Employee Happiness and Engagement: Burlington Public Library & Fraser Valley Regional Library

Prepared for the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC)
Principal Investigator: Kimberly Silk, MLS

Figure 1: Burlington Public Library and Fraser Valley Regional Library
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Executive Summary

This study was commissioned by the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) in spring 2015 as one a series of three research studies. This study explores the conditions for promoting employee engagement in a library setting.

Key Findings

- Employee happiness and satisfaction is not the same as employee engagement. Happier workers may benefit an organization, but the real goal of employee engagement is improved business outcomes. Engaged employees contribute to the economic health of their organization in ways that other employees do not.

- Employees want to be engaged in and challenged by their work, feel they are moving up in the organization, and that their hard work is recognized and rewarded.

- Employees want their co-workers to be competent and properly trained, so they can rely on each other to perform their duties.

- Engaged employees speak positively about the organization to co-workers, potential employees and customers.

- Engaged employees have an intense sense of belonging and desire to be part of the organization.

- Engaged employees are motivated and exert effort toward success in their job and for the organization.

- In Canada, the dimensions that are most effective for driving employee engagement are:
  - Rewards and Recognition
  - Employee Value Proposition
  - Enabling Infrastructure
  - Career Opportunities.
Acknowledgements

Brightsail wishes to acknowledge the generous and enthusiastic participation of the two library systems who co-conducted this research project:

- Maureen Barry, CEO, and Linda Dobson, Director of Staff Development and Support, at Burlington Public Library.

- Scott Hargrove, CEO, and Cathy Wurtz, Director of Organizational Development, at Fraser Valley Regional Library.

Sincere thanks as well to Plasticity Labs, who spent time with the principal investigator to discuss their platform.
Background and Context

The Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) is a membership-supported organization made up of Canadian libraries serving urban regions with populations of 100,000 or more. CULC is committed to the strengthening of vibrant urban communities through building the capacity of Canada’s urban libraries.

In spring 2015, CULC members participated in a brainstorming session to discuss recent library impact research studies, and to discover what topics to explore in further research. At the end of the session, the members identified three priority areas:

1. Determining how library space is used;
2. The impact of the library in addressing community unemployment;

CULC member libraries volunteered to participate in the research project that would provide the most benefit to their community. Each of the three studies and their findings are described in individual reports.

This report describes the approach, methodology and findings for the research project exploring the factors that influence employee happiness and engagement in the workplace.
Introduction

In the 21st century, successful organizations place a high priority on creating a workplace where employees are engaged. The old-fashioned command-and-control approach to management is long dead; focusing on human development and creating a supportive, growth-oriented environment is what employees require today. Engaged employees are passionate, more productive, and provide better customer service. In a library environment, where providing an outstanding “customer experience” is paramount, investing in employee engagement is critical to raising the value of the library in the eyes of the community.

Employee attitudes and expectations are evolving in terms of what they are looking for in a job. They want their work to have purpose and meaning, they want to apply their talents, improve upon their strengths, and learn new skills. They want to know that the hours they spend working makes a difference, and that their coworkers recognize and value their contribution. They won’t settle for just any job; they will hold out for an employer whose mission and culture aligns with their own values.

The competition for talented, skilled workers continues to increase. Organizations must adapt to the needs of the modern employee to retain and attract the best talent.

A significant body of literature, both academic and professional, is established on the topic of employee engagement. This research study draws on this body of literature, and contributes to it. The findings described in this study, based on employee surveys from two urban library systems in Canada, will benefit CULC member libraries, as well as libraries serving populations of various sizes around the world.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine what conditions need to be present for employees to experience happiness, satisfaction and engagement in the workplace.

Two library systems participated in this study: Burlington Public Library and Fraser Valley Regional Library.

Research Question

For this study, we posed the following research question:

- What conditions need to be present to achieve employee happiness and engagement in a public library setting?

