A Survey of Employer Practices Aimed at Balancing Work and Life and Becoming or Staying an Employer of Choice

Conducted and sponsored by the Connecticut Department of Administrative Services (DAS) Winter, 1999

Barbara A. Waters, Commissioner

Martin W. Anderson, Ph.D., Strategic Leadership Center
Catherine Bysiewicz-Cluen, Human Resources Business Center

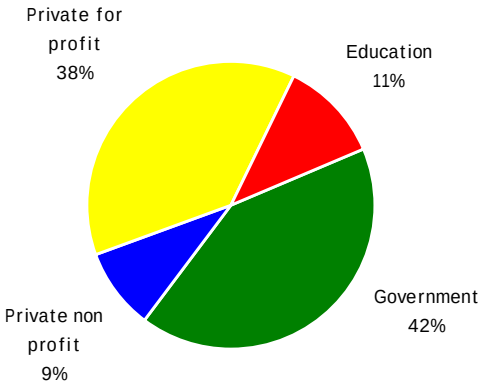
As part of a human resources strategic planning effort, human resources professionals from all over the globe were invited to participate in a survey that was administered over the DAS web site (http://www.das.state.ct.us[1]).☐☐☐The survey consisted of two parts. Part 1 sought to determine the prevalence of a variety of personnel programs, practices or benefits ostensibly designed to assist employees in **balancing their work and life** and the benefits/effects of those practices, if any. Part 2 sought to determine human resource activities that employees were using to become or stay an **employer of choice** in this competitive world of recruiting.☐☐☐The content of the survey (i.e., programs and activities under survey) was gleaned from a great deal of research performed by Catherine Bysiewicz-Cluen who attempted to canvass what was on the horizon for human resource activities in these two areas. This report summarizes the findings.

Contact the principle author at martin.anderson@po.state.ct.us

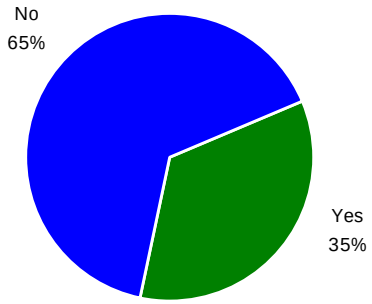
[1] Published on the web by William Skyrme

Profile of Survey Participants (N=54)

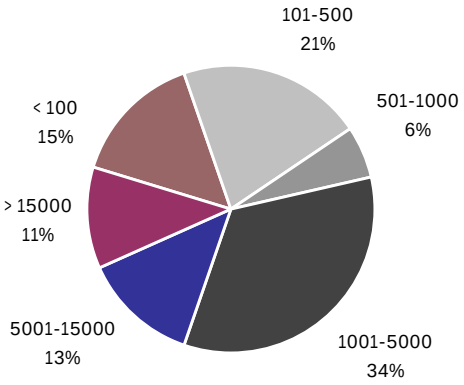
Type of Employer



Is the Business Unionized?



