

2008 TOP PERFORMER

SURVEY REPORT



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2008 Top Performer Survey Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Survey Methodology	2
Why Is This Important?	3
Survey Results	
Profile of a Top Performer	4
Job Attribute Importance Ratings	5
Challenging & Interesting Work is Most Important to Top Performers	6
Compensation: Highly Important Factor When Selecting a Job	8
Training & Rewards: Not Viewed as Most Important	9
Demographic Breakouts	
Gender	11
Marital Status	16
Age	19
Job Type	22
Education	27
Top Performer Perspectives	31

Executive Summary

The Top Performer Survey is administered in conjunction with the NorthCoast 99, an annual program that honors 99 great workplaces for top talent in Northeast Ohio. The survey allows Top Performers (employees identified by organizations that apply for the award) to select the most important job attributes that they look for in a job and rate 69 items related to aspects of employee engagement. Their ratings are used to help evaluate and select winners of the award.

The survey was developed and is presented by ERC (Employers Resource Council), Northeast Ohio's largest organization dedicated to HR and workplace programs, practices, training and consulting. Below is a summary of the key findings of this year's survey in which 937 Top Performers throughout Northeast Ohio participated.

Survey Methodology

Each organization that applied for NorthCoast 99 was asked to identify 5 of their Top Performers (3 of whom had to be non-management employees) and have them complete an online survey. The survey asked them to select their top two most important job attributes that they look for in a job, 1 being most important. Participants were then asked to rate their agreement with 69 items measuring workplace practices that relate to employee engagement. Top Performers were also asked a series of demographic questions.

The questions in the NorthCoast 99 application were weighted based on the Top Performers' responses. Each organization that applied for the award received an overall score. Overall scores were ranked in order from highest to lowest and the top organizations were designated as the 2008 NorthCoast 99 winners.

Why Is This Important?

Top Performers fuel the economy. Workplaces that attract, retain, and motivate Top Performers are more likely to be successful and grow. The Top Performer Survey was designed not only to help recognize employers that are doing these things extremely well, but also to provide all Northeast Ohio organizations a tool to help develop ways to improve their ability to do the same.

This report tells employers what Top Performers in Northeast Ohio are looking for in a job. This is extremely valuable information that can be used to refine organizational policies, create reward and recognition programs, design employee benefit plans, enhance development opportunities, strengthen company culture, and enhance recruiting practices.

Although this report does provide beneficial information about what Top Performers are thinking, it is also important to recognize that these responses are only a sample of a much larger population of potential job candidates and current employees. The results of the survey do not describe every Top Performer's individual needs. In fact, the variations in the results highlight the importance of knowing what individual Top Performers want and need. Organizations that fail to recognize individual differences and do not build their policies and practices to support those differences will be at a competitive disadvantage in the on-going battle to find and keep top talent – because as the NorthCoast 99 Winners demonstrate – there are plenty of other employers who are already pulling ahead by constantly adapting and evolving to address those individual needs.

For the last decade, ERC has surveyed Northeast Ohio organizations about their biggest challenges to success. Consistently, year after year, the biggest challenge reported is finding and keeping qualified people. It is ERC's mission to provide employers with resources and services to address this critical challenge, and it is our hope that this report is one of many resources that will help us work with Northeast Ohio organizations to meet that challenge head-on.

Profile of a Top Performer

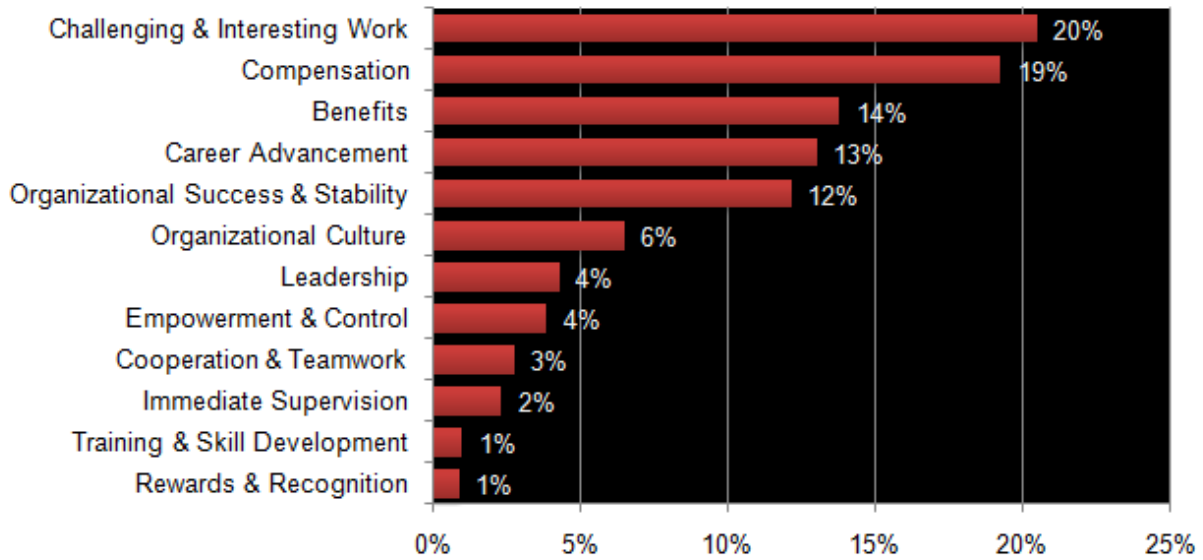
The table below shows the breakdown of who top performers are in Northeast Ohio including gender, race, age, education, length of service, job type and marital status.

Demographic Group	Percent
All Employees	937
Gender	
Female	63%
Male	37%
Race	
African American	5%
Asian	1%
American Indian & Alaska Native	0%
Caucasian	89%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific	0%
Multiracial	1%
Hispanic	1%
Age	
19-34	38%
35-49	42%
50+	19%
Education	
Less than 9th grade	0%
9th-12th grade - no diploma	1%
High School Graduate	12%
Some College	18%
Associate Degree	10%
Bachelor's Degree	42%
Graduate/Professional Degree	17%
Length of Service	
0-5 years	57%
6-10 years	22%
11-15 years	8%
16+ years	12%
Job Type	
Management, Professional, & Related Occupations	53%
Sales & Office Occupations	12%
Service Occupations	18%
Construction, extraction and maintenance occupations	1%
Production, Transportation & Materials Moving Occupations	3%
Other	14%
Marital Status	
Single	27%
Married	63%
Separated	1%
Widowed	1%
Divorced	1%

Job Attribute Importance Ratings

The chart below describes the frequency in which top performers ranked each job attribute as the most important attribute that they look for in a job. Challenging and interesting work, compensation, and benefits rank among the most important job attributes for top performers. Rewards and recognition and training and skill development still rank among the least important attributes that top performers seek in a job, consistent with last year's results. These trends were consistent across most demographic groups.

Job Attribute Importance Ratings - Most Important Job Attribute



Challenging & Interesting Work is Most Important to Top Performers

Top Performers overwhelmingly ranked challenging and interesting work as the most important job attribute that they look for in a job. It was among the top job attributes that top performers selected as the two most important attributes that they look for in a job.

Across most demographics, challenging and interesting work remains the most sought after job attribute in addition to compensation, particularly among males, those with Bachelor's degrees or higher, and those in management and professional occupations. Females sought benefits and compensation more so than males; high school graduates sought compensation, benefits, career advancement, and organizational success and stability more than those with college degrees; sales and office employees sought compensation before challenging and interesting work; service employees sought compensation and benefits over challenging and interesting work, and production employees look for many different factors before challenging and interesting work.

Demographic Group	Ranking of Challenging & Interesting Work
All Employees	# 2
Gender	
Female	# 3
Male	# 2
Age	
19-34	# 3
35-49	# 3
50+	# 3
Education	
High School Graduate	# 5
Bachelor's Degree	# 2
Graduate/Professional Degree	# 1
Job Type	
Management, Professional, & Related Occupations	# 1
Sales & Office Occupations	# 4
Service Occupations	# 4
Production, Transportation & Materials Moving Occupations	# 7

It was also the job attribute that top performers were most satisfied with at their current employer, which means that their organizations are doing a remarkable job keeping their employees challenged and interested in the work they do. In fact, the average length of service

for top performers in their respective organizations was 8 years! Organizations appear to be retaining their best employees. Career advancement opportunities were also ranked among the top five attributes, suggesting that Top Performers want jobs that are challenging, interesting and will advance their careers.

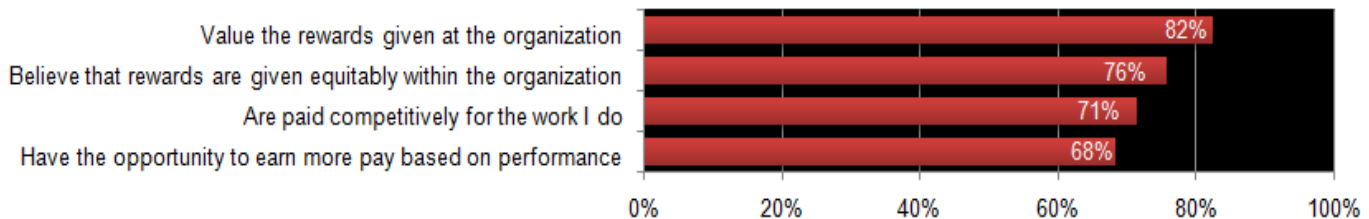
Compensation: Highly Important Factor When Selecting a Job

Across all demographics, compensation was one of the most important factors when selecting a job. It was ranked among the top two job attributes for every demographic groups and the second most important job attribute overall.

Nonetheless, when asked to rate their agreement with various aspects of their pay, top performers showed some dissatisfaction with pay compared to their other glowing responses. Seventy-one percent of top performers say they are paid competitively for the work they do. Similarly, 68% say that they have the opportunity to earn more pay based on their performance. Although these ratings are above average in comparison to norms, these were among the lowest rated statements out of those surveyed.

While they value the rewards offered at their organization, they are less inclined to believe that they are paid competitively for the work they do nor that they have the opportunity to earn more pay based on their performance. This is of particular concern seeing as compensation is viewed as the most important job attribute.

