



IHR ASIA BUSINESS LEADERSHIP SURVEY 2009

OBJECTIVE OF SURVEY

The iHR Asia Professional Employees Survey was conducted to obtain a deeper understanding about what characteristics professional employees value in relation to leadership and organisational climate in Thai workplaces. It also examined the extent to which they are satisfied with the performance of these characteristics in their own workplaces.

The survey also provided us with an understanding of the extent to which these characteristics may be valued differently by generation Up to 30, 31 to 45, and Greater than 45.

THE METHODOLOGY

The iHR Survey contained 75 questions covering a subset of 23 leadership and organisational climate characteristics. The characteristics that were selected were from iHR's climate survey methodology.

Participants were asked to rate characteristics using a 6 point Likert style rating scale in terms of their importance and their satisfaction (called stated importance and satisfaction).

The data was analysed using a variety of techniques to prioritize stated importance, measure relative stated satisfaction and discover derived associations between characteristics.

It is also important to note that respondents were informed prior to completing this survey that all data would be directly received by our Australia server, therefore subject to Australian confidentiality laws. This, we hoped would ensure confidence among participants in relation to the privacy of submitted data.

**Table 1: iHR Asia Leadership Survey
Stated Importance Ratings for Measured Job Characteristics
(Maximum Score 100)**

Characteristic	Score
Job stability and security	91
Being treated with fairness and respect.	90
Working in an effective team.	90
Clear and achievable performance goals.	89
Manager leads by example.	88
Opportunity to contribute to planning and decisions which impact on your work.	88
Being trusted you to make decisions necessary to work effectively.	88
Support and encouragement to work more effectively.	88
A friendly and cooperative environment.	88
Manager encourages comments and feedback.	88
Opportunities for training and skills development.	88
Manager makes effective decisions.	88
Encouragement to use skills to solve problems and develop new ideas.	88
Work is conducted professionally	88
Manager inspires staff to perform at their best.	87
Job provides a variety of experience.	87
Information important to work is communicated effectively.	87
Level of salary and benefits.	87
Manager is trustworthy.	86
Employer communicates a clear business strategy.	86
Opportunities for career and promotion.	84
Salary and benefits are market competitive.	83
Manager is approachable.	81

**Table 2: iHR Asia Leadership Survey
Average Importance Ratings for Characteristics by Age Group
(Maximum Score 100)**

Up to 30 Years (Generation Y)		31 - 45 Years		Greater than 45 Years	
Working in an effective team.	93	Being treated with fairness and respect.	92	Job stability and security	89
A friendly and cooperative environment.	91	Job stability and security	91	Opportunities for training and skills development.	88
Job stability and security	91	Being trusted you to make decisions necessary to work effectively.	91	Encouragement to use skills to solve problems and develop new ideas.	86
Being treated with fairness and respect.	90	Opportunity to contribute to planning and decisions which impact on your work.	91	Manager inspires staff to perform at their best.	86
Manager leads by example.	90	Clear and achievable performance goals.	90	Opportunity to contribute to planning and decisions which impact on your work.	86
Clear and achievable performance goals.	89	Opportunities for training and skills development.	89	Clear and achievable performance goals.	86
Manager encourages comments and feedback.	89	Working in an effective team.	89	Information important to work is communicated effectively.	86
Support and encouragement to work more effectively.	89	Job provides a variety of experience.	89	Manager makes effective decisions.	86
Level of salary and benefits.	88	Manager leads by example.	89	Being treated with fairness and respect.	86
Encouragement to use skills to solve problems and develop new ideas.	88	Support and encouragement to work more effectively.	89	Working in an effective team.	85
Work is conducted professionally	88	Manager inspires staff to perform at their best.	88	Support and encouragement to work more effectively.	85
Manager makes effective decisions.	88	Work is conducted professionally	88	Work is conducted professionally	85
Information important to work is communicated effectively.	88	Manager makes effective decisions.	88	Job provides a variety of experience.	85
Opportunity to contribute to planning and decisions which impact on your work.	87	Manager encourages comments and feedback.	88	Being trusted you to make decisions necessary to work effectively.	84
Manager inspires staff to perform at their best.	87	Encouragement to use skills to solve problems and develop new ideas.	88	Employer communicates a clear business strategy.	84
Being trusted you to make decisions necessary to work effectively.	87	A friendly and cooperative environment.	87	Manager encourages comments and feedback.	84
Manager is trustworthy.	87	Manager is trustworthy.	87	Manager leads by example.	84
Opportunities for career and promotion.	86	Level of salary and benefits.	87	A friendly and cooperative environment.	84
Job provides a variety of experience.	86	Employer communicates a clear business strategy.	87	Manager is trustworthy.	82
Employer communicates a clear business strategy.	86	Information important to work is communicated effectively.	86	Level of salary and benefits.	82
Opportunities for training and skills development.	86	Salary and benefits are market competitive.	85	Manager is approachable.	82
Salary and benefits are market competitive.	83	Opportunities for career and promotion.	84	Opportunities for career and promotion.	81
Manager is approachable.	80	Manager is approachable.	81	Salary and benefits are market competitive.	80
Average	88		88		85