Number of Employees in Entire Company



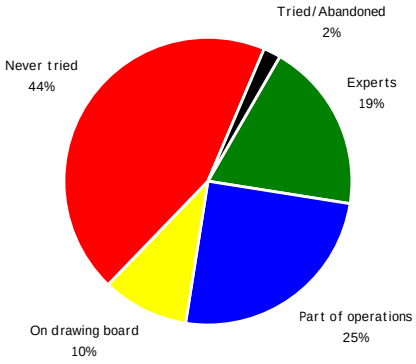
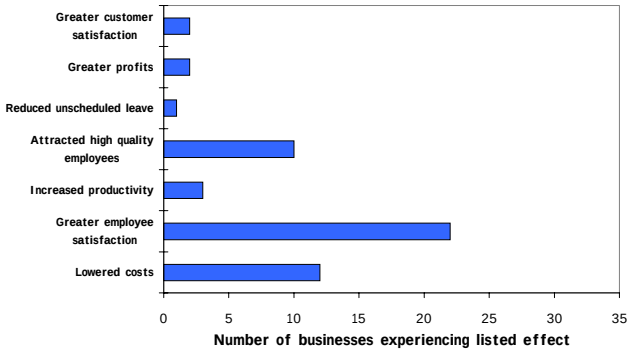
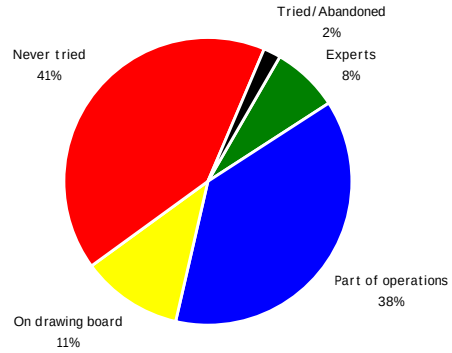
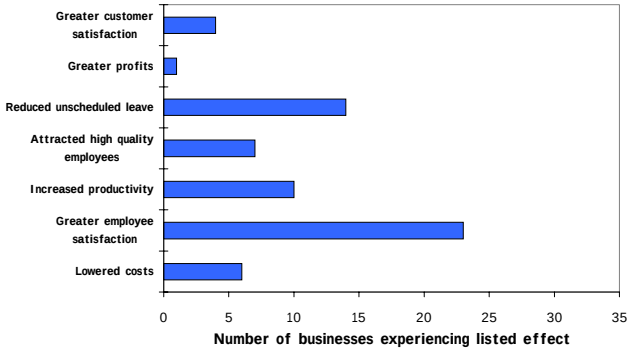
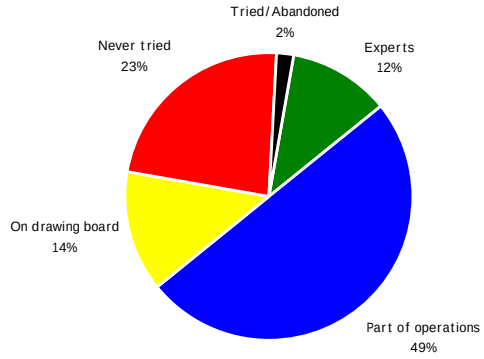
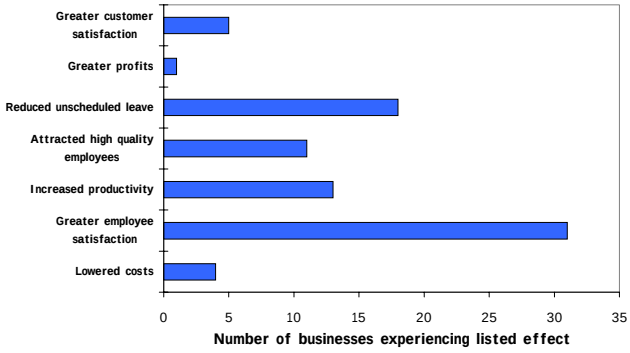
Sponsor

Department of Administrative Services
State of Connecticut
165 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06422

DAS Strategic Leadership Center
Voice: 860-713-5041
Fax: 860-713-7492

1: Balancing Work and Life

How would you describe the status of the following programs, practices, or benefits to the employees of your organization?

Program, Practice, or Benefit prepared responses: "Never Tried"☐☐☐"On Drawing Board" ☐☐☐"Part of Operations" ☐☐☐"We are Experts" ☐☐☐"Tried and Abandoned"	**If the programs, practices, or benefits were used, which of the following effects were experienced by your organization?**
Cafeteria Plan Benefits Selection  	**Effect of program, practice, or benefit** 
Compressed Work Week  	**Effect of program, practice, or benefit** 
Flexitime Programs  	**Effect of program, practice, or benefit** 