Research Team

The research project was a collaborative effort among representatives from both library systems and the principal investigator:

- Kimberly Silk, Principal Consultant, Brightsail (Principal Investigator)
- Maureen Barry, CEO, Burlington Public Library
- Linda Dobson, Director of Staff Development and Support, Burlington Public Library
- Scott Hargrove, CEO, Fraser Valley Regional Library
- Cathy Wurtz, Director of Organizational Development, Fraser Valley Regional Library

Both libraries agreed to share their employee survey results for this project.
Study Methodology

The methodology for this research study includes the following components:

**Literature Review**

An environmental scan of scholarly and professional literature was done to explore current thinking and best practices regarding creating work environments that promote and sustain employee happiness and engagement.

Summaries of the literature reviewed for this study are compiled in Appendix A: Annotated Bibliography.

**Employee Surveys**

Burlington Public Library and Fraser Valley Regional Library have each implemented survey instruments to measure employee happiness, engagement and satisfaction.

**Burlington Public Library**

Burlington Public Library works with Plasticity Labs\(^1\), a Canadian company that offers a survey and employee engagement platform to measure workplace culture, employee well-being, and performance. Plasticity’s Hero Survey measures the factors that are consistently linked to how people are able to succeed psychologically, socially and emotionally in their workplace. Factors include these workplace outcomes:

- Happiness
- Engagement
- Sense of Community
- Inspiration
- Satisfaction – current, past and future
- Trust

\(^1\) [Plasticity Labs](#)
• Stress
• Likeliness to recommend your workplace to others

Additional factors include these emotional intelligence outcomes:
• Hope
• Efficacy
• Resilience
• Optimism
• Gratitude
• Emotional control

Plasticity provides 3-month and 6-month reports that use heat maps and graphs to show aggregated departmental and organizational responses to each outcome, and how the outcomes have changed over time.

Reports between November 2015 and March 2016 were analyzed for this study.

**Fraser Valley Regional Library**

Fraser Valley Regional Library (FVRL) worked with Aon Hewitt², a global firm that provides human resources advisory services. FVRL applied Aon Hewitt’s Model of Employee Engagement through the Employee Engagement Check-Up survey, deployed in October 2012.

The Model of Employee Engagement includes a number of Engagement Outcomes:
• Engaged employees speak positively about the organization to coworkers, potential employees and customers;
• Engaged employees have an intense sense of belonging and desire to be part of the organization;
• Engaged employees are motivated and exert effort toward success in their job and for the company.

² Aon Hewitt’s [Model of Employee Engagement](#)
The survey asks employees to respond to questions about engagement, corporate social responsibility, their direct managers, and senior managers. These results are then benchmarked against an aggregated sample of responses from Aon Hewitt’s database of the best small and medium employers (BSMEs) for that year.
Community Profiles

Public libraries are deeply integrated with their communities. To understand the people who use and work at the libraries in this study, it’s helpful to understand the communities the libraries serve.

City of Burlington

The City of Burlington is a mid-sized city situated on the shores of Lake Ontario, between Toronto to the east, and Hamilton to the west. With a population of 183,000 in 2016, Burlington’s key employment sectors are advanced manufacturing, finance and business services, information and communication technology, and life and earth sciences.

In terms of demographics, Burlington residents are predominantly Canadian citizens, with approximately 5% of residents having citizenship other than Canadian. The majority (90%) of Burlington residents speak only English. Burlington has an unemployment rate of 3%, with an average 2015 total income of $60,898.

The Burlington Public Library (BPL) system consists of a central library and six neighbourhood branches.

Sources: Burlington Economic Development Corporation; Statistics Canada’s 2016 Census Profile for Burlington, Ontario; Burlington Public Library.

Fraser Valley Regional District

The Fraser Valley Regional District is located in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, east of Vancouver, and consists of six municipalities: Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Harrison Hot Springs, Hope, Kent and Mission. Together, these municipalities are home to over 280,000 residents.

The key employment sectors in the Fraser Valley Region have long been focused on agriculture and forestry, and
have expanded to include manufacturing, aerospace, service and high-tech fields.

In terms of demographics, Fraser Valley District residents are predominantly Canadian citizens, with approximately 6% of residents having citizenship other than Canadian. 7% of the population identify as Aboriginal persons. The majority (92%) of residents speak only English. The district has an unemployment rate of 7.1%, with an average total income of $40,277.