8 OUTSTANDING POINTS ABOUT WHAT CHARACTERISTICS THAI PROFESSIONAL PEOPLE VALUE IN THE WORKPLACE

➤ **Point 1 JOB STABILITY AND SECURITY IS THE MOST IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTIC (Table 1 and Table 2)**

Job stability and security was rated as the most highly valued characteristic by our sample. We can acknowledge that this survey was conducted during the financial crisis, however, it is our view that there are two factors at work here.

First in the context of an emerging economy, Thai professional people strongly value ‘having a job’ as a means of practical necessity and social evolution (Eg. education of children, capability to purchase standard of housing).

Second *The Organisational Four Walls Factor*. Simply those participating in this survey work in the organisation because it provides them with a level of protection that is unobtainable in a small entrepreneurial/ unpredictable business.

➤ **Point 2 SALARY IS NOT AS MUCH OF A CONSIDERATION AS MANY OTHER FACTORS (Table 1 and Table 2)**

While employers need to pay a competitive salary to attract quality employees they must then get on with the business of effective leadership and employee management to engage employees in a stimulating, **somewhat paternalistic** organisational climate. Level of salary and benefits was a lower ranking characteristic with exception being for generation up to 30. This result could be attributed to the new wave of materialism that is associated with that generation, or the fact that many are not yet established in their professional careers or personal lives or simply that they perceive that they get paid poorly.

We were surprised at the lower ranking ‘Salary and Benefits’ got on the overall survey, in particular, generation 31 to 45. Perhaps there is a certain ‘personal embarrassment’ associated with ranking this higher. It should be noted, however that the 31 to 45 year olds went on to rate it as one of the characteristics they were least satisfied with in their current employment.

➤ **Point 3 LOW ON RISK, HIGH IN PATERNALISM (Table 1 and Table 2)**

The survey showed us that in professional organisations employees most value two characteristics that are not necessarily associated with highly innovative and entrepreneurial environments. These were:

1. Job stability and security
2. Being treated with fairness and respect

Our view is that many Thai people working in professional positions prefer to work in a paternalistic environment. That is Safe, Low on Risk, High in security and care.

➤ **Point 4 EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK DRIVES UP TO 30'S (Table 2)**

Working in an effective team and a friendly cooperative environment were outstanding results among under 30's. Sharing work, sharing idea's and sharing the load is important to young Thai professionals. Employers who neglect this fact do so at their own risk. Beware to the international

high flyer who lands in Thailand and seeks to restructure and change without consideration for the power of team in Thailand. On the other hand using the team factor to build performance is a real opportunity. Having team based achievement targets for example or using small teams to achieve team based projects

➤ **Point 5 UP TO 30 YEAR OLDS DO VALUE CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH GREATER LEVELS OF INNOVATION (Table 2)**

Organisations wishing to build high innovation and entrepreneurial environments can take heart. A characteristic associated with this kind of environment such were valued by under 30's characteristics such as:

- My Manager encourages comments and feedback
- Encouragement to use skills and to solve problems

were both valued. But behind the team aspects of working.