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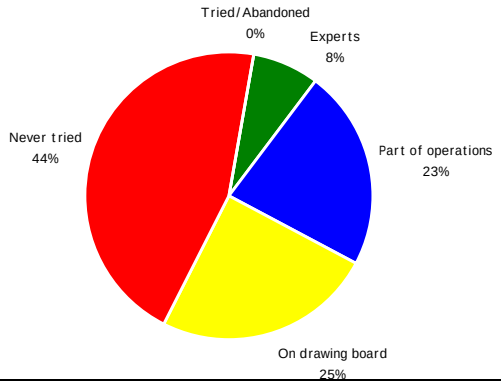
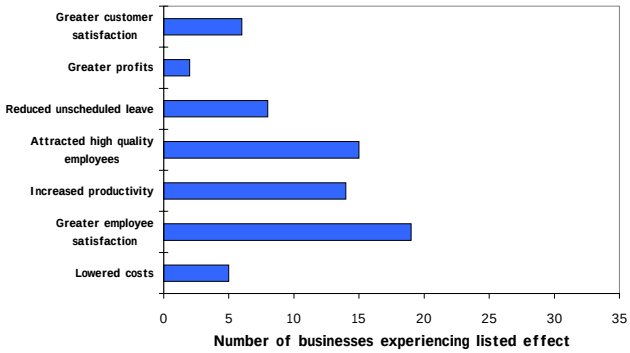
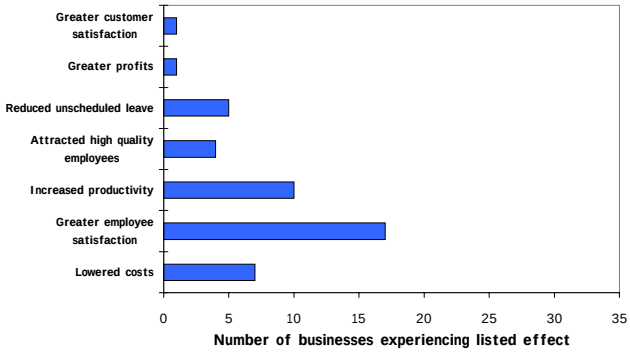
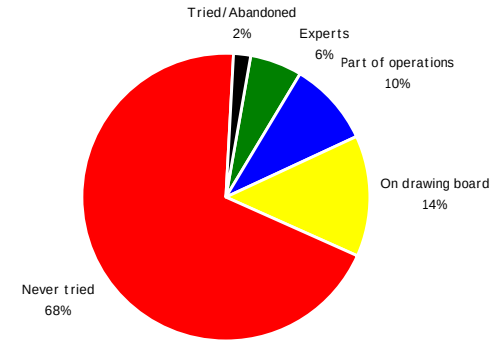
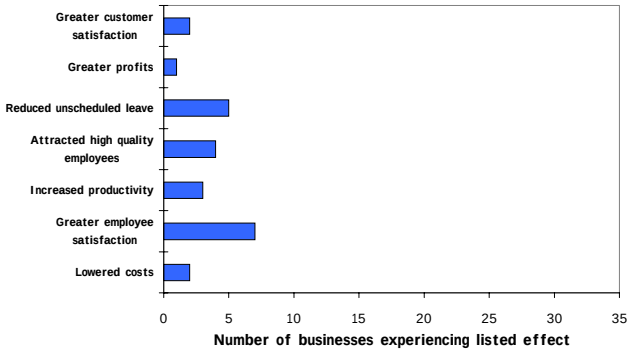
Telecommuting  	**Effect of program, practice, or benefit** 
On-site fitness centers/memberships 	**Effect of program, practice, or benefit** 
On-premises child care  	**Effect of program, practice, or benefit** 