The Fraser Valley District Library system consists of an Administration Centre in Abbotsford, and 25 branches serving 14 communities.

Sources: Fraser Valley Regional District; Statistics Canada’s 2016 Census Profile for Fraser Valley Regional District; Fraser Valley Regional Library.
Findings

Literature Review Analysis

A review of scholarly and professional literature was done to explore current thinking and best practices regarding creating work environments that promote and sustain employee happiness and engagement.

Summaries of the literature reviewed for this study are compiled in Appendix A: Annotated Bibliography.

Trends:

- Employees want to be engaged in and challenged by their work. They want to feel they are moving up in the organization, and that their hard work is recognized and rewarded;
- Employees value feeling competent and being properly trained, and they want their co-workers to be competent and properly trained, so they can rely on each other to perform their duties;
- While salary and benefits are important extrinsic factors which lead to happiness and satisfaction, these are less important in comparison to intrinsic factors – feeling accomplished, being trained to do the job well, and working with others who value the same things.

Survey Analysis

Due to the different methodologies used by Plasticity for Burlington Public Library and by Aon Hewitt for Fraser Valley Regional Library, these two instruments cannot be effectively compared. In addition, employee responses at Burlington Public Library are gathered daily and aggregated over a 3- and 6-month period; the employee responses to the survey deployed at Fraser Valley Regional Library was gathered once, representing a snapshot in time.
Plasticity Labs uses the following Workplace Outcomes and Emotional Intelligence indicators to measure the psychological, emotional and social factors that are linked to happiness and satisfaction.

**Workplace Outcomes indicators:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Survey Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>How happy are you today?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>How often do you feel engaged in your job?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Community</td>
<td>There is a sense of community among my co-workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiration</td>
<td>How often does your job inspire you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>How happy are you with your job?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predicted Satisfaction</td>
<td>In three months, how happy do you think you will be with your job?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Satisfaction</td>
<td>How happy were you with your job three months ago?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>I feel a strong sense of trust with the people at my company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>I find my job really stresses me out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Promoter Score</td>
<td>How likely are you to recommend your workplace to others as a great place to work? (Scored on a 0-10-point scale)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Emotional intelligence indicators:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Survey Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>No matter what happens, I feel that everything’s going to be okay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy</td>
<td>I’m confident that I can solve most problems if I really try.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trait</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>When something bad happens, I’m able to quickly bounce back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>I usually expect the best.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HERO Aggregate</td>
<td>The average score of Hope, Efficacy, Resilience and Optimism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gratitude</td>
<td>There is so much about my job to be grateful for.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional control</td>
<td>People can change their emotions if they try.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Trends:**

Using the “Happiness” outcome as the primary comparator, Figure 2 shows the positive and negative correlations between happiness and other workplace outcomes:

- There is a positive correlation between happiness and engagement, inspiration, and Net Promoter Score.

- While there is a negative correlation between happiness and sense of community over 3 months, the correlation becomes positive over 6 months. This change may indicate that a feeling of community takes longer to establish and benefit from.

- While current and previous satisfaction over a 3- and 6-month period are positively correlated with happiness, predicted satisfaction over a 3-month period is negatively correlated with happiness. This may indicate an employee’s lack of optimism about the future of their job.

- While there is a positive correlation between happiness and trust over a 3-month period, it changes to a negative correlation over a 6-month period. Looking at more data over a longer period of time would provide more insight on this pattern.
Unsurprisingly, there is a negative correlation between happiness and stress, which increases over a 6-month period.

Figure 2: Happiness Correlations
Fraser Valley Regional Library

Fraser Valley Regional Library applied Aon Hewitt’s Model of Employee Engagement to measure employee engagement in October 2012.

The survey asks employees to respond to questions about how they perceive their level of engagement, their perspective on the organization’s approach to corporate social responsibility, and their view on whether their direct managers and senior management successfully engage them. These results are then benchmarked against an aggregated sample of responses from Aon Hewitt’s database of the best small and medium employers (BSMEs) for that year. The scores for the organization are provided with the benchmarks, so that organizations can judge how they are faring in comparison to the best employers of comparable size.