➤ **Point 6 THAI PROFESSIONALS LOOK FOR CLEAR DIRECTION AND GOAL SETTING (Table 1 and Table 2)**

Thai professionals rated the characteristic 'Clear and achievable goals highly. This supports the theory that Thai professionals like working within clear *parameters*.

It was interesting that the characteristic 'My Manager is approachable' is valued lower across all generations. Furthermore all age groups indicated that they were relatively satisfied with their managers performance in this area. At face value this is a positive result but our anecdotal evidence suggests something different. Our observations indicate that Thai professionals may have a low expectation of management in this area and that some professionals still prefer to wait for direction from their managers rather than being proactive in the relationship. Now this is not a problem in a highly hierarchical institution but it is a problem in an organisation relying on pro-activity. The problem may well be being exasperated by management style which in our observation tends to be 'non-forceful directive'.

➤ **Point 7 THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE DECISIONS IS INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT TO THAI PROFESSIONALS 31 TO 45 (Table 2)**

Some 31 to 45 professionals in our sample had lower level management roles thus indicated that they were keen to be trusted to make decisions effectively and to contribute to planning and decisions which impact on their work. Obviously characteristics that we associate with being an effective leader. We start to see a pattern emerge where the young generation concentrates more on 'what I can get from work place' where as 30 to 45 year olds are interested in having greater power to contribute to their environment. We balance this comment however by saying that our experience has been that Thai professionals wish to make decisions and have control in the context of a very clear framework and hierarchy. It has also been our experience that Thai professionals can function effectively within more laissez-faire structures but need to be given the tools to do this effectively.

➤ **Point 8 CAREER ADVANCEMENT AND PROMOTION NOT THE BIG PRIORITY BUT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IS. (Table 1 and Table 2)**

We have noted the lower priority given to opportunities for career promotion among the 30 to 45 year olds. Do they believe they have already reached the peak in terms of hierarchy? Perhaps there is a feeling of resignation that one cannot go any further than certain ceilings inherent in hierarchical work environments. Even generation 'up to 30' did not rate opportunities for career promotion as a relatively high value (This clearly varies from our in-house survey results in Australia). This does not all go well for creating 'the high performance organisation' where people believe they can succeed and achieve greater influence and attain the very top positions in organisations. On the other hand the 31 to 45 years participants were keen to be trained and develop skills. This need was even higher among Greater than 45 year olds who rate the characteristic at number2 position. On the other Under 30's rated it at position 21. Our view is that as Thai professionals mature they value keeping relevant to their professional stream more than they do being promoted.

Table3:iHR Asia Leadership Survey
Relative Satisfaction for Characteristics by Age Group
(Table indicates the level of satisfaction participants had with each characteristic in their current workplace)

Up to 30 Years (Generation Y)		31 - 45 Years		Greater than 45 Years	
Manager is approachable.	1	Manager is approachable.	1	Salary and benefits are market competitive.	1
Manager leads by example.	2	Manager inspires staff to perform at their best.	2	Manager is approachable.	2
Manager inspires staff to perform at their best.	3	Encouragement to use skills to solve problems and develop new ideas.	3	Level of salary and benefits.	3
Encouragement to use skills to solve problems and develop new ideas.	4	Job provides a variety of experience.	4	Opportunities for career and promotion.	4
Job provides a variety of experience.	5	Work is conducted professionally	5	Job provides a variety of experience.	5
Being trusted you to make decisions necessary to work effectively.	6	Manager is trustworthy.	6	Encouragement to use skills to solve problems and develop new ideas.	6
A friendly and cooperative environment.	7	Support and encouragement to work more effectively.	7	Manager is trustworthy.	7
Opportunities for training and skills development.	8	Being trusted you to make decisions necessary to work effectively.	8	Manager encourages comments and feedback.	8
Manager makes effective decisions.	9	Employer communicates a clear business strategy.	9	Support and encouragement to work more effectively.	9
Manager is trustworthy.	10	Manager leads by example.	10	Work is conducted professionally	10
Work is conducted professionally	11	Manager makes effective decisions.	11	Opportunity to contribute to planning and decisions which impact on your work.	11
Information important to work is communicated effectively.	12	Opportunities for career and promotion.	12	Being trusted you to make decisions necessary to work effectively.	12
Opportunities for career and promotion.	13	Working in an effective team.	13	Manager makes effective decisions.	13
Being treated with fairness and respect.	14	Information important to work is communicated effectively.	14	A friendly and cooperative environment.	14
Support and encouragement to work more effectively.	15	Salary and benefits are market competitive.	15	Being treated with fairness and respect.	15
Employer communicates a clear business strategy.	16	Job stability and security	16	Information important to work is communicated effectively.	16
Clear and achievable performance goals.	17	Manager encourages comments and feedback.	17	Working in an effective team.	17
Manager encourages comments and feedback.	18	A friendly and cooperative environment.	18	Manager inspires staff to perform at their best.	18
Salary and benefits are market competitive.	19	Opportunity to contribute to planning and decisions which impact on your work.	19	Opportunities for training and skills development.	19
Opportunity to contribute to planning and decisions which impact on your work.	20	Level of salary and benefits.	20	Employer communicates a clear business strategy.	20
Working in an effective team.	21	Clear and achievable performance goals.	21	Manager leads by example.	21
Job stability and security	22	Being treated with fairness and respect.	22	Clear and achievable performance goals.	22
Level of salary and benefits.	23	Opportunities for training and skills development.	23	Job stability and security	23