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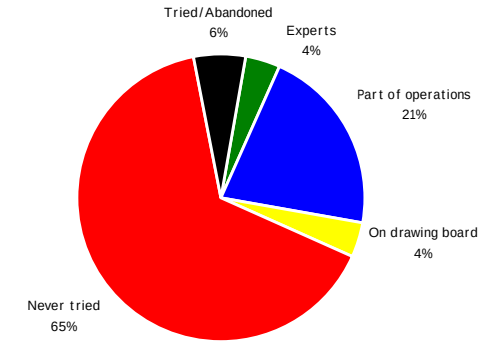
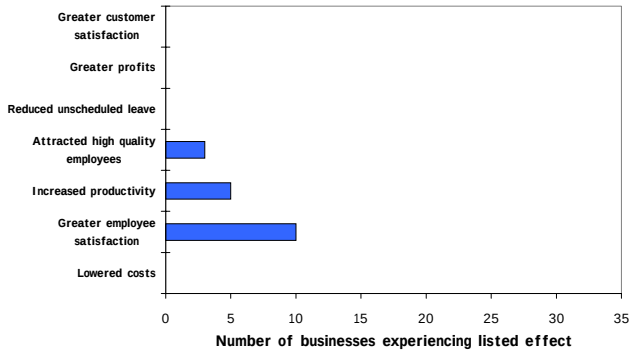
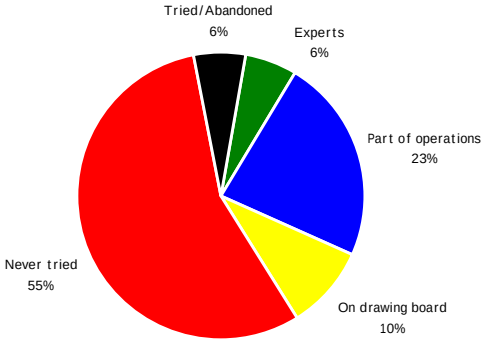
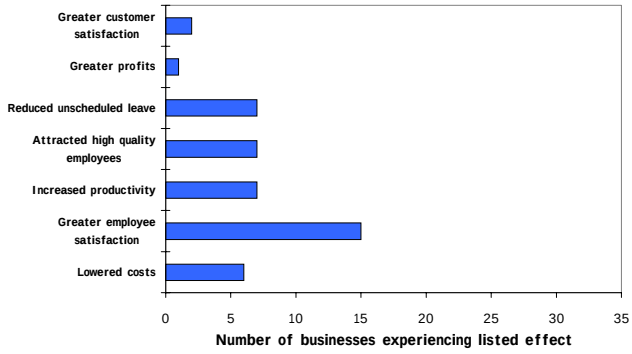
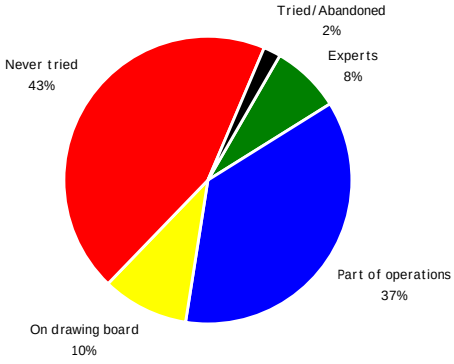
Loan Programs (e.g., student loans)	**Effect of program, practice, or benefit**
Job Sharing Employment Option	**Effect of program, practice, or benefit**
Educational Leave	**Effect of program, practice, or benefit**