While the responses to the Fraser Valley Regional Library survey are confidential, examining this model is useful in understanding what workplace conditions promote employee engagement.

Defining Employee Engagement

Aon Hewitt defines employee engagement as “the level of an employee’s psychological investment in their organization.” The firm asserts that employee engagement is not to be confused with employee happiness or satisfaction.

The Model of Employee Engagement measures employee engagement using a ‘Say, Stay, Strive’ definition; from each definition, two statements are presented to the employee to score:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Say</th>
<th>Engaged employees speak positively about the organization to coworkers, potential</th>
<th>I would not hesitate to recommend this organization to a friend seeking employment.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

3 Source: Aon Hewitt (2017) *2017 Trends in Global Employee Engagement*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>employees and customers.</th>
<th>Given the opportunity, I tell others great things about working here.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stay</td>
<td>Engaged employees have an intense sense of belonging and desire to be part of the organization.</td>
<td>It would take a lot to get me to leave this organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I rarely think about leaving this organization to work somewhere else.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strive</td>
<td>Engaged employees are motivated and exert effort toward success in their job and for the company.</td>
<td>This organization inspires me to do my best work every day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This organization motivates me to contribute more than is normally required to complete my work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to measuring employee engagement, Aon Hewitt adds the following additional engagement drivers for employees to score.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manager</th>
<th>My manager sets clear goals</th>
<th>My manager provides feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My manager recognizes efforts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Coworkers work together</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coworkers share best practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good cooperation between departments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Leadership</td>
<td>Senior leadership communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior leadership is accessible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior leadership provides clear direction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>Performance impacts pay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Paid fairly  
I receive recognition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enablement</th>
<th>Required staffing levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tools and resources support productivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work processes support productivity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning &amp; Development</th>
<th>Support for learning and development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity to gain new skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career opportunities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on extensive research and testing, Aon Hewitt states that these engagement outcomes will lead to the following business outcomes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Talent</th>
<th>Retention, absenteeism, wellness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Operational</td>
<td>Productivity and safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer</td>
<td>Satisfaction, Net Promoter Score (NPS), retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>Revenue/sales growth, operating income/margin, total shareholder return</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Global Trends:**

Aon Hewitt publishes an annual report on trends in Global Employee Engagement, based on the aggregate findings from worldwide implementations of the Model of Employee Engagement. In addition to employee engagement, the study measures these work experiences: Employee Value Proposition (EVP), Reputation, Career Opportunities, Collaboration, Diversity and Inclusion, Empowerment/Autonomy, Enabling Infrastructure, Learning and Development, Manager, Performance Management, Rewards and Recognition, Senior Leadership, Talent and Staffing, Work Fulfillment, and Work/Life Balance.
The 2017\textsuperscript{4} report provides the following findings:

- At a global level, employee engagement peaked in 2015 at 65%, and dropped in 2016 to 63%; 2016 engagement is still higher in comparison to 2011-2014.

- At a global level, the top opportunities for increasing employee engagement are:
  - Rewards and Recognition
  - Employee Value Proposition
  - Senior Leadership
  - Career Opportunities
  - Enabling Infrastructure

- In North America, where employee engagement is at 64%, the top opportunities for increasing employee engagement are:
  - Enabling Infrastructure
  - Employee Value Proposition
  - Rewards and Recognition
  - Senior Leadership
  - Performance Management

- In Canada, employee engagement is at 70%, an increase from 69% in 2015. The dimensions that improved the most in terms of driving employee engagement are:
  - Rewards and Recognition
  - Employee Value Proposition
  - Enabling Infrastructure
  - Career Opportunities

\textsuperscript{4} Source: Aon Hewitt (2017) \textit{2017 Trends in Global Employee Engagement}
Concluding Remarks

The benefit of this study, which explores best practices for increasing employee happiness and satisfaction, is that it adds to the existing and growing body of research that explores how to improve conditions in the workplace. For libraries and many other knowledge organizations, human capital is a significant investment; investing in increasing the engagement of employees is likely to result in higher employee retention, employees who are loyal and invested in the success of the organization, and an improved patron experience.