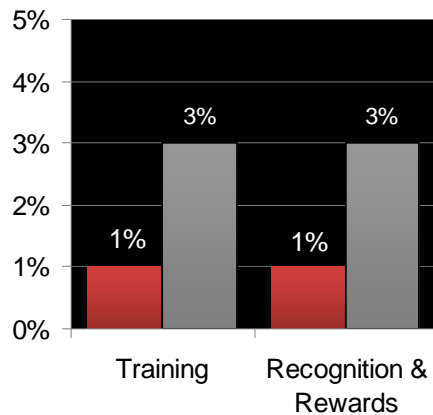
How Top Performers Feel About Their Rewards



Training & Rewards: Not Viewed as Most Important

Across all demographics, training, recognition, and rewards are not viewed as the most important job attributes that top performers look for in jobs. Regardless of age, gender, job type, or education level, top performers did not consider training and skill development to be the most important attribute that they look for in jobs, nor did they consider recognition and rewards to be the most important. This trend has been fairly consistent over the past few years (red denotes 2008 percentages; gray denotes 2007 percentages).

Rankings of Training & Rewards and Recognition Attributes in 2007 & 2008



Interestingly, however, compensation and career advancement are considered to be two of the most important job attributes that top performers look for in jobs. These job attributes commonly can be associated with training and rewards programs.

Does this mean that organizations shouldn't invest in training and rewards programs in favor of career advancement and compensation strategies? Not necessarily. It does mean that great training without a link to career advancement or career development probably will not be enough to attract the best top performers to your organization. Similarly, rewards programs without a link to compensation may also not be enough to attract the best top performers.

These insights into what is important to top performers may suggest two basic conclusions. Because career advancement and training are similar and many times related to one another, organizations could focus their training initiatives on those that help advance the careers of their employees. Also, because compensation and rewards are similar, compensation rewards (or

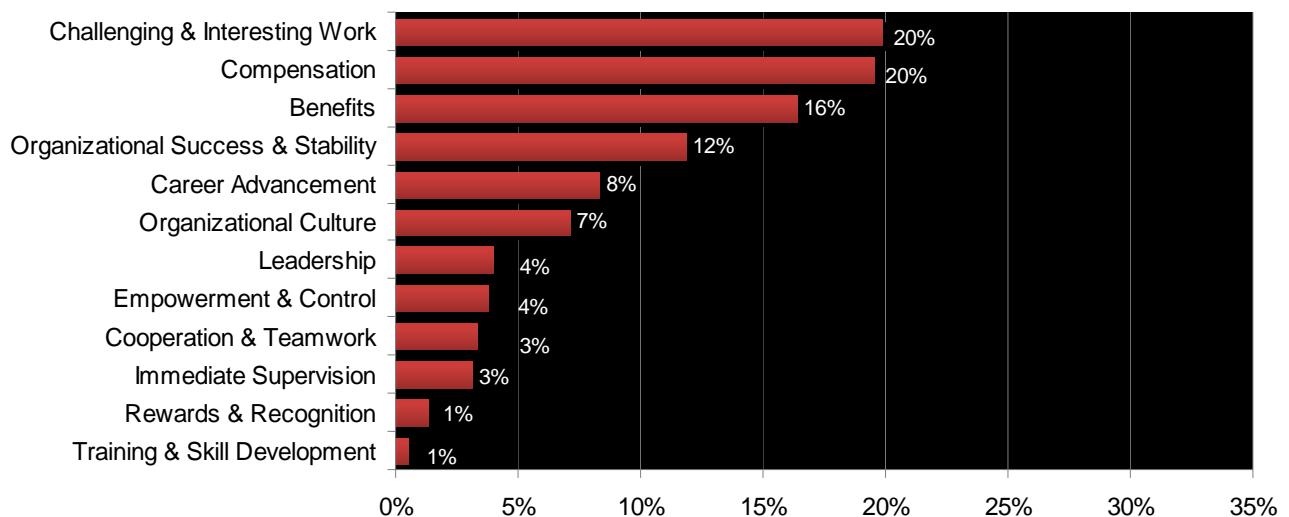
performance pay) could be a way in which organizations use rewards programs to attract top performers.

In essence, great training and rewards programs, while not viewed as the most important job attributes, can work to an organization's advantage if they are designed to align with the basic interests of top performers.

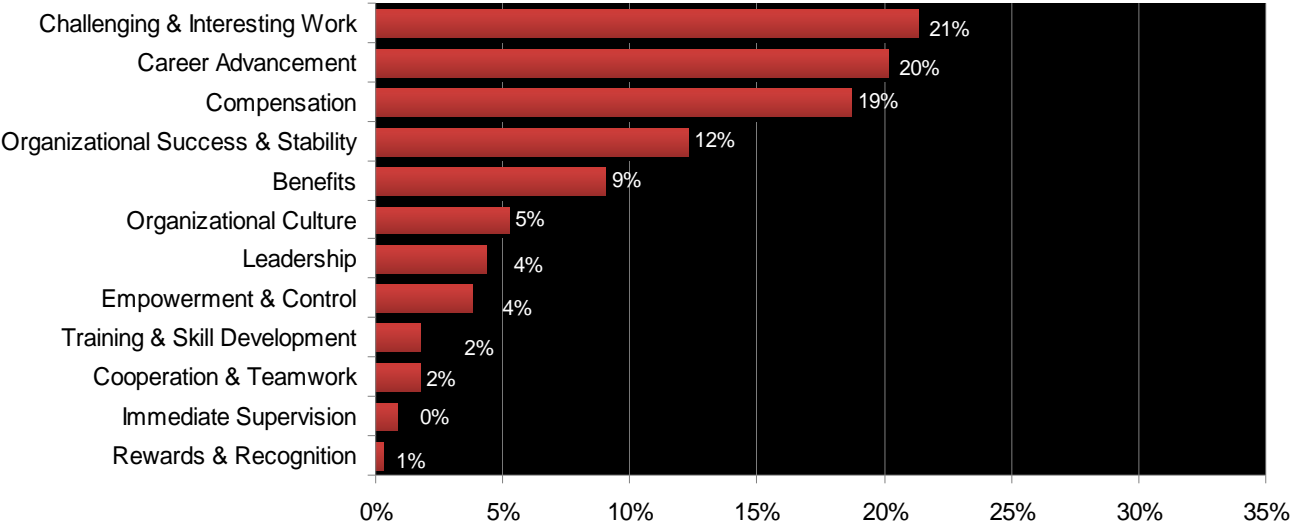
Gender

Generally, gender does not have a significant influence on rankings of job attribute importance. One key difference that was found in the survey was that females find benefits to be more important than males. Males tend to place more emphasis on career advancement rather than benefits while women tend to place more emphasis on benefits. Among other less notable differences, females are more interested in organizational culture and immediate supervision than males. Other than those slight differences, both genders feel similarly about the most important attributes they seek in a job.

Job Attributes Importance Rankings: Females



Job Attributes Importance Rankings: Males

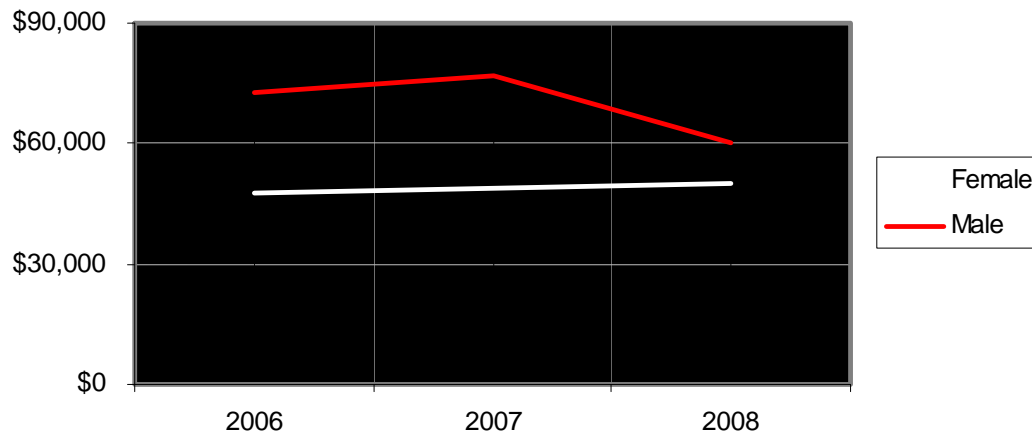


The most pronounced difference between males and females was not related to job attribute preferences, but instead related to pay. This is the smallest gap in three years. While the gap in gender pay has decreased from 2007 and 2008, male top performers still earn a higher average salary than female top performers. This year, however, the gap decreased by over \$10,000, which is the smallest gap in three years.

2008 Salaries

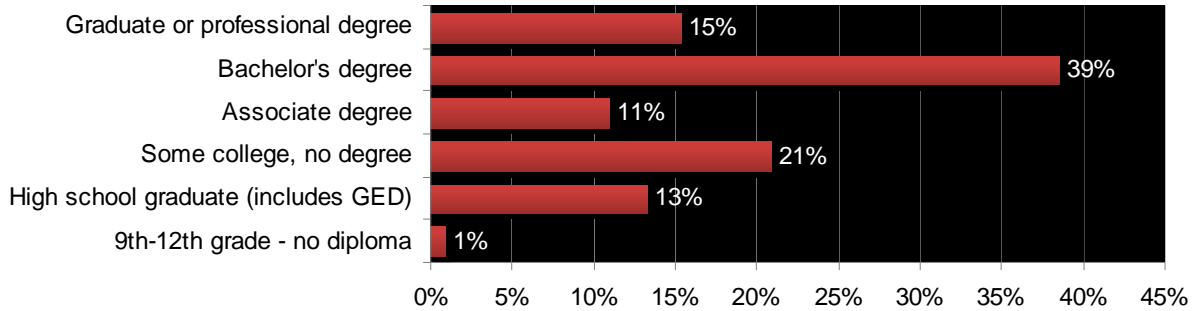
Gender	Salary
Female	\$49,769
Male	\$60,254

Salary Gap Trend Line by Gender

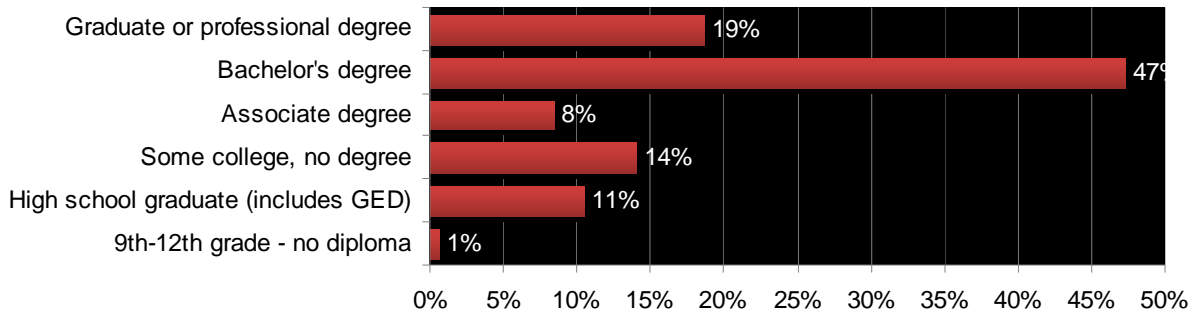


Fewer females have a Bachelor's or graduate degree in comparison to males. Sixty-six percent of males have at least a Bachelor's degree while 54% of females have at least a Bachelor's degree. This discrepancy in higher education may be influencing the salary differences between genders.