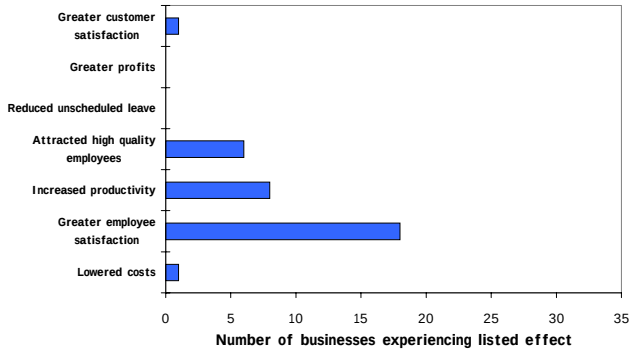












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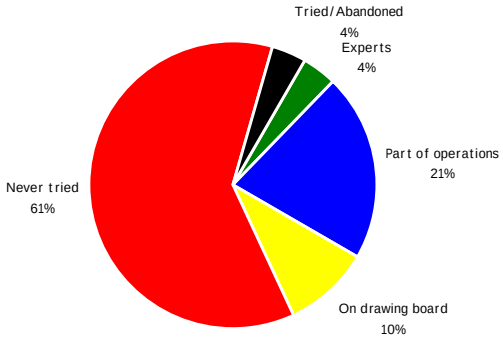
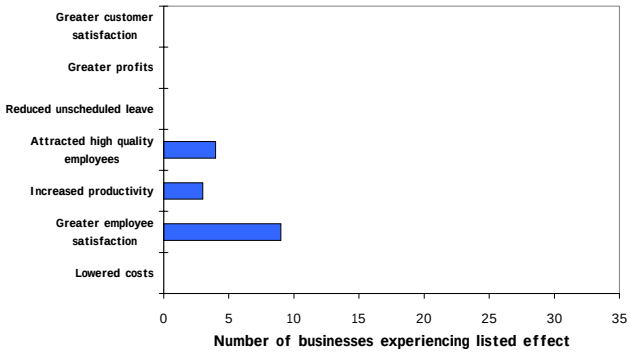
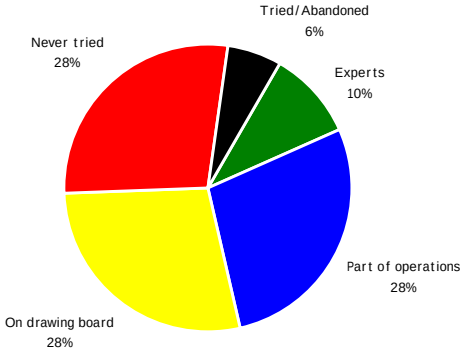
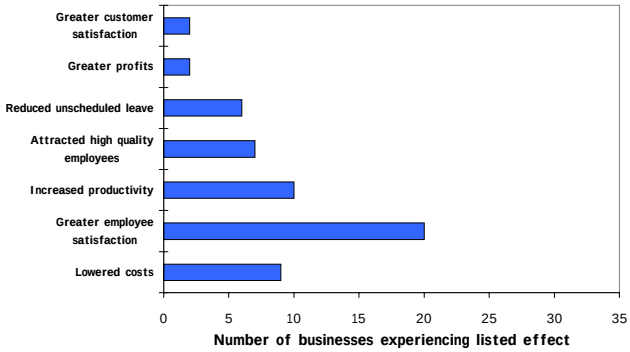
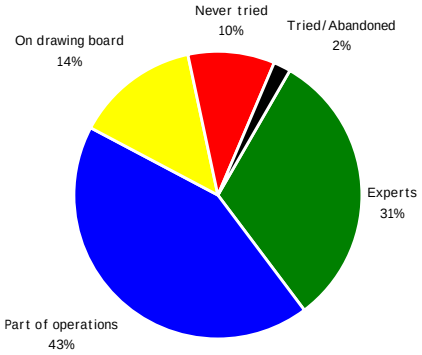
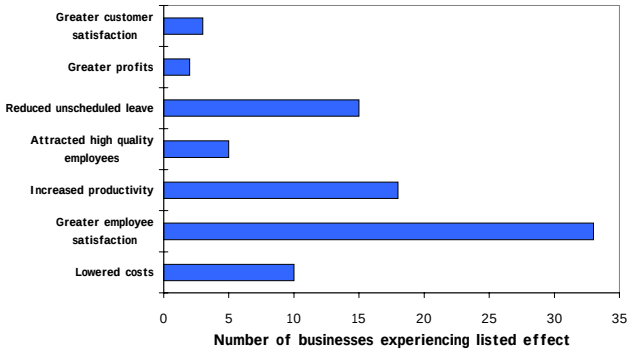
Sabbatical	**Effect of program, practice, or benefit**
	
