

# Then And Now:

## How A Decade Changed The Workplace

### THE STATE OF HR: A TEN YEAR REVIEW OF SATISFACTION AND EMPLOYEE MANAGEMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

A lot has changed in the world these last ten years. We weathered the Great Recession. We experienced the universal adoption of mobile technology that has blurred the lines between work and personal life. We sorted out the details of universal health care ... mostly. Many companies banished the formal review and re-imagined the definition of an office altogether. And through it all, we watched society's most outrageous workplace moments play out in hilarious parody on *The Office*.

But just how have these events changed our work and personal lives? To answer this question, we took on the audacious task of reviewing specific research that examined the state of HR before this era began. After combing through the data to find the most representative results from 2006, we asked the same questions to a new group of working professionals in 2016. Our results revealed numerous insights into the state of HR today when it comes to employee satisfaction, electronic media usage in the workplace, workplace environment, and workplace stress and anxiety.

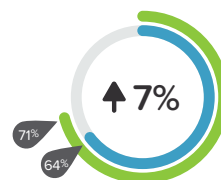
### Employee Satisfaction

While our results revealed that employees generally reported similar job satisfaction as they felt ten years ago, we uncovered some important distinctions in how employees view different aspects of their jobs. These aspects include leadership, meaningfulness, growth opportunities, loyalty, corporate recognition, and work-life balance. Generally, the results show that employees feel the workplace has become more employee-focused in the last last ten years.

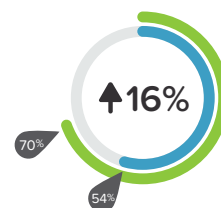
However, while employees may feel like their companies value their service, how their skills connect to their company's future success may not be as clear.

#### Key Findings:

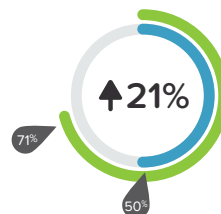
- Employee management is improving:
  - 2006
  - 2016



Today, 71 percent of employees either agree or strongly agree that the person they report to is an effective leader. That's an increase from 64 percent ten years ago.

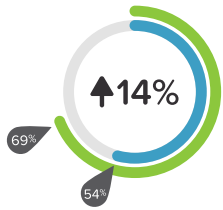


Seven out of ten employees feel like they are receiving meaningful recognition for their work—up 16 percent from 2006.

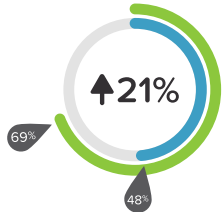


The most drastic increase in recognition was found among employees ages 40 to 50, where 21 percent more employees agree or strongly agree that they receive meaningful recognition for work well done.

- Employees see a brighter future with their companies:



An additional 14 percent of employees (two out of three employees total) agree or strongly agree that they have career growth opportunities with their employers.



Today, two out of three employees would also choose their current job over a similar job elsewhere, while less than half of employees surveyed ten years ago (48 percent) felt the same way.

- Employees feel more respect as individuals:

- ▶ 17 percent more employees (75 percent today) are satisfied with their workload.
- ▶ Eight percent more employees (73 percent today) feel like their company supports work/life balance.

- Employees are less connected to their companies:

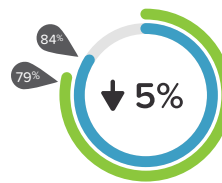
- ▶ Five percent fewer employees (79 percent today) feel like the job they are doing is a good fit for their skills and interests.
- ▶ Five percent fewer employees (83 percent today) said they know how their work helps their department achieve its goals.

## Workplace Environment

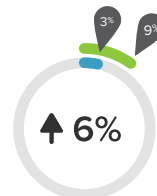
Workplace environment matters more to employers today than it did ten years ago, and employees are taking note. Employees have embraced a less traditional workplace, and they prefer environments that champion creativity and innovation. However, the results show that employees haven't quite left the office behind—they still overwhelmingly prefer working in an office to working remotely.

### Key Findings:

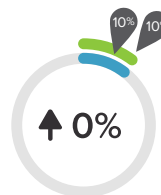
- Employers and employees seem to be paying more attention to workplace attributes:
  - ▶ Those who feel the quality of their work environment affects their job satisfaction has remained unchanged in the last ten years, at about nine out of ten employees.
  - ▶ 71 percent of employees today feel that creating a productive workplace is important to their employers—a dramatic increase from just one-third of employees ten years ago.
  - ▶ Perhaps as a result, 66 percent of all employees today (up from just 50 percent) feel that their current workplace design encourages creativity and innovation.
- Focusing on a productive workplace environment seems to encourage working away from home, either in an office or another remote location:



79 percent of employees today (down only five percent) still feel they accomplish their best work at the office.



This shift from office work favors remote work locations, like coffee shops and libraries (up to nine percent of employees from a mere three percent ten years ago).



Those who feel their best work is at home remains at about one in ten employees.