Female Education Levels

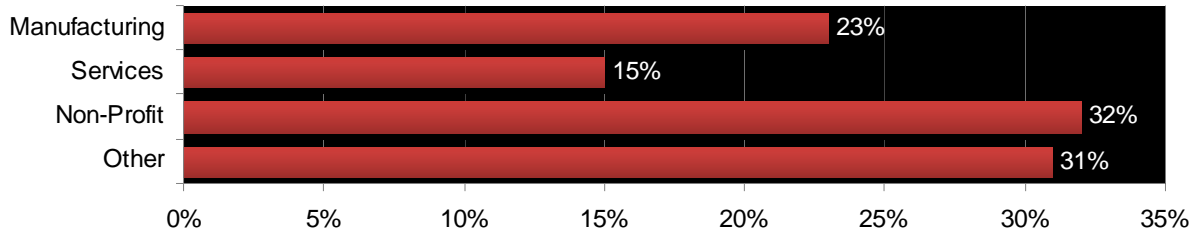


Male Education Levels

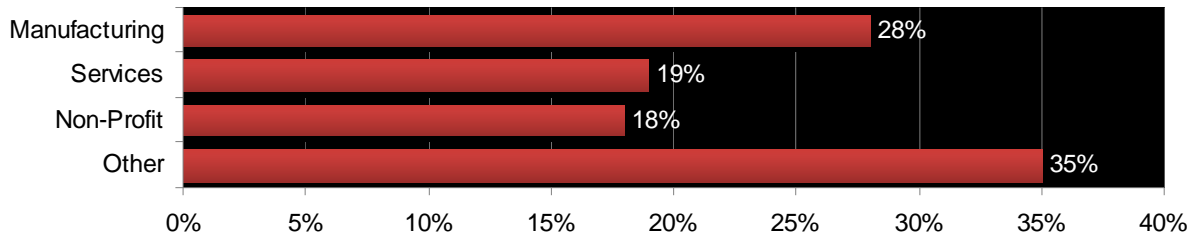


In addition, females are more commonly employed in the non-profit industry compared to the services and manufacturing industries which may contribute to the pay gap. The charts below detail the industries in which top performers from each gender are employed.

Female Employment by Industry

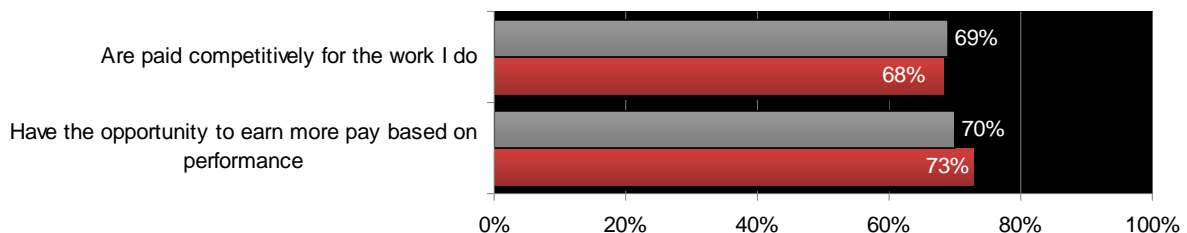


Male Employment by Industry



Despite lower pay and such a pronounced pay gap, females are just as satisfied with their pay as males are. No significant differences were found between the genders in regards to pay satisfaction, as only 1% fewer females feel they are paid competitively (red denotes female response; gray denotes male response).

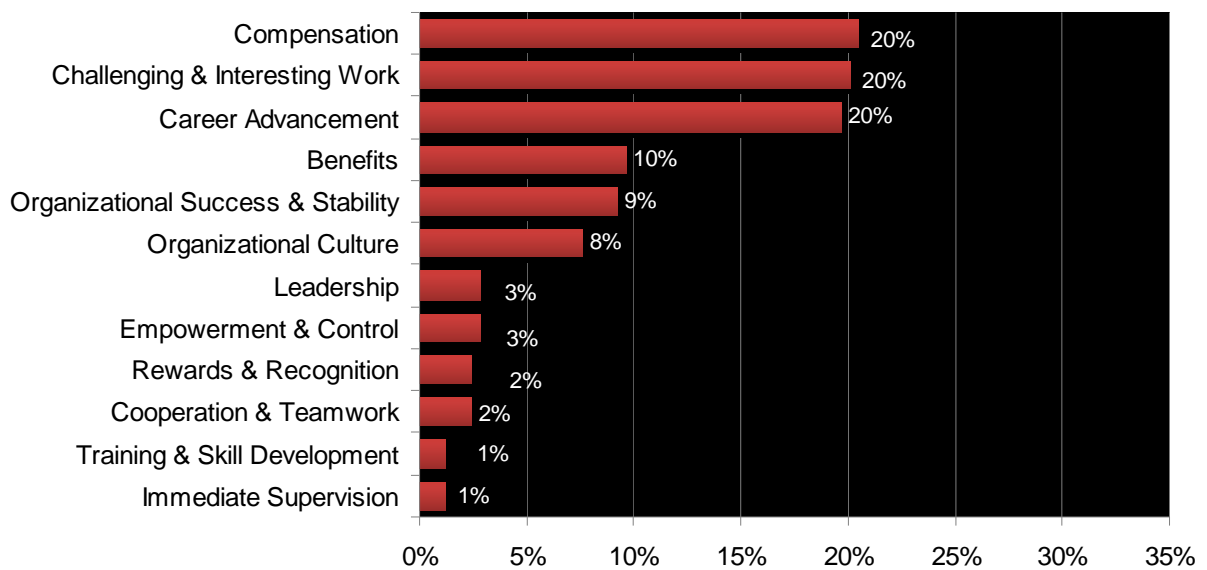
Satisfaction with Pay



Marital Status

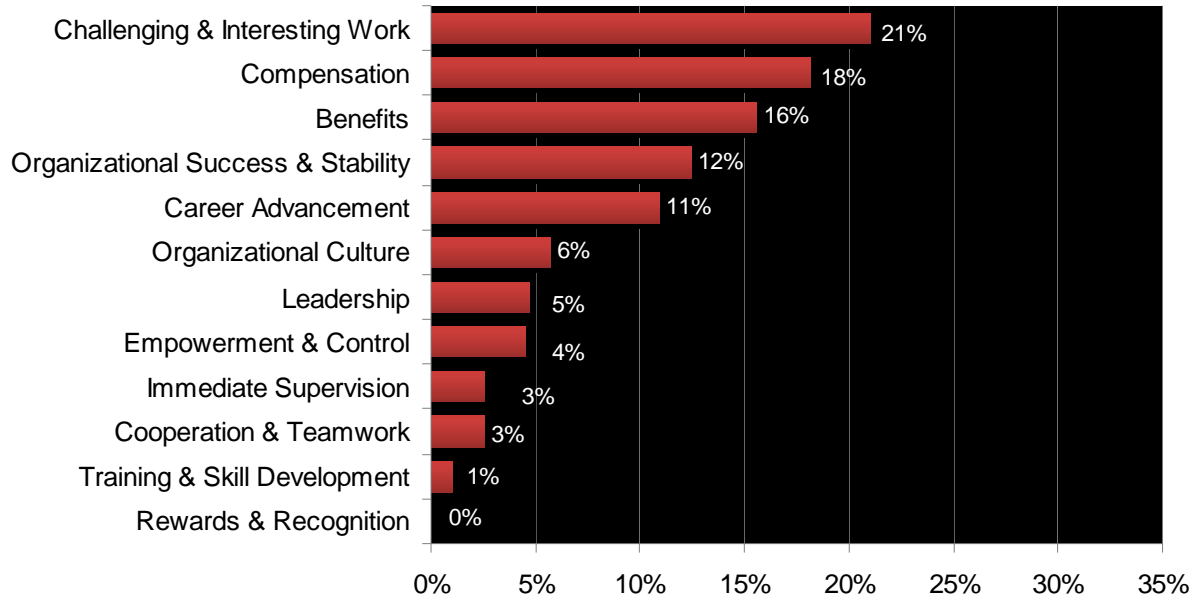
Like gender, marital status appears to influence benefits importance. Single top performers place less emphasis on benefits than those that are divorced, widowed, and married, and place more emphasis on career advancement than top performers that are divorced, widowed, and married. In general, however, marital status did not have a very significant impact on top performers' selection of job attributes.