Wellness Program	**Effect of program, practice, or benefit**
	
Employee Assistance Program	**Effect of program, practice, or benefit**
	

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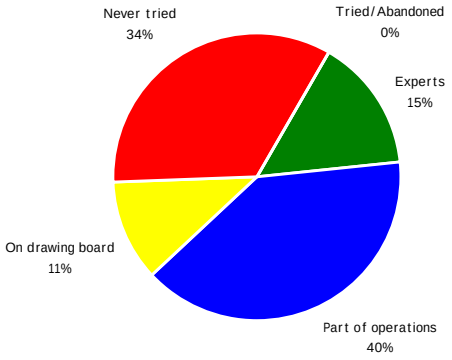
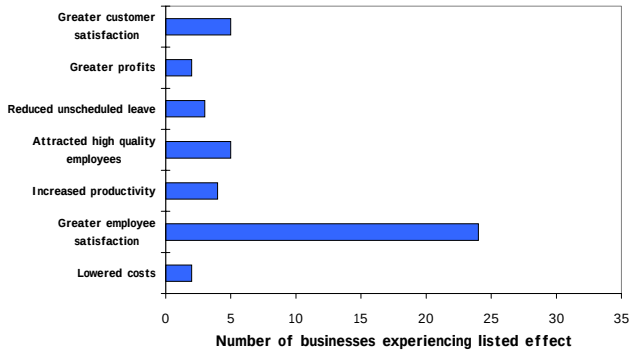
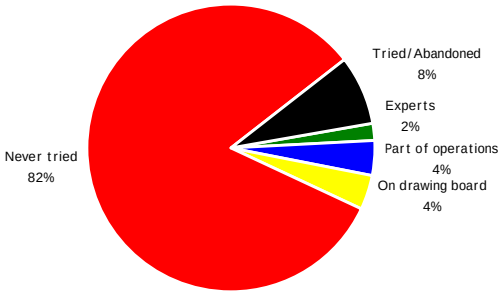
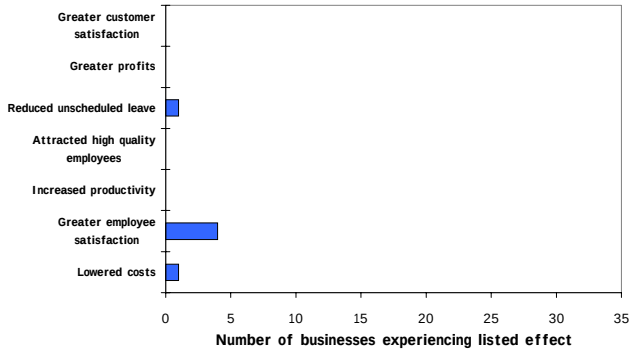
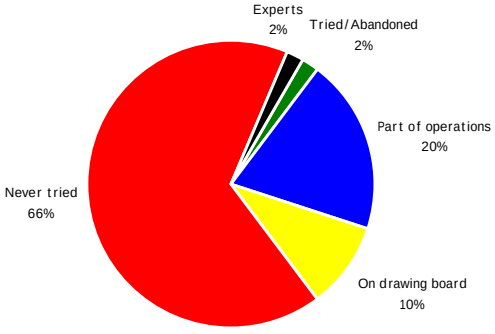
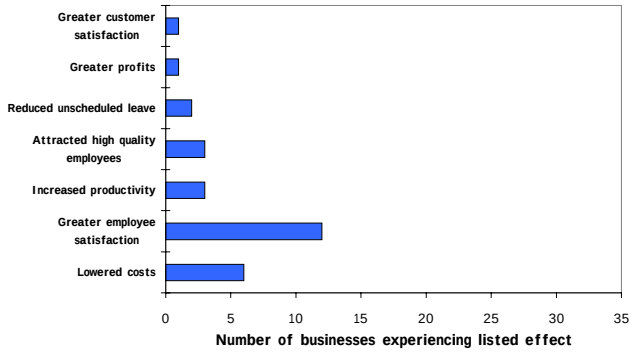
Bring kids/friends/family to work day  	**Effect of program, practice, or benefit** 
Voluntary Purchase of Extra Leave  	**Effect of program, practice, or benefit** 
Voluntary Reduction in Work Days/Weeks  	**Effect of program, practice, or benefit** 

Programs, practices or benefits used by respondents not addressed in the foregoing:
Trying to be flexible and accommodating to employees on an informal basis…not by policy.
Tuition reimbursement.
Workshops on dealing with aging parents.
Subsidized or paid sports club membership.

Programs, practices or benefits used by respondents not addressed in the foregoing:
Desk massage; social time valued.
Frequent employee family parties.
Sick child care program and trained sick child care worker to go to home of employee with ill child.
Mildly ill child care plan (reimbursement for daycare for sick child).
Fee waiver program for employees and dependents for undergraduate college courses.
Staff go to school and use flex time to make up for work.
All employees are independent contractors and may work as much or little as they can afford to do.
Onsite child care, college courses, and a skills lab program.
Educational programs regarding health and benefits.
Strong unwritten cultural rule to stay at home as needs warrant.
Monthly seminars on stress reduction, financial planning, family issues.
Personal Effectiveness Program—planning of life and career objectives, plans and activities.
Transition services through out placement center to assist employees in making career choices.

Balancing Work and Life—Summary

It appears from the obtained results that the tried and true programs are flexitime, wellness, employee assistance, and bringing kids/friends/family to work days. Employee assistance programs seem to offer many rewards for both employees and employers.