The challenge in conducting this study was in analyzing and interpreting two different approaches and methodologies for measuring employee happiness and engagement. While useful trends from these two approaches have been identified, applying a single, consistent methodology for any kind of measurement across multiple organizations is worth consideration. Applying consistent methodologies, over a period of time, will produce valuable longitudinal data that can be compared and aggregated across library systems.

Ideally, research informs library practice, and provides data-driven evidence to help anticipate and meet patron expectations. Library practice is not limited to the programs and services designed for our patrons; equally important is how to design the work environment to promote employee engagement.
Appendix A: Annotated Bibliography

**Library Environments**


This article outlines the conditions that need to be present to create happy, motivated and engaged employees in a law library setting. Four factors were focused on: culture, work-life balance, engagement, compensation and growth opportunities, and support and resources. The development of positive work culture through the presence of respect, communication, transparency and trust will allow employees to feel engaged in their work setting and among their work peers. Additionally, autonomy and freedom encourage innovation and creativity among employees to engage them in their work and feel a sense of purpose and contribution. Work-life balance refers to the scheduling of employees into the usually long hours of library operation. The development of flexible and fair schedules that still support the operations of the library are recommended. Engagement refers to communication and feedback. Consistent and positive communication to staff who are working hard and performing well is necessary as well as constructive feedback to encourage any changes in behaviour or work habits. Meetings, committees and teams are suggested to engage all employees. In meetings, it is recommended to have all employees summarize what they are working on and encourage an exchange of ideas among everyone. Further, it is suggested to have a rotation of all employees run each meeting. Compensation refers to not only salary but also benefits and other perks, however small they may be (ex. free coffee, workshops, etc.). Growth opportunities are important as employees will feel frustrated and dissatisfied if they feel they aren’t moving up.
Understanding and showing you understand an employee’s goals and strengths. Further the development of leadership and/or skills through training, rotational leadership and job shadowing is recommended. Support and resources refers to the proper amount of people and the necessary resources (ex. technology, etc.) needed for each employee to do their job properly without being overwhelmed.


This paper outlines results of a study that examined job satisfaction among the employees of two different academic libraries in Bangladesh: Rajshahi University library and Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology library. The staff examined were professionals, possessing a degree in library science or other field; paraprofessionals, those who held a certificate in library science; and non-professionals, those who performed office assistance duties. The study looked to understand satisfaction based on eight dimensions: work environment, wages, promotion, supervision, nature of the job, training facilities, library rules and regulations, and social status based on the respondents’ answers to a questionnaire and an interview. It was found that employees of these libraries were not very satisfied with their job for a variety of reasons, including: competencies of staff and staff training, salary, promotion opportunities, facilities, lack of IT facilities (especially in a technologically advancing environment). Based on these findings eight recommendations were made. First, professional staff must possess a graduate or postgraduate degree in library science to be considered eligible for the job. Second, a salary similar to other category jobs must be offered and increase with qualification and experience. Third, promotions need to be easier to obtain and become a more regular occurrence. Fourth, evaluation methods should be created and adopted to assess these employees
for promotions. Fifth, adequate training needs to be provided after recruitment. Sixth, IT training must be available to necessary employees when new technology is installed. Seventh, job security needs to be increased. Last, develop motivational programs to highlight the social value of the job in order to engage employees and encourage the younger generation to join this profession.


This journal article presents the results of a study done in public libraries throughout Botswana. The study examined the qualities necessary to provide effective delivery of library and information services as well as the necessary motivational circumstances for staff to provide this level of service. The purpose of the study was to develop a more strategic model for human resource development with the lack of funds these public libraries have. A structured questionnaire using a five point Likert scale was used to gather data on the library staff’s perception of the importance of certain attributes to strategic human resource management. The aim of this study was to determine an effective and strategic model for human resource development in order to enhance the delivery of library services in Botswana. The overarching finding was that if an employee is satisfied in their position they will offer the conditions conducive to a productive library. These conditions were found to be: enthusiasm, positive attitude, innovative thinking, and commitment. The key factors to build and maintain employee satisfaction were: a sense of achievement and staff recognition (through employee reward systems), job security, career development, performance feedback, effective communication, good salary, clear job description, staff training, etc. In order for these libraries to function to their fullest potential and have an opportunity to grow, the staff need to feel satisfied and for these employees to be satisfied working conditions need to include: stability,
reward, recognition, learning, development and communication.