Job Attributes Importance Rankings: Single

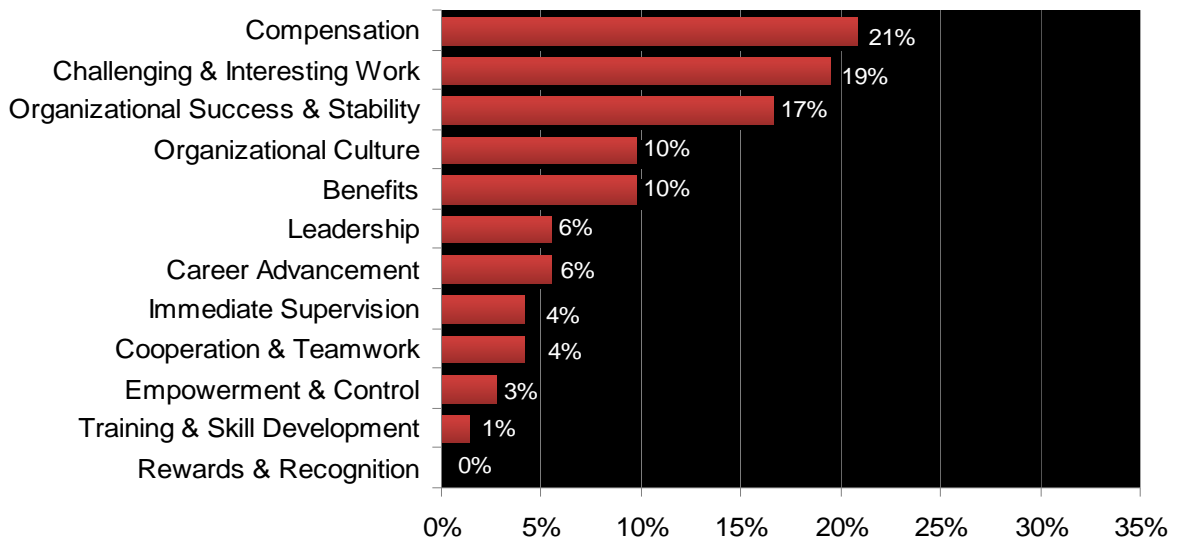


Single top performers' preferences are more concentrated around three job attributes: compensation, challenging and interesting work, and career advancement. Married top performers' preferences are concentrated around challenging and interesting work, compensation, and benefits. Divorced top performers' preferences are concentrated on three attributes: compensation, challenging and interesting work, and organizational success and stability.

Job Attributes Importance Rankings: Married

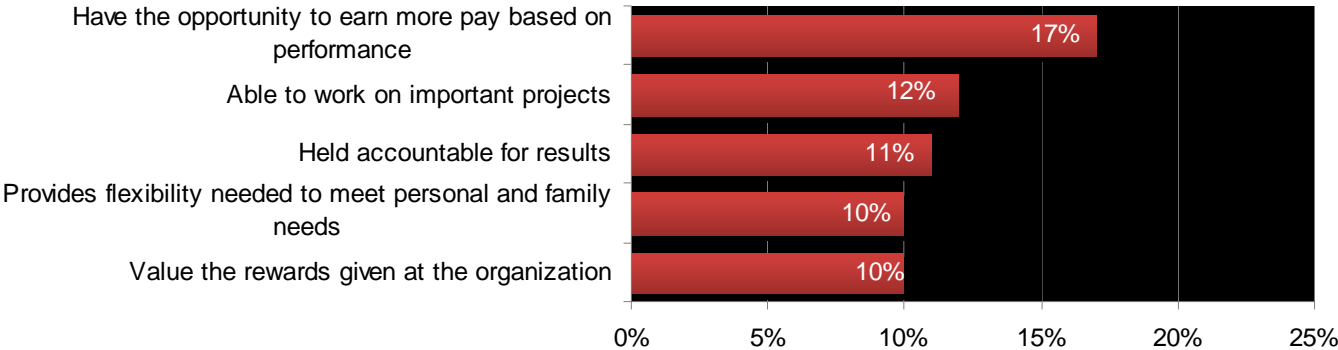


Job Attributes Importance Rankings: Divorced



Married top performers also appear to be slightly more satisfied with varying aspects of their job averaging 4% more positive responses compared to single top performers. The most significant differences between single top performers and married top performers are that a larger percentage of married persons have opportunities to earn more pay based on performance, the ability to work on important projects, are provided flexibility to meet personal and family needs, and value rewards given at their respective organizations.

Single Versus Married Top Performers



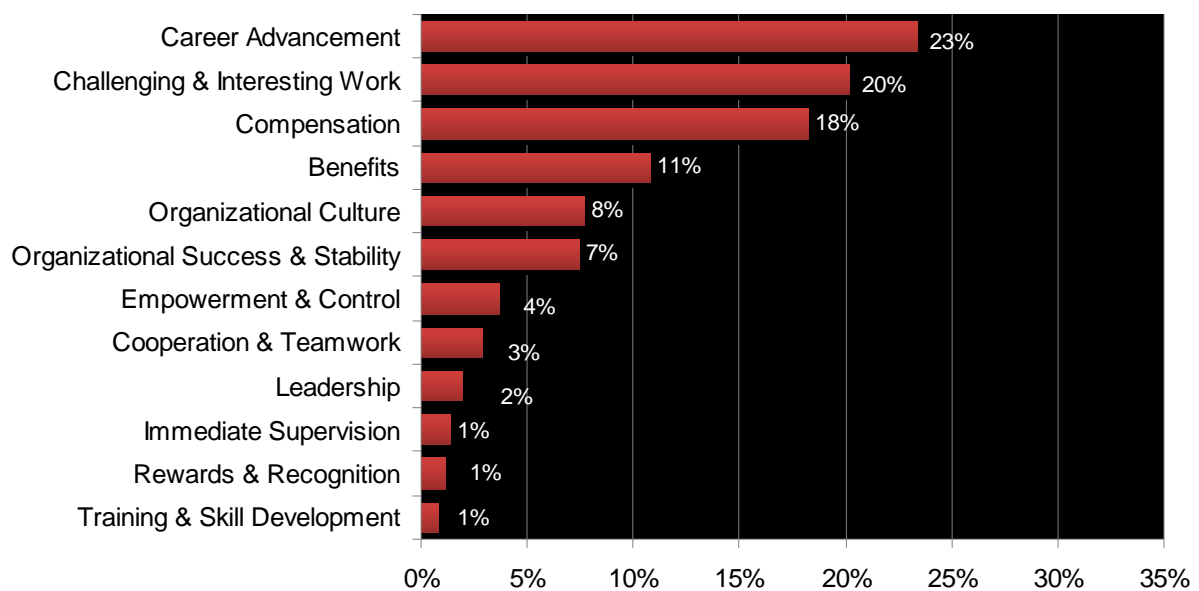
Age

Age appears to influence what top performers look for in a job, particularly in regards to benefits, job security, and career advancement.

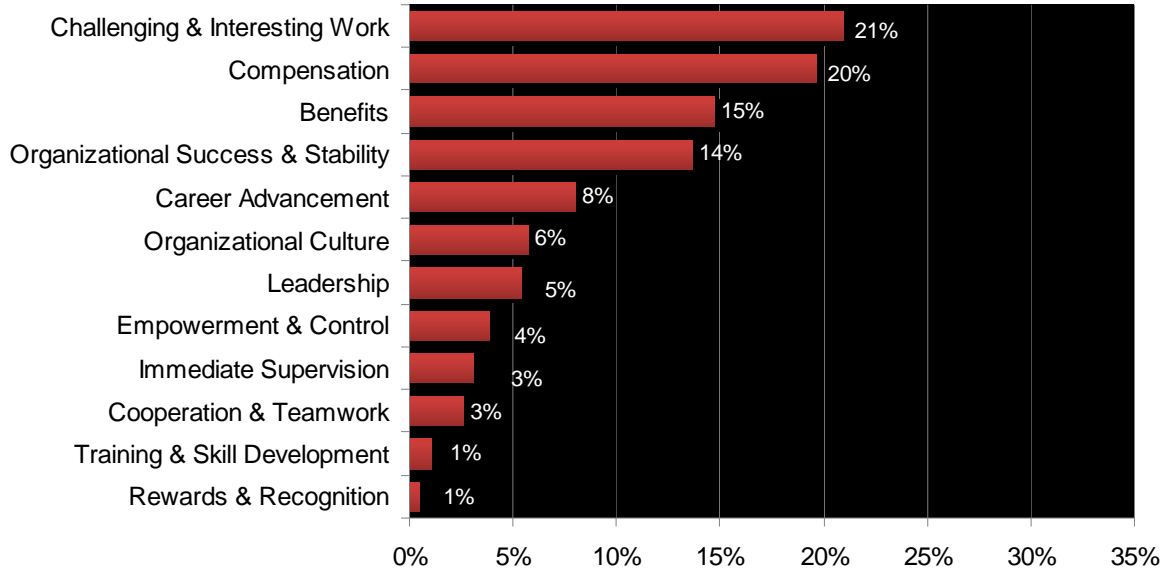
Career advancement remains high in importance for younger top performers (19-34), of moderate importance for middle aged top performers (35-49), and low in importance for older top performers (50+).

Career advancement, challenging and interesting work, and compensation were the most widely selected job attributes amongst young top performers. Challenging and interesting work, compensation, benefits, and organizational success and stability were the most widely selected job attributes among middle-aged top performers. Likewise, challenging and interesting work, compensation, benefits, and organizational success and stability were the most widely selected job attributes amongst older top performers. Only 2% of top performers over the age of 50 seek career advancement in jobs.