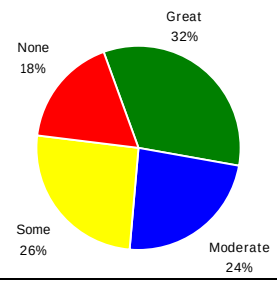
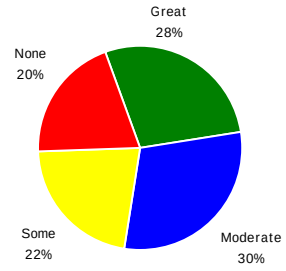
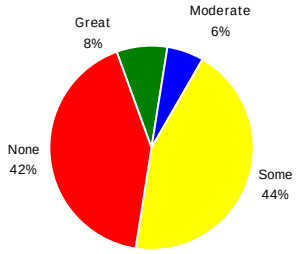
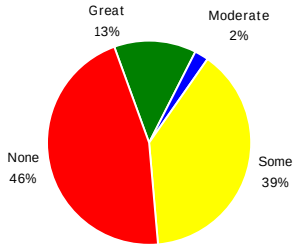
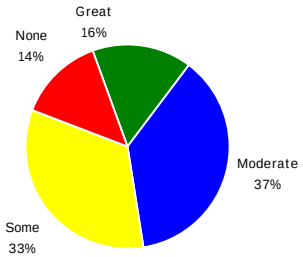
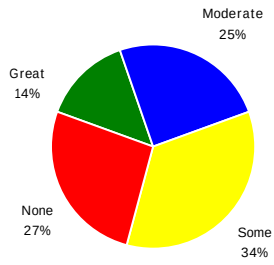
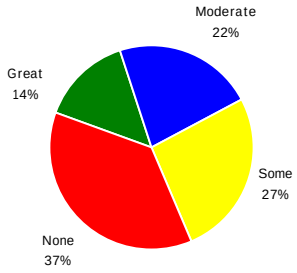
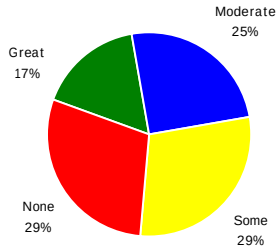
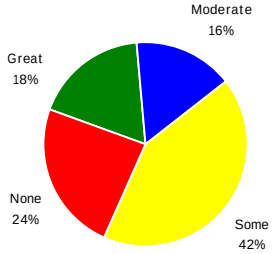
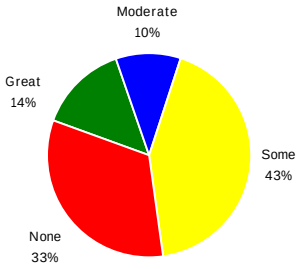
Programs that seem to most favorably impact employee satisfaction were cafeteria plan benefits, compressed work weeks, flexitime, employee assistance programs, and bringing kids/friends/family to work. Employee satisfaction seemed to be the principle benefit of the instant constellation of programs, practices, or benefits. Reductions in unscheduled leave were most associated with compressed work weeks, flexitime, and EAP. Greater customer satisfaction seemed to result most from telecommuting, flexitime, and bringing kids/friends/family to work days. Other trends can be identified by the reader.

The programs that were seem to be emerging most strongly (are "on the drawing board" at the highest percentages) were telecommuting and wellness programs. Most others were being planned at a fairly consistent rate (10 to 15% of respondents).

2: Becoming or Staying an Employer of Choice

a) Indicate the degree to which you have recently invested ***resources*** or effort into the following human resources activities;

b) Indicate the degree to which the human resources activities have been a part of the way your organization usually ***does business***.

Human Resources Activity	Resources Invested	Part of Way of Doing Business
1. Distributing printed or electronic materials designed to present a positive image to potential recruits.		
2. Performing succession planning for hard to fill positions.		
3. Reducing the cycle time for filling hotly recruited positions.		
4. Building close recruiting partnerships with colleges or universities.		
5. Building internships or similar entry level programs for recruitment leverage.		