- However, even though employees may be accomplishing great work at the office, they don't feel like the great ideas that fuel that productivity come from their desks:
  - ▶ Ten years ago, half of all employees felt they developed their best ideas at their desks. Today, this is still the number one place for developing great ideas, but only 27 percent of employees favor it. Today, employees have a more diverse preference of places for finding inspiration:

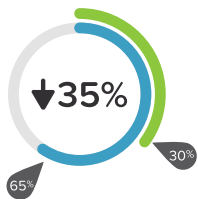
- ▶ 19 percent say while home, but not working.
- ▶ 11 percent say while at an informal office location, such as the breakroom, watercooler, a couch, or even a company retreat.
- ▶ Ten percent say while commuting to and from work.
- ▶ Nine percent say while working at home.
- ▶ Seven percent say while they are engaged in strenuous physical activity, such as running, while at the gym, doing yoga, or playing a competitive sport.

## Electronic Media Usage

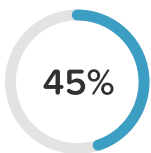
Now that employers have had ten more years to become familiar with mobile technology and social media, they seem to be easing up on previously strict electronic media policies and surveillance practices. With the expansion of mobile internet networks, employees have new routes for accessing the Internet, rendering many of the blocking programs ineffective in controlling Internet use. But these results also revealed that, while HR may have loosened up, employees may still be skeptical of their electronic independence on work computers or corporate wi-fi channels.

### Key Findings:

- Site blocking technology is on its way out:



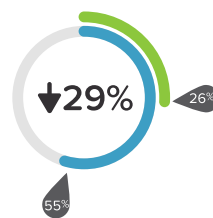
In 2006, nearly two out of three (65 percent) of companies used technology to block connections to banned websites. Today, fewer than one out of three (30 percent) HR professionals and members of management told us they do this.



However, nearly half of all employees (45 percent) who are not members of HR or management believe their companies block certain website connections.

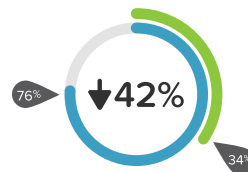
- Fewer employers use site monitoring:
  - ▶ In 2006, more than three out of four (76 percent) employers said they monitored employees' website connections instead of blocking them.
  - ▶ Today, just over one out of four members of HR and management (29 percent) reported they still do this.

- E-mail monitoring is way down:



Ten years ago, over half of employers (55 percent) said they monitored employee e-mails. Today, that number is cut in half, with only 26 percent of HR and management reporting that they keep an eye on employee emails.

- E-mail regulation policies have relaxed:



Ten years ago, employers thought that it was important to regulate e-mail usage—76 percent said their organizations had e-mail usage and content policies. Today, that number has decreased by more than half, with only 34 percent of companies reporting they have such policies.



# Workplace Stress and Anxiety

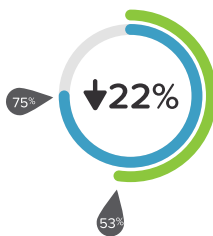
The previously mentioned updates to management style, employee recognition, and workplace environment may be alleviating some employee stress and anxiety. We asked our survey respondents to select the workplace factor(s) that caused stress and their response(s) to workplace stress. Overall, it appears that fewer people are experiencing daily stress and, for those who are, that stress is having a smaller impact. Stress and anxiety may also be coming from different places today.

## Key Findings:

- Employee stress has dropped considerably:



Far fewer employees today (just one in ten) are experiencing persistent stress or excessive anxiety in their daily lives than they did ten years ago (four in ten).



What's more, just over half (53 percent) of these employees say this daily stress they experience interferes with their lives at least moderately, while almost three-fourths of employees who experienced frequent stress in 2006 felt like it interfered with their daily lives.

- Leading causes of work-related stress have changed:

- ▶ 2016
  1. Dealing with issues/problems that arise
  2. Staff management
  3. Deadlines
  4. Interpersonal relationships
- ▶ 2006
  1. Deadlines
  2. Interpersonal relationships
  3. Staff management
  4. Dealing with issues/problems that arise

- Employees are dealing with their stress in different ways:

- ▶ Back in 2006, the top method for managing high levels of stress at work was to get more sleep (popular among 44 percent of employees), while today employees prefer to talk about it with family and friends (preferred by 42 percent of employees).
- ▶ Exercising more frequently has also become a more popular way to deal with stress, with one in three employees saying they use it to deal with stress (up five percent since 2006)
- ▶ Eating more has become drastically less popular today (17 percent) than it was ten years ago (36 percent).

## CONCLUSION

The research undertaken here clearly illustrates that the last ten years have changed us into a more employee conscious workplace. Our direct reports thrive because we create more stimulating workplace environments. We have a better understanding of their technological needs, and we exert less control over technology use. With greater satisfaction and less stress, our employees can accomplish greater work.

Our new challenge moving forward is to help each employee find the right seat on the bus—giving them a clear understanding of how their work makes a solid contribution toward accomplishing team goals. Providing this understanding can create a balanced workplace, one that is rewarding for both companies and employees.

## ABOUT THE RESEARCH

The June 2016 study collected responses from 1,049 professionals over the age of 18 who are employed by companies of more than 50 employees. This research was generated by BambooHR. 2006 data came from surveys conducted by the American Management Association, Gensler, the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, and the Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics.

[Satisfaction & Engagement: Northwest Territory Bureau of Statistics](#)

[Workplace Violence: Bureau of Labor Statistic one, Statistic two](#)

[Electronic Media Usage: American Management Association](#)

[Workplace Environment: Gensler](#)

[Workplace Stress & Anxiety: Anxiety and Depression Association of America](#)