WHAT THE GENERATIONS ARE LEAST SATISFIED WITHIN THEIR JOBS. (Table 3)

➤ UP TO 30 YEARS OLD

Two of the 'Up to 30's' highly valued characteristics were rated in the bottom five on the relative satisfaction chart.

The area of least satisfaction expressed by under30 was salary and benefits. This is a potential problem in terms at the high performer level and retention of talent in Thailand. That is that they can go overseas and get a better paid job. It must be noted that under 30's generally are demotivated if they feel under paid, hence undervalued by the organisation, and are ready to move jobs.

What is really interesting is that two of the most valued of characteristics of up to 30's were apparently not being met by employers.

22) Job stability and security

21) Working in an effective team

➤ 31 - 45 YEARS OLD

4 of the highly valued characteristics were rated in the bottom five on the relative satisfaction chart by 31 to 45's. This makes this group comparatively the least satisfied of the three groups.

They were

(23) Opportunity for skills development and training

(22) Being treated with fairness and respect

(21) Clear and achievable performance goals

(19) Opportunity to contribute to planning decisions that impact on their Job

31's to 45's were also less satisfied with level of salary and benefits which is natural because they probably have more financial commitments than any other group.

➤ GREATER THAN 45 YEARS OLD

For 3 of the highly valued characteristics were rated in the bottom five on the relative satisfaction chart. These were:

23) Job stability and security

22) Clear and achievable performance goals

19) Opportunities for Training and Development

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THAILAND

- 1) That employers cannot simply focus on salary and benefits as a means to retain their best professional staff. (However it has to be competitive or employees especially 45 years and below will be dissatisfied). Retention is dependent on the organisation placing the right balance between salary and benefits and organisational climate factors.
- 2) That Thai professionals working in organisations value job security ahead of all other factors. They do not put such a high value on some attributes associated with innovative and entrepreneurial cultures. Therefore, businesses wanting to promote greater innovation and entrepreneurialism will have to build change strategies that clearly address these factors.
- 3) Effective Teamwork and Friendly Cooperative environments are key requirements for generation 30 and under. This means that employers are unlikely to get high levels of satisfaction if they force workers to work autonomously. The concept of team needs to be a major consideration in organisational design and development frameworks. When organisations move professionals to another posting (especially overseas) the matter of team integration must be a major consideration.
- 4) Change Programs implemented in Thailand without consideration for the impacts of destabilizing a workplace and breaking up teams are likely to fail.
- 5) Organisations (especially western) that build HR structures and systems that offer promotion as a major incentive will need to analyse its application to Thailand. They will also need to address the issue that promotion is unlikely to be sought by all professional employees and that professional development will be a key motivator for many.
- 6) That organisations need to consider the needs of different generations of professionals when designing HR systems and strategies if they want to achieve high levels of satisfactions. Movement out of the work paradigms of the different generations needs to be well explained.