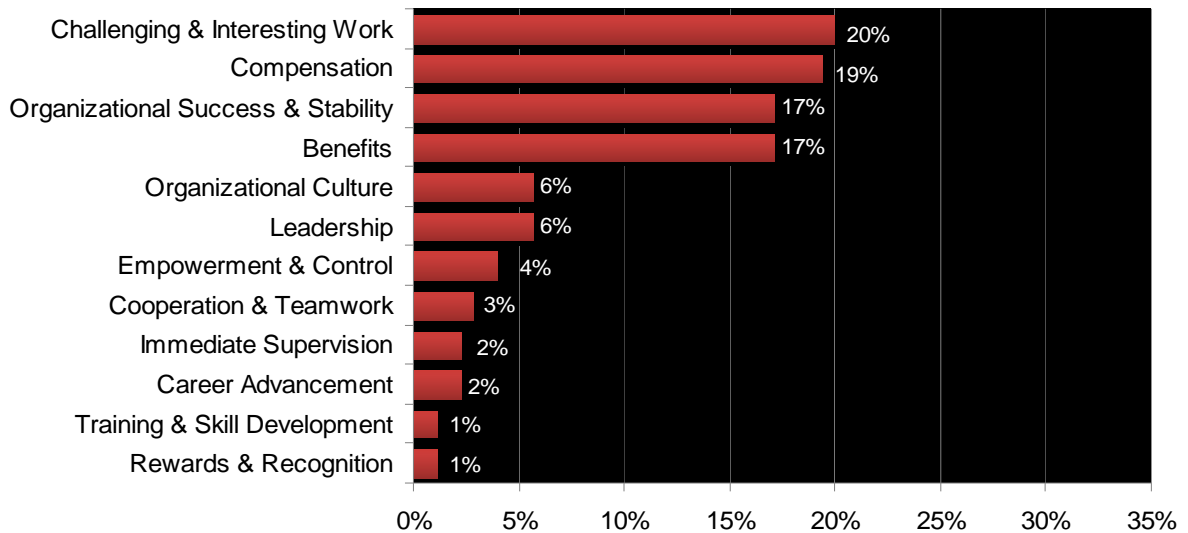
Job Attributes Importance Rankings: Age 19-34



Job Attributes Importance Rankings: Age 35-49

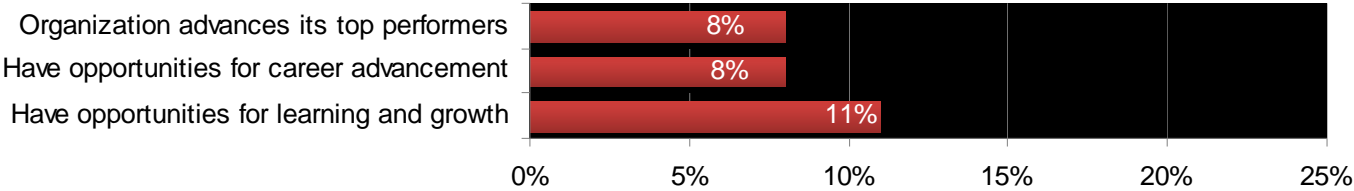


Job Attributes Importance Rankings: Age 50+



There were other slight differences prevalent among the age groups. Younger workers were less likely to view leadership and empowerment and control as important compared to their older counterparts. All age groups agree that rewards and recognition, immediate supervision, and training and skill development are not driving forces behind seeking a particular job.

Percentage Difference Between Younger Top Performers' Satisfaction & Middle-Aged Top Performers' Satisfaction

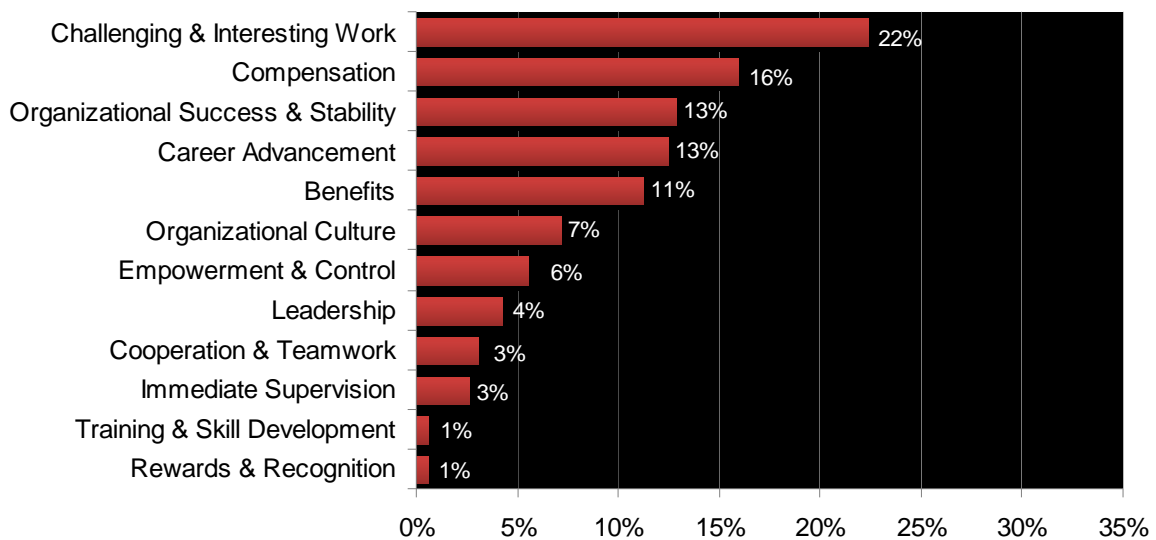


Younger top performers are more satisfied with their opportunities for advancement and learning and growth than middle-aged top performers by a sizable margin. This suggests that their satisfaction aligns with their importance rankings. There were no major differences in satisfaction between middle-aged and older top performers other than the fact that older workers appear to be somewhat more satisfied with their degree of autonomy and control on the job.

Job Type

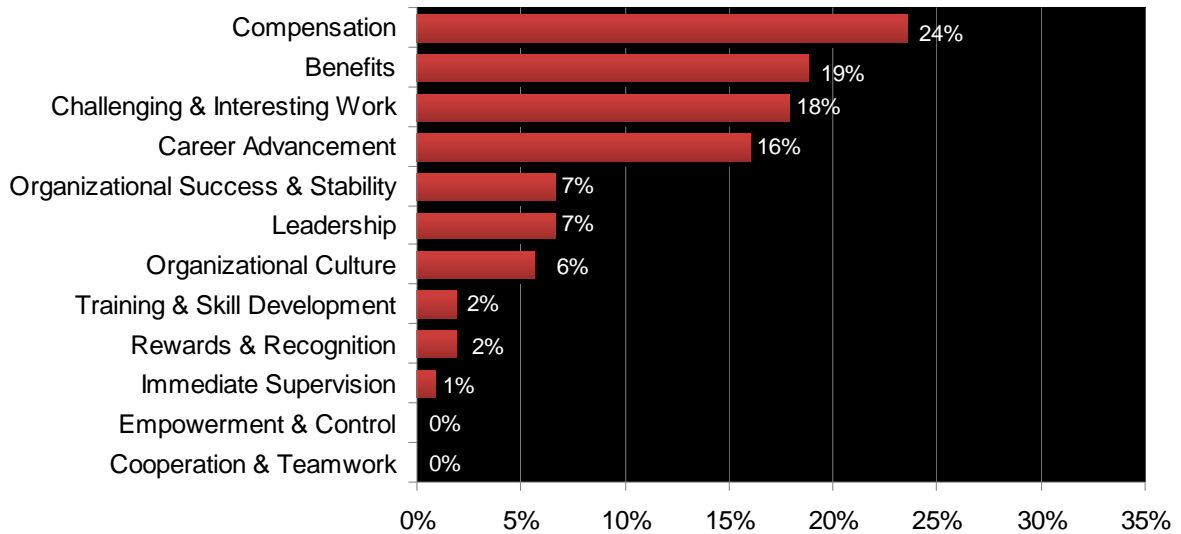
Top performers employed in management and professional occupations view challenging work, compensation, organizational success and stability, benefits, and career advancement as the most important job attributes. They were less likely to seek out rewards and recognition, training and skill development, immediate supervision, and cooperation and teamwork.

Job Attributes Importance Rankings: Management, Professional, & Related Occupations



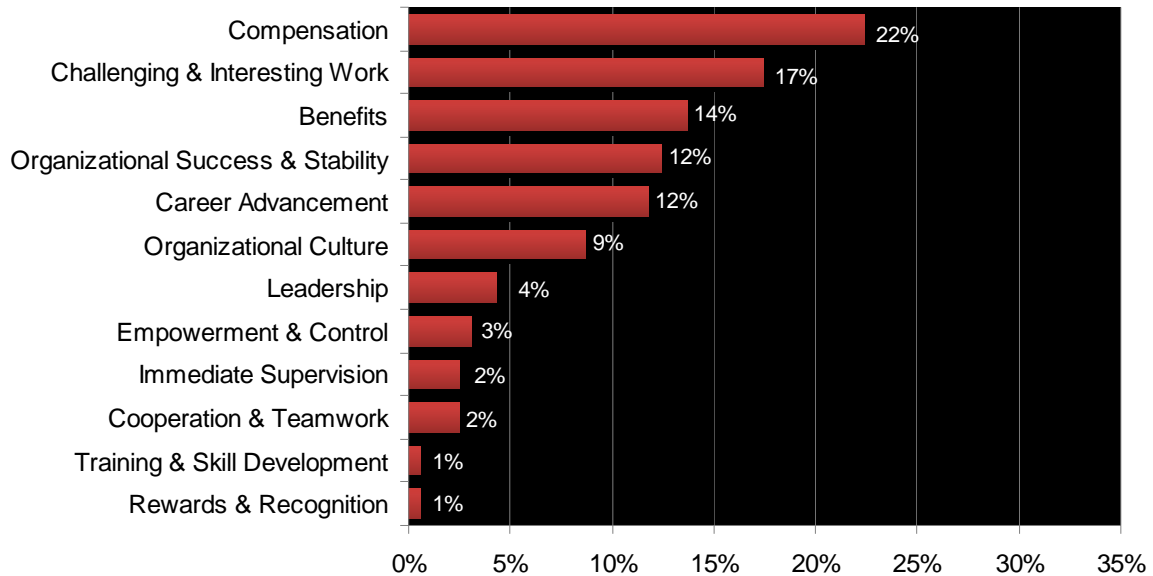
Those employed in service occupations view compensation, benefits, challenging and interesting work, and career advancement as the most important job attributes. They were less likely to seek out rewards and recognition, empowerment and control, immediate supervision, and cooperation and teamwork. Compensation is the most common job attribute selected by those in this field.

Job Attributes Importance Rankings: Service Occupations



Top performers in sales and office occupations commonly seek out compensation, challenging and interesting work, and benefits in jobs. Similar to other job groups, they are less likely to view training and skill development, rewards and recognition, and immediate supervision as the most important job attribute. Top performers in sales and office occupations tend to be more satisfied with their compensation and benefits than other job groups.

