

Press release

Swiss HR Barometer 2020

Job satisfaction decreases with digitisation

7 October 2020

This year's *Swiss HR Barometer* combines two major trends: digitisation, and an aging society. Almost 40 percent of those surveyed can imagine working beyond retirement age. Job satisfaction decreases as digitisation of an employee's tasks increases.

Digitisation and electronic monitoring

The respondents believed that employers in Switzerland are relatively open to new technologies: more than 74 percent of employees indicated that their employer is willing to use digital solutions. But at the same time, the more the company pushes digitisation, the lower the job satisfaction. Individual responsibility is playing an increasingly important role in the digitised working environment: 66% of those surveyed stated that they are "fully" or at least "somewhat" empowered by their superiors when it comes to independent decision making. On the other hand, the respondents also reported electronic monitoring by employers: 46% of them revealed, for instance, that the employer blocks access to certain web content, while 22 percent have their online activity monitored. 20 percent of the respondents reported that they accordingly feel that their privacy is compromised by their employer. The results suggest that employees feel less connected to their company if electronic monitoring is used too often.

Age stereotypes and digital self-efficacy

Prejudices against older employees appear to be widespread in companies in Switzerland: only slightly more than ten percent of employees have not witnessed any negative prejudices towards older employees at work. "There is considerable room for improvement here on the part of employers as well as managers and colleagues," says Gudela Grote, who led the study. Negative age stereotypes lead to a reduction in the digital self-efficacy of those affected, i.e. older employees tend to rate their ability to deal with digital technologies less highly. Prejudices against older workers also have a negative effect on the willingness to work beyond retirement age. Data from the *Swiss HR Barometer*

shows that in excess of 40 percent of those surveyed can imagine working longer and that this willingness can be actively fostered through e.g. “reverse mentoring”, where younger employees support older ones.

Differentiation between private and working life

Some 75 percent of those surveyed prefer a clear separation between work and private life. This finding is particularly topical in the current situation: many people still have limited access to their places of work and so work from home. The desire for differentiation is even more pronounced among older employees. At the same time, however, some 60 percent concede that, in reality, work and private life intermingle. “Employees, their superiors and HR managers need to ensure the existence of clear rules governing, for example, employee availability: these make it possible to establish boundaries between work and private life,” says Bruno Staffelbach.

Trends

The latest *HR Barometer* also looked at general trends in human resource management and their impacts. The researchers were surprised to find that employees are, on average, experiencing the same degree of job insecurity as two years ago. This is presumably because the survey happened at the same time as the lockdown due to the spread of Covid-19. Detailed analyses also show that there are major differences between sectors and that, for instance, job insecurity has risen in the hospitality industry. The fact that job satisfaction has increased and forms of dissatisfaction have almost consistently decreased also suggests that employees, currently at least, are relieved to be in work.

On the whole, as in previous years, the picture of human resource management is positive. That said, the weaknesses have not gone away: autonomy and participation need boosting, and the psychological contract should be rebalanced to encourage employees to professionalise on their own initiative and acquire the skills needed to support the digital transformation.

The eleventh edition of the *Swiss HR Barometer* is based on a representative survey of almost 2000 employees in German-, French- and Italian-speaking Switzerland. The survey started in mid-March 2020, just when the World Health Organisation (WHO) was classifying Covid-19 as a global pandemic; the lockdown was imposed soon after. Although the survey did not explicitly focus on the pandemic and its impact on the world of work, the data should be interpreted against this background.

The Swiss HR Barometer

The *Swiss HR Barometer* measures how employees in Switzerland experience their work situation. Amongst the topics surveyed are: mutual expectations and obligations of employees and employers as a component of the employment relationship (psychological contract); HR management practices such as working arrangements and staff development; management; job satisfaction; labour market skills; and career orientations. The study is published on a regular basis by Gudela Grote, professor of Work and Organisational Psychology at the ETH Zurich, and Bruno Staffelbach, Head of the Centre for Human Resource Management at the University of Lucerne, in cooperation with the University of Zurich.

The *HR Barometer 2020* is based on a survey of 1995 employees selected from the sample frame register of the Federal Statistical Office. The focal topic of the latest issue is "Digitisation and generations". The survey took place in the German-, French- and Italian-speaking regions of Switzerland between March and May 2020.

The *HR Barometer 2020* was published with the support of the Swiss National Science Foundation.

The report can be downloaded at: www.hrbarometer.ch →

Bibliographical references

Gudela Grote and Bruno Staffelbach (editors): *Swiss HR Barometer 2020: digitisation and generations*. Zurich 2020. Universities of Lucerne and Zurich and ETH Zurich. ISBN 978-3-033-08125-3

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