This study examined the job satisfaction of 49 academic library employees from university libraries across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan using Spector’s Job Satisfaction scale. Using Spector’s scale 7 attributes were examined using a Likert scale. These attributes were: pay, promotion, supervision, benefits, contingent rewards, nature of work and communication. The results of the study showed these employees were slightly satisfied with their benefits, promotion chances, pay and communication within the library but were unsatisfied with the nature of work, supervision and cognitive rewards. Based on these findings this article outlines 7 recommendations to improve employee job satisfaction and overall happiness. These included: improvement to pay scales, quick transition of employees (fill vacant positions fast) to reduce workload, reward employees, allow more autonomy, provide opportunities to improve qualifications, and training for staff to remain knowledgeable in a digital age, and implement a policy to improve satisfaction. These findings help to show that even if employees are satisfied with pay, benefits and promotion opportunities, they may still be unsatisfied with the nature of their work, including how challenged they feel and if they feel burdened due to a lack of staff, as well as training opportunities to grow and expand their knowledge.

Amy Buckner Chowdhry co-founded the company AnswerLab, which credits their high employee retention rate to employee happiness. This article outlines 4 suggestions she has to help boost employee happiness. The first, think about their career, suggests an individual approach to each employee to help them understand the future opportunities they have with the company or organization. Second, encourage learning, suggests allowing employees to learn about and experience the product, service, technology, etc. the company or organization is promoting. For example, AnswerLab gives employees $400 to spend on a new technology product of their choice. Third, promote wellness, suggests promoting a healthy and balanced way of life to keep staff feeling good. Lastly, help them give back, suggests promoting community involvement or charitable giving of employees, either as individuals or together as an organization.


This article details a case study, which examined employee happiness of professional and paraprofessional staff at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill academic library. To gather the data, staff were given Paul Spector’s Job Satisfaction survey. In this survey nine facets of job satisfaction are presented and respondents are asked to respond to the statements using a Likert scale. The dimensions examined were: nature of work, supervision, coworkers, communication, contingent rewards, benefits, operating procedures, promotion, pay and overall satisfaction. The goal of the study was to determine whether professional and paraprofessional staff experience different levels and sources of happiness in their jobs and of so, what these differences were. The results showed that staff were generally satisfied with their job but professional employees showed higher levels of satisfaction in key areas: enjoyment of work itself, coworkers, appreciation and recognition, promotion and
Professional staff are those who have higher up positions, likely with more engaging work, higher pay and more promotion opportunities. Further the higher pay and more promotion opportunities likely contribute to their higher satisfaction with appreciation and recognition.


This article reports the results of a survey that analyzed job satisfaction of 361 library access service staff. Job satisfaction in this study was rated based on Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs understands human motivation through the fulfillment of needs. Maslow organized basic human needs into a hierarchy, stating that people were motivated to fulfill lower (or more basic needs) before they could be motivated to fulfill higher (or growth) needs. For example, the most basic needs, according to Maslow, were physiological needs such as air, food and shelter and once these needs were met people would move onto the next level, which are safety needs such as rules, stability and order. The final level is self-actualization, such as realizing self-potential and self-fulfillment. Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory argues that there are two separate factors in the workplace that cause job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction. The survey examined 5 dimensions of job satisfaction: benefits and environment, relationships, challenges, opportunities, and personal fulfillment. Each dimension was broken down into a number of related factors, which were ranked by respondents on a 5-point Likert scale. Each of these dimensions corresponds to a level on Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Herzberg argues that job satisfaction comes from “motivators” that lead to self-actualization. Therefore, all lower levels of needs (environment, relationships, challenges, and opportunities) need to be met before an employee can be satisfied with their job. Overall, the staff examined in this study were satisfied with their jobs. Areas
that ranked as the most important for job satisfaction by staff were personal fulfillment, job opportunities and relationships with co-workers. Two out of the three of these factors correspond to Maslow’s highest level of need, self-actualization. Additionally, more recognition and more training could improve job satisfaction, again relating to self-actualization. Salary was an area that ranked high as having a negative impact on job satisfaction.