Job Attributes Importance Rankings: Sales & Office Occupations

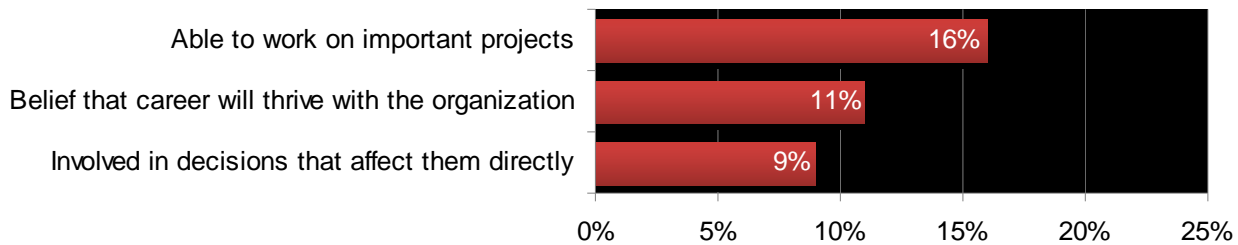


Top performers employed in management and professional occupations responded to statements regarding empowerment, challenging and interesting work, and career development more favorably than those employed in sales and office positions. Sixteen percent more top performers in management and professional occupations are able to work on important projects, 11% more believe that their career will thrive with the organization, and 9% more are involved in decisions that affect them directly.

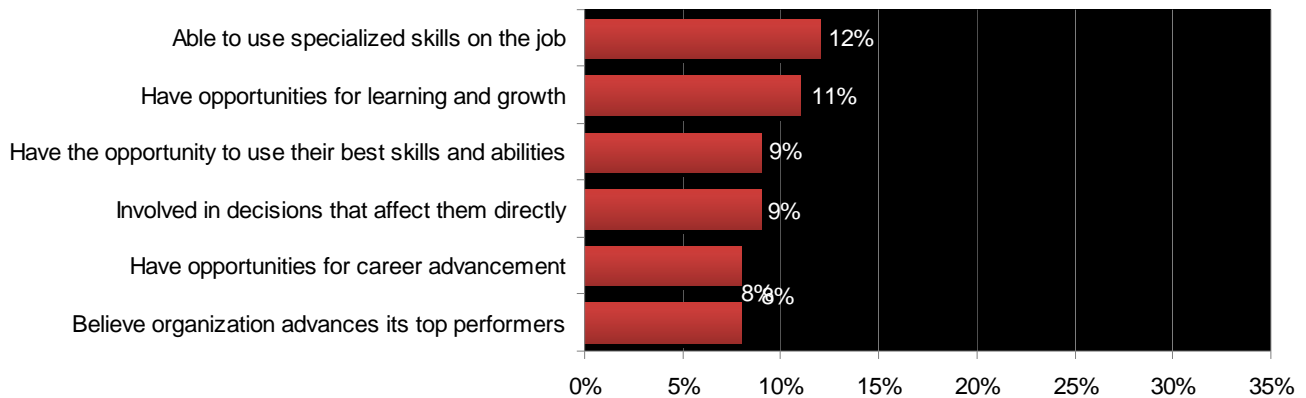
Top performers employed in production, transportation and material moving occupations were most interested in compensation, benefits, and career advancement. No top performer surveyed was interested in rewards and recognition, organizational culture, and leadership.

Top performers in management and professional occupations were more satisfied with their ability to work on important projects and are more involved in decisions that affect them directly. In addition, they believe that their career will thrive with the organization to a greater extent than those employed in service occupations.

Percentage Difference Between Satisfaction of Top Performers in Management & Professional Occupations & Satisfaction of Top Performers in Service Occupations

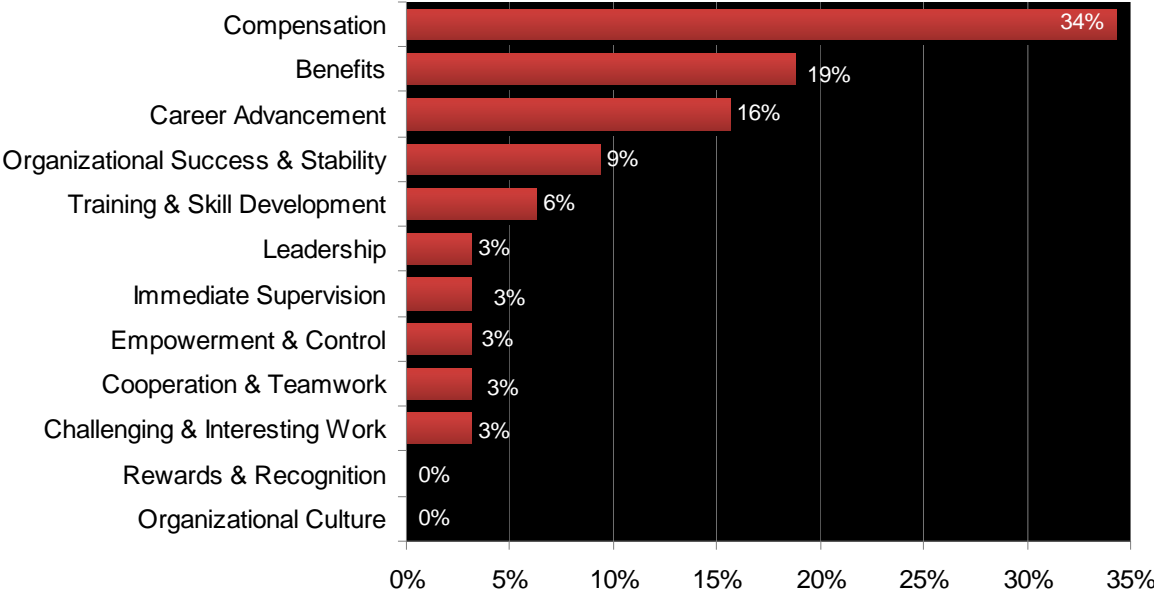


Percentage Difference Between Satisfaction of Top Performers in Management & Professional Occupations Versus Satisfaction of Top Performers in Sales Occupations



By a notable margin, top performers employed in production, transportation, and materials moving occupations seek out three primary job attributes: compensation, benefits, and career advancement. They are also the most satisfied with their compensation out of all occupations.

Job Attributes Importance Rankings: Production, Transportation & Materials Moving Occupations

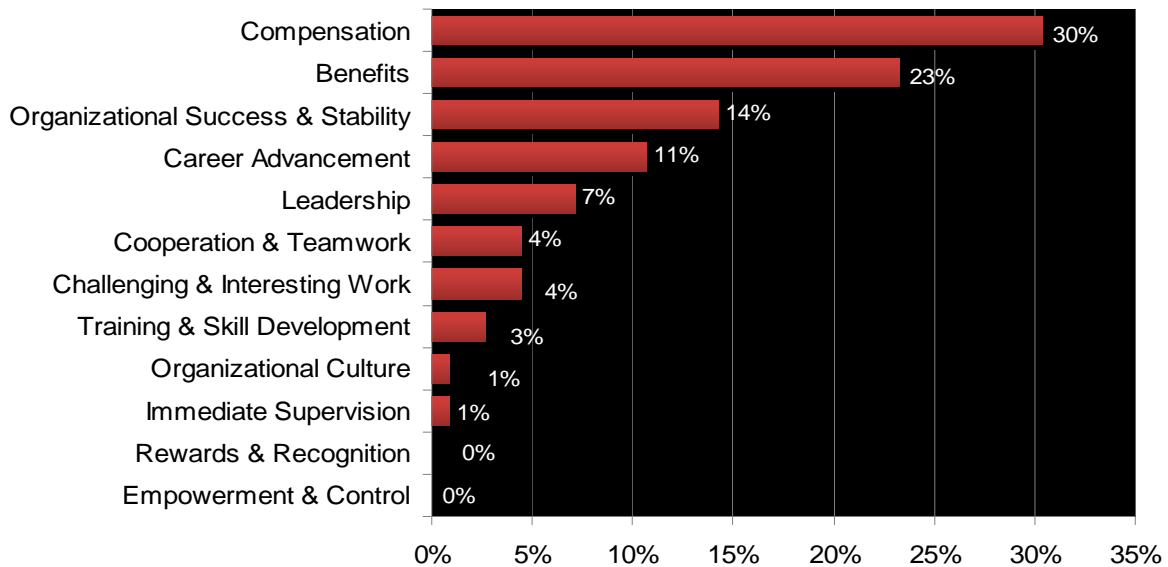


Education

Like other demographics, education plays a minimal role in preferences for job attributes. While slight differences are evident for each education level, top performers seem to want the same things: solid benefits, competitive compensation, opportunities for career advancement, challenging and interesting work, and to work for a stable and successful organization.

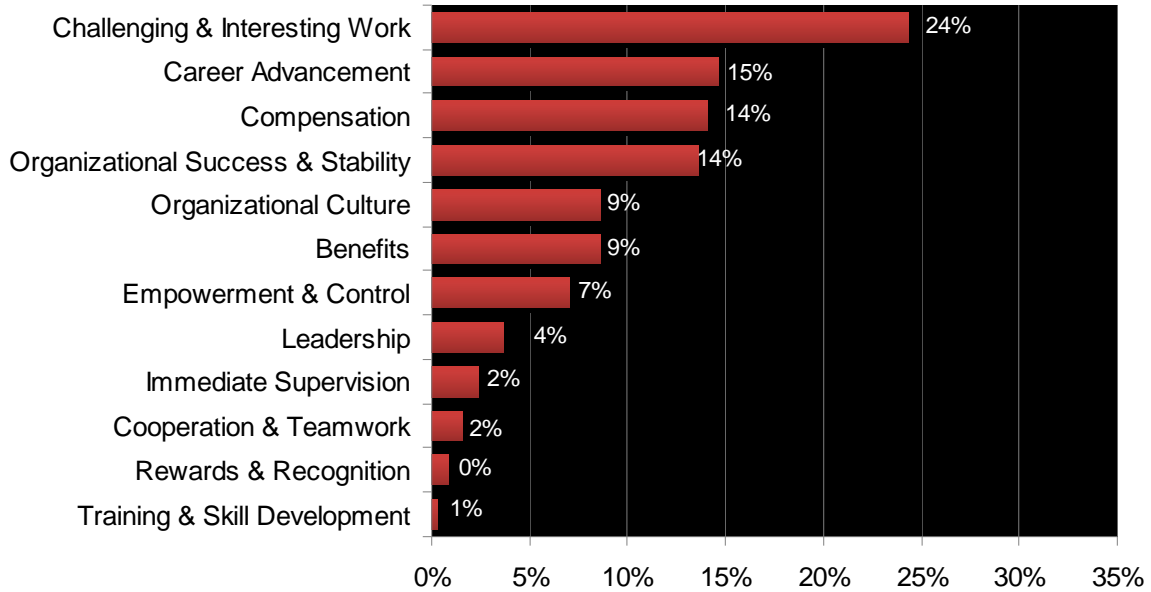
Top performers that are high school graduates seek out benefits and compensation to a greater degree than most other job attributes, however, career advancement and organizational success and stability are also important attributes that they look for in jobs. They were the least interested in challenging and interesting work.