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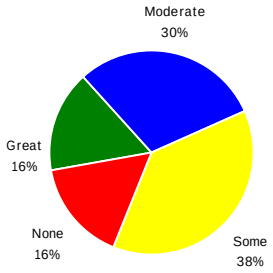
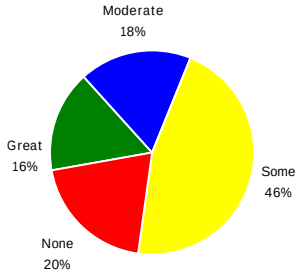
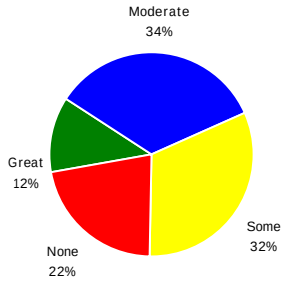
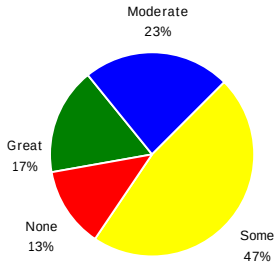
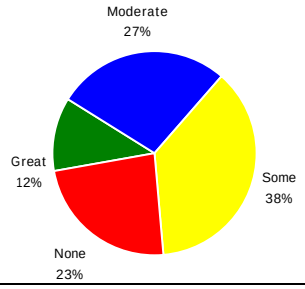
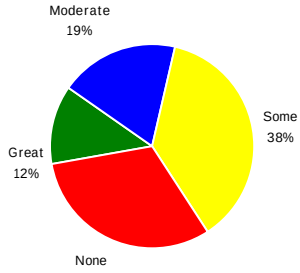
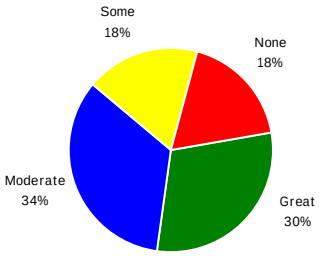
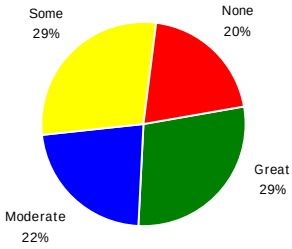
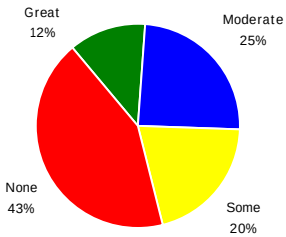
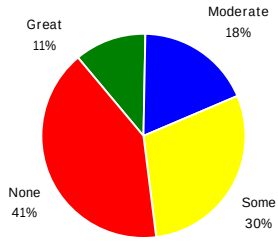
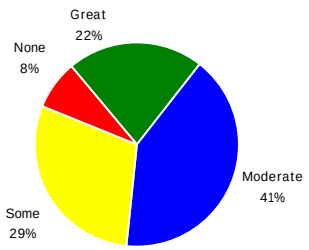
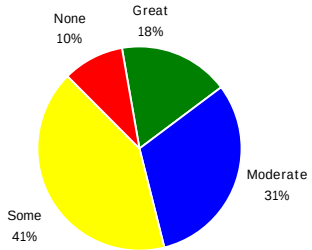
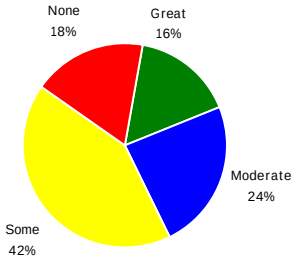
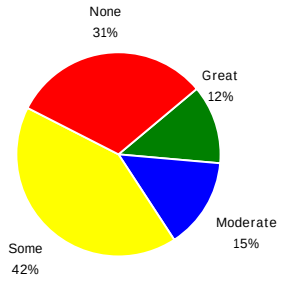
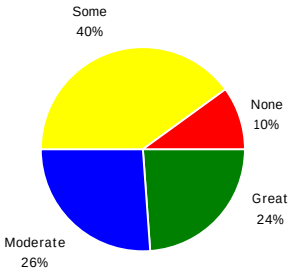
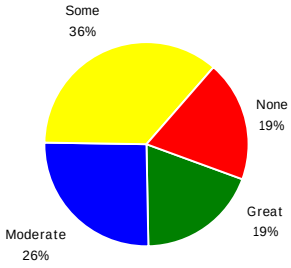
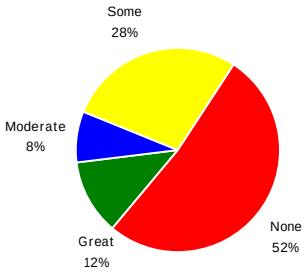
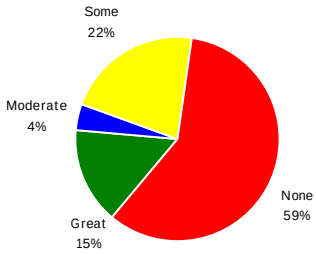
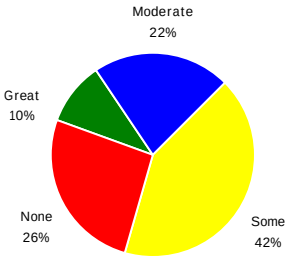
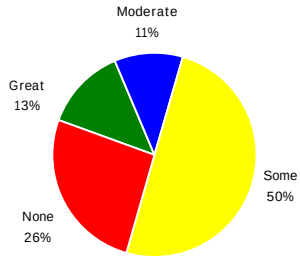
b) Indicate the degree to which the human resources activities have been a