Staines, G. Reaching Beyond the Summit: Are We Creating Work Environments for People to Thrive?, ACRL 14th National Conference, Seattle, 2009.

An exploratory study of libraries in the US and Canada as well as comparable academic libraries in the UK, Australia and New Zealand to discover strategies library leaders are implementing to engage employees. The study involved a random selection of 26 from a list of the 126 members of the Association of Research Libraries and a random selection of libraries listed on the UNESCO Libraries portal/Academic and Research Libraries website. Administrators of the libraries selected were contacted via e-mail and asked to answer a seven-question survey, 29 out of 45 responses were received. Based on responses a number of factors needed to engage employees were revealed. The first being ideal meeting spaces with excellent lighting, flexible furniture and current technologies. Secondly, level of discourse in meetings was found to be an indicator of engagement, such as collaborative brainstorming and problem solving. However, it was found that a majority of library leaders found communication, recognition and opportunities for promotion and/or professional development to be the most effective ways to engage employees.
Other Knowledge Environments


This study examined the relationship between organizational culture and job satisfaction among knowledge workers in the R&D division of the Italian pharmaceutical industry. The framework used to understand this relationship was proposed by Wallach (1983), which highlighted three types of organizational culture (bureaucratic, innovative and supportive) and how the type organizational culture influenced both level of job satisfaction and source of job satisfaction (internal or external satisfaction). Bureaucratic culture is characterized by a hierarchy, clear authority and systematic work. Innovative culture provides space for creative work, risks and challenges. Lastly, supportive culture is characterized by collaboration, relationships and encouragement. The data was obtained from semi-structured interviews of employees in 5 randomly selected companies operating in the pharmaceutical industry. The interviews involved statements regarding both organizational culture and job satisfaction and respondents had to respond to these statements using a 5-point Likert scale. The results showed the framework was a suitable measurement for the pharmaceutical industry. Although all companies didn’t fit into a specific organizational culture framework, each culture was found to some extent in each company at varying levels. Intrinsic job satisfaction was found to be most important to a knowledge worker and as a supportive culture grows in an organization, or area of an organization, so does the level of intrinsic job satisfaction in employees. Innovative culture was also found to have a positive impact on overall job satisfaction and bureaucratic culture was found to have a negative impact on job satisfaction.

The 2017 edition of Gallup’s State of the American Workplace report is its third iteration, since it was first published in 2010. The report draws from data collected from over 195,000 U.S. employees through the Gallup Panel during 2015 and 2016. Among the findings, the report focuses significantly on the increasing need to organizations to see employee engagement as a business strategy and a competitive advantage. The underlying goal of employee engagement is improved business performance. Organizations who are successful with engagement treat employees as stakeholders of their future and the company’s future. Highly engaged business units experience a reduction in absenteeism, an increase in productivity, and lower turnover. Gallup’s employee engagement survey consists of 12 questions that focus on basic human needs in the workplace: Basic needs include employees knowing what is expected of them at work, and have the materials and equipment they need to do the work correctly. Individual needs include having the opportunity to do what they do best every day, receiving recognition or praise for good work, and having a supervisor or co-worker who cares about them as a person and encourages their development. Teamwork needs include employees perceiving that their opinions are valued, perceiving that the mission of their organization makes them feel their job is important, feeling that their colleagues are committed to doing quality work, and that they have a best friend at work. Growth needs include having someone at work talk to them about their progress, and having opportunities to learn and grow at work. Finally, Gallup describes how to create a culture of engagement by integrating coaching conversations into everyday interactions.

This study examined the effect of and employees’ attitudes towards knowledge sharing in relation to employee happiness. The examined population was the 830 employees of the University of Isfahan of which 130 were selected through random sampling. Two surveys were used to collect the data, the first being a questionnaire on attitudes towards knowledge sharing and the second being a questionnaire on employee happiness. The original hypothesis stated that positive attitudes towards knowledge sharing would increase employee happiness. The results proved the hypothesis. The literature review in this article suggests four factors that are related to knowledge sharing that have been shown to link to employee happiness in other studies. These are trust; organizational culture, where knowledge is shared among those you have a relationship with through a common goal or purpose (ex. co-worker); incentives, where a reward structure can engage employees and motivate them to perform to their best; and motivation, the stimulation of employees individually will lead to higher engagement in the obtainment and transfer of knowledge through their work. Additionally, the study found managers have a large role in implementing knowledge sharing and boosting employee happiness. It is recommended that managers of knowledge organizations create a positive work environment by creating motivation for and eliminating barriers to knowledge sharing to enhance employee happiness and engagement.
Retail Environments


This study examines the sources of job satisfaction among retail workers to reduce training and recruitment rates and employee turnover rates in the retail industry. Salespeople from the business-to-business and retail sector in the U.S. were surveyed. Recruitment was done via email through a third-party market research company. Job satisfaction was measured using a reduced version of the 28-item INDSALES scale, which contained 7 factors: overall job, co-workers, supervision, policy, pay, promotion, and customers. Findings suggest that perceived organizational support, role ambiguity and emotional exhaustion are most important influential factors for most facets of job satisfaction. Particularly in retail sectors, role ambiguity and emotional exhaustion can come from instructions to perform tasks one may not be privy too or having to combine multiple tasks at once. The example given is of a supermarket employee who is asked to unload boxes from a shipment, place them on the shelf and also be aware of and help customers that may need assistance. Clearer job descriptions and designated employees for certain positions can help with this. Perceived organizational support is also an important indicator of job satisfaction and turnover intention. Training and wellness programs offered to employees can enhance the perception of organizational support and commitment to employees, increasing their job satisfaction.

The Malaysian retail industry has a high turnover rate, which is posing a large problem for the sector. This study was completed to determine the level and source of job satisfaction of these retail employees to develop strategies to increase retention rates. A questionnaire was developed and sent to 100 employees, of varying ranks, of a Malaysian retail company. The questionnaire included demographic questions, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intention. Job satisfaction was examined based on the Job Descriptive Index, which measures satisfaction based on salary, promotion, co-workers, the work itself, and supervision. Organizational commitment was examined using the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire, which includes statements about the employee’s attitudes towards their company or organization. The respondents completed the questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale. The study found that salary, promotion, supervision and the work itself play a large role in influencing employee turnover. Based on these finding, several recommendations were proposed. First, salary was an important indicator of turnover, so a new salary scheme for Malaysian retail workers is recommended. It was found that employees judge fairness of pay by comparing their salary to others at the same level at different companies, others in their company and comparing against an external pay level. Second, promotion opportunities influence turnover and although employees were somewhat satisfied with promotion opportunities it is recommended to provide time, space and training for employees to enhance their skills and training. Third, redesigning the work itself such as less repetition or job rotation will increase engagement and reduce boredom. Fourth, supervisors need to play a role in the encouragement and support of employees by providing motivation and proper training. Lastly, organizational commitment needs to be increased through human resource practices. It is suggested the human resource practices are viewed by employees as a commitment by the company to them and employees will reciprocate this commitment to the company.
About Brightsail

Brightsail is a boutique advisory firm that provides high quality research, evaluation and consulting services. Established in 2003 by Kimberly Silk, Brightsail has worked with public and private sector organizations – including libraries, museums, universities, colleges, schools, and government agencies – for over a decade.

**Kimberly Silk, MLS**  
**Principal Consultant**

Kimberly Silk is a librarian with a background in academic and data librarianship, and a passion for conducting research to evaluate how cultural institutions impact their communities.

As Principal Consultant of Brightsail Research, she works with organizations across Canada to develop methodologies to demonstrate value and impact.

**Jeffrey Veffer, MBA**  
**Data Scientist**

Jeffrey Veffer has worked with large for-profit organizations as well as small not for profits using data to refine strategic and marketing plans.