Job Attributes Importance Rankings: High School Graduate



By comparison, top performers with Bachelor's degrees most commonly seek out challenging and interesting work, career advancement, and compensation. Benefits were presumably less important to this group compared to high school graduates while challenging and interesting work was more important to these top performers compared to high school graduates.

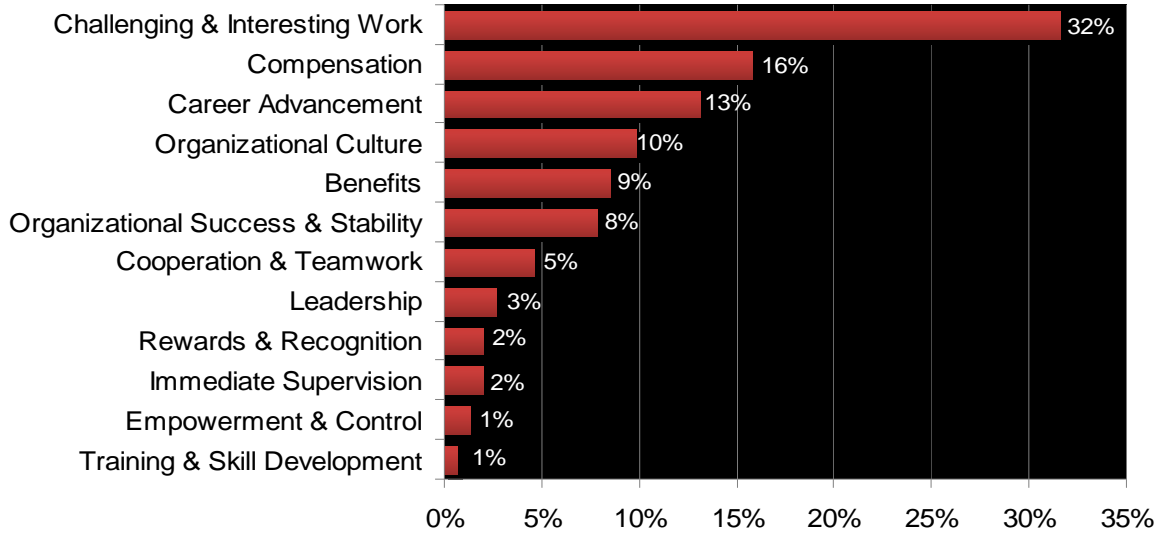
Job Attributes Importance Rankings: Bachelor's Degree



Those top performers with graduate or professional degrees most commonly selected challenging and interesting work, compensation, and career advancement. Challenging and interesting work was by far their most popular selection as the most important job attribute. They were least interested in training and skill development, empowerment and control, and rewards and recognition.

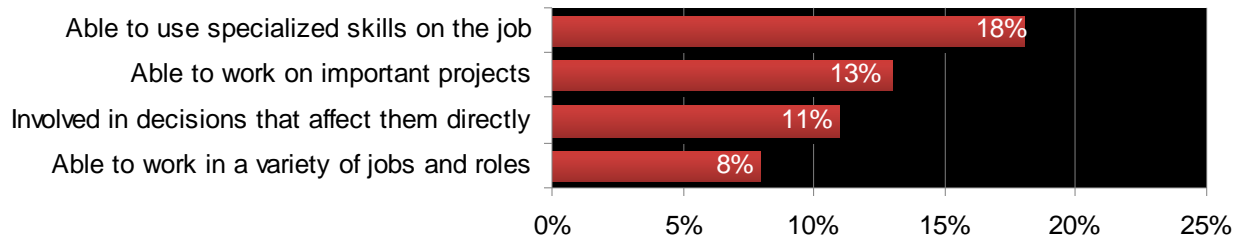
Overall, those top performers with higher education tended to seek out challenging and interesting work to a greater degree than those with high school education. They also exhibited less interest in organizational success and stability compared to those employees with Bachelor's degrees and high school diplomas.

Job Attributes Importance Rankings: Graduate/Professional Degree



There were no other significant differences between the top performers' level of education. Top performers with Bachelor's degrees were more likely to have more opportunities for empowerment, autonomy, and challenging and interesting work than those with only high school diplomas. While satisfaction didn't vary greatly amongst other aspects of their workplace, a significant higher percentage of top performers with Bachelor's degrees said they are able to use specialized skills on the job, able to work on important projects, were involved in decisions that affect them directly and able to work in a variety of jobs and roles. The only aspect in which top performers with high school diplomas rated significantly higher (20%) was that the training they received improved their job performance.

Percentage Difference Between Top Performers with High School Diplomas & Bachelors Degrees

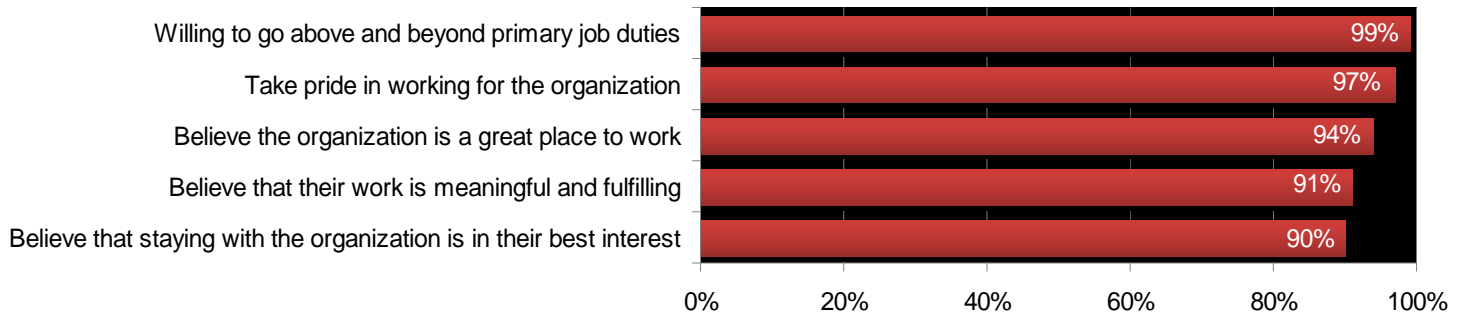


Top Performer Perspectives: What They Say About Their Workplaces

Top performers believe that staying with their organization is in their best interest. They also believe that the work they do is meaningful and fulfilling and that their organization is a great place to work. They are willing to go above and beyond their primary job duties and take pride in working for their respective organizations.

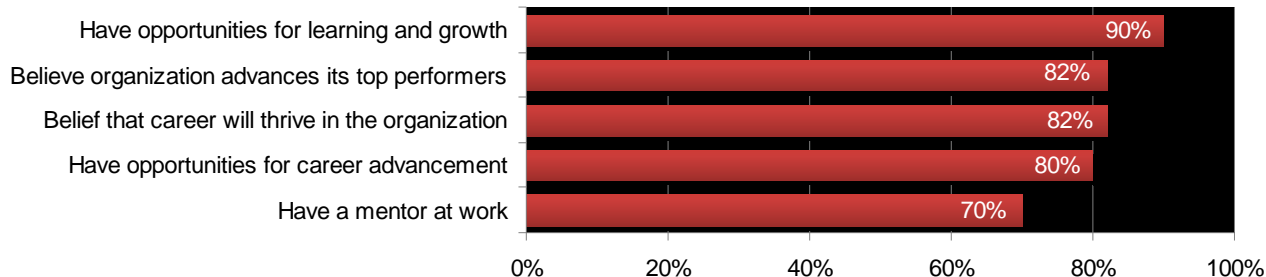
Over 90% of top performers show strong engagement in their organization. Nearly 100% are willing to go above and beyond their primary job duties and 97% take pride in working for their organization. Ninety-one percent of top performers believe that their work is meaningful and fulfilling.

Top Performer Perspectives: Employee Engagement



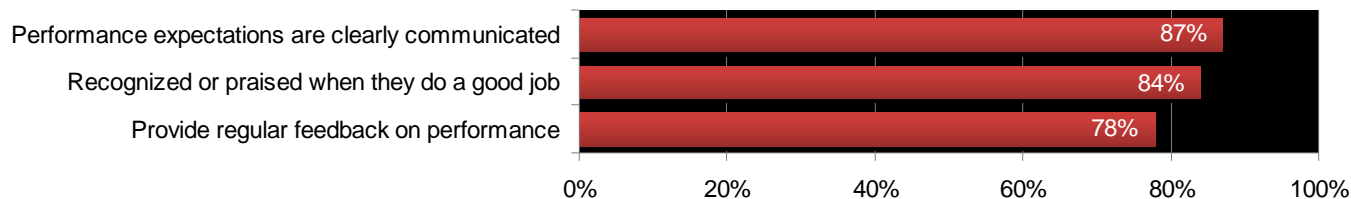
Top performers overwhelmingly have opportunities for learning and growth. They believe that their career will thrive in the organization and say that their organization advances its top performers. Eighty percent of top performers have opportunities for career advancement and 70% have mentors at work. Top performers were asked to rate their agreement with various items measuring workplace practices that lead to higher employee engagement.

Top Performer Perspectives: Career Development



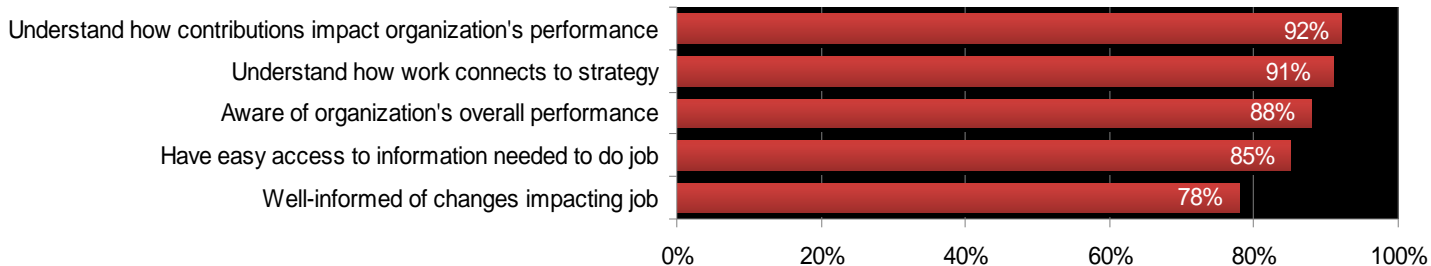
Eighty-four percent of top performers say that they are recognized or praised when they do a good job. In addition, they confirm that performance expectations are clearly communicated and they are provided regular performance feedback which signals that organizations are managing their top performers' performance with great care.

