

## Use your employees' strengths or they'll head for the exit lounge | Inside Small Business

*Paul Findlay*

Almost half of Australians who don't believe their strengths are well used at their workplace are planning to head for the employee exit door, according to a new national survey.

That's a key result from a Wellness in the Workplace survey of 530 Australians from private sector, government and non-profit organisations conducted by us.

Although the survey found almost nine in 10 workers say they are engaged at work, 24 per cent are planning to leave soon or within 12 months.

But of the 27 per cent of workers who don't believe their individual strengths are generally well used by their current employer, 48 per cent of that group are planning to jump ship.

The survey also found:

- Regular change in the workplace impacts personal resilience. Some 72 per cent say change affects their resilience and ability to bounce back – 22 per cent say it happens frequently or all the time.
- Some feel unappreciated – 39 per cent say their organisation's culture frequently or always promotes gratitude towards employees, 24 per cent say it happens generally, and 37 per cent say it occurs occasionally, rarely or never.
- While 39 per cent say their organisation is always or frequently an optimistic place, and 34 per cent say it's generally that way, 27 per cent say their workplace is never, rarely or occasionally optimistic.

PDT also surveyed 85 Australian human resources professionals and found they overwhelmingly believe that organisational change impacts workers' resilience – 53 per cent say it happens frequently or all the time.

The survey highlights the importance of organisational leaders understanding their employees'

strengths and how to use and develop them to realise more of their employees' potential.

Strengths are a pre-existing capacity for a particular way of behaving, thinking or feeling that is authentic and energising. When people use their strengths, they feel happier, more confident, more resilient, and are generally more proactive and productive.



Strengths, optimism, resilience and gratitude are four elements of ORANGES, a new workplace wellness program developed by children's cancer charity Camp Quality that PDT is now delivering to public and private sector organisations.

The message is clear from more than 600 HR professionals and individual employees. Constant change affects a person's capacity to withstand and adapt to life's challenges. Showing employees how the brain, body and emotions are linked and providing activities to boost positive mood and manage negative emotions can improve resilience. Ultimately, that is critical to organisational success.

The survey indicated disenchantment follows lack of appreciation with 36 per cent of those who said a grateful culture was not the norm saying they were planning to leave.

It's important to remember that gratitude can come from everywhere; it's not just a manager or employer's responsibility but a culture of gratitude throughout the organisation can make a difference.

Some highlights from the survey:

- The survey of 530 people, comprising 52 per cent from the private sector, 32 per cent from government and 16 per cent from non-profit organisations, was conducted by PDT in the past month.

- Almost six per cent were aged 18-25, 34 per cent were 26-39, 44 per cent were 40-54 and 16 per cent were 55 and over.
- A quarter have spent 10 years or more at their current workplace.
- Of the 85 HR professionals, most have spent 15 to 20 years in the industry.

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