Top Performer Perspectives: Performance Management



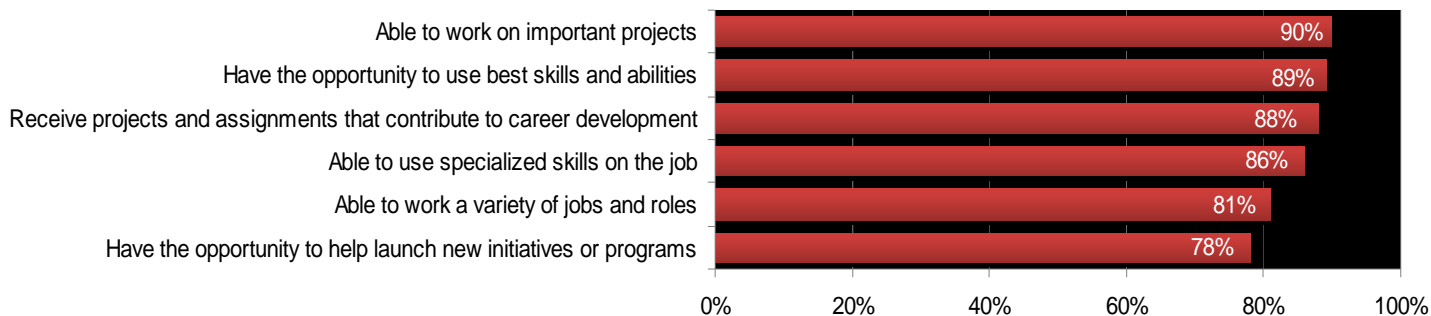
Top performers perceive excellent communication at their respective organizations. Over 90% understand how their contributions impact their organization's performance and have a clear understanding of how their work connects to the overall organizational strategy. Nearly 90% of top performers are aware of their organization's performance and have easy access to information needed to do their job. The least positively rated aspect of communication by top performers was being well-informed of changes impacting their job. Overall, however, top performers are quite satisfied with their organization's communication practices.

Top Performer Perspectives: Communication



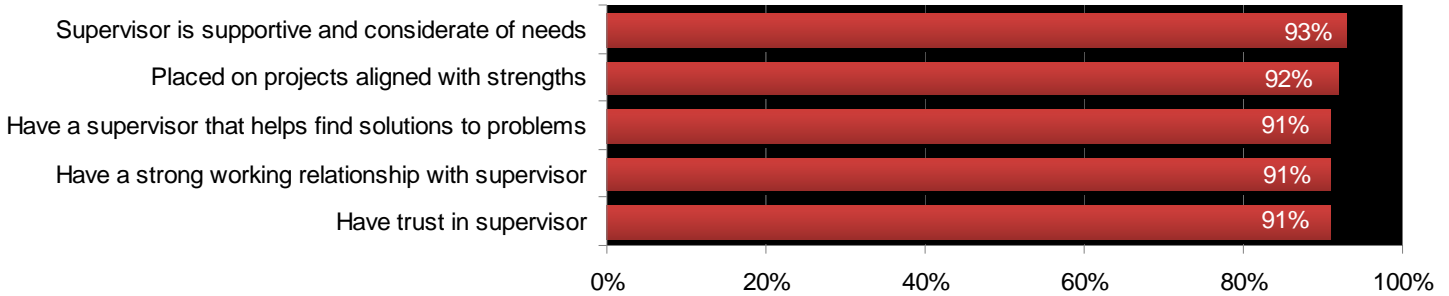
Top performers are incredibly challenged! Ninety percent report that they are able to work on important projects and 89% have the opportunity to use their best skills and abilities. In addition, over 80% of top performers receive projects and assignments that contribute to their career development, are able to use specialized skills on the job, and are able to work in a variety of jobs and roles. Fewer, however, have the opportunity to help launch new initiatives or programs.

Top Performer Perspectives: Challenging & Interesting Work



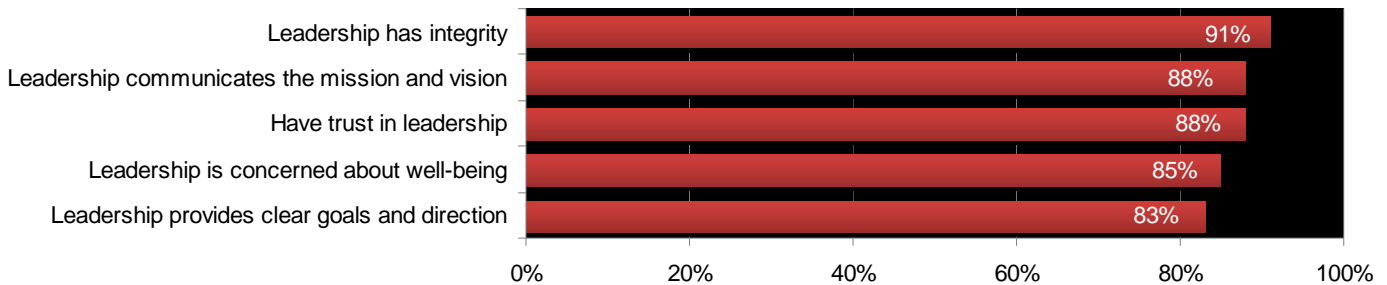
Aspects of supervision were among the most highly rated by top performers. Top performers believe that their supervision is excellent, reporting over 90% agreement with aspects related to their supervisory relations, including having a supervisor that is supportive and considerate of their needs, being placed on projects aligned with their strengths, having trust in their supervisor, having a strong working relationship with their supervisor, and having a supervisor that helps them find solutions to work problems.

Top Performer Perspectives: Supervision



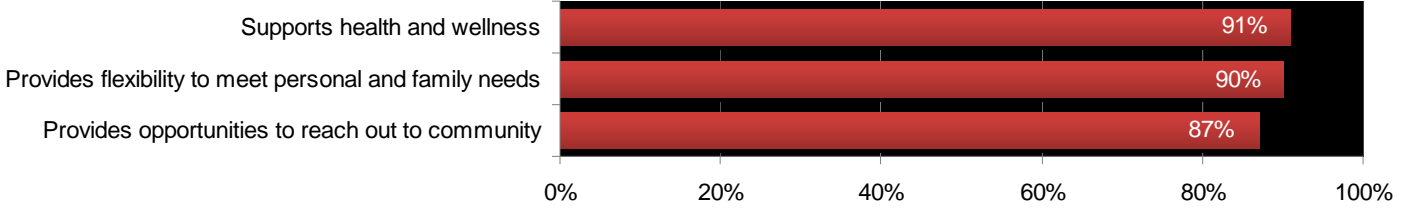
Leadership is highly regarded by top performers. Top performers say that their leadership team has integrity, communicates the mission and vision for the organization, is concerned about employee well-being, and provides clear goals and direction for the organization. In addition, top performers have a wealth of trust in their leadership.

Top Performer Perspectives: Leadership



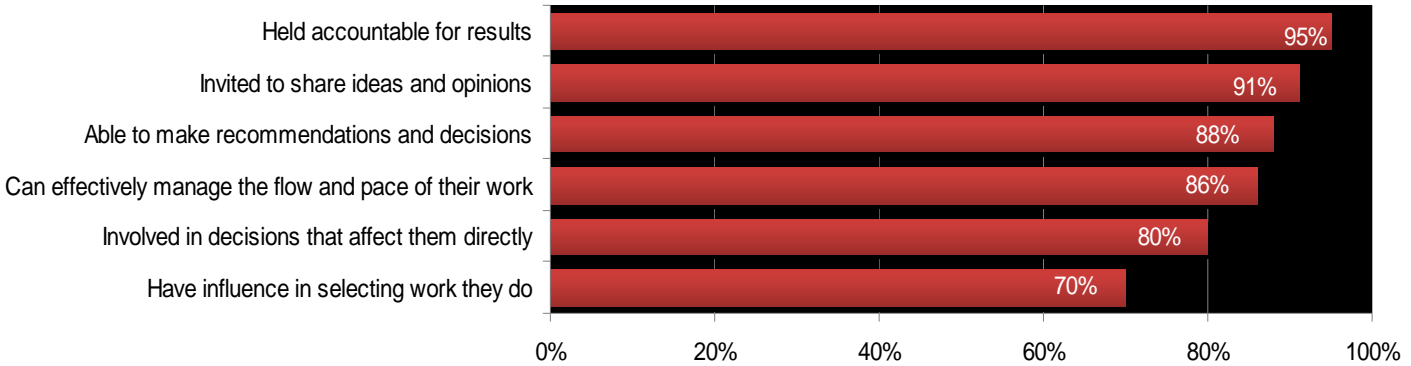
Top performers work at incredibly supportive organizations that support their health and wellness, provide flexibility to meet personal and family needs, and provide opportunities to reach out to the community. This suggests that organizations are supporting top performers' needs.

Top Performer Perspectives: Organizational Support



In terms of empowerment, top performers notoriously are held accountable for results, invited to share ideas and opinions, and able to make recommendations and decisions at work. Eighty-six percent say that they can effectively manage the flow and pace of their work. Fewer, however, have influence in selecting work they do and are involved in decisions that affect them. This reflects cultures nurturing top performer empowerment, autonomy, and control.

Top Performer Perspectives: Empowerment & Control



The Role of ERC

ERC uses the data and information obtained through this program to assist local organizations in developing programs that help them attract, retain, and motivate great employees. Best practices data are communicated and applied through speaking engagements, consulting projects, research, and training.

By helping organizations implement workplace best practices, ERC is helping to create a competitive advantage for area employers, allowing them to develop great jobs and attract and retain even better talent to the region. In this way, the NorthCoast 99 serves as a model for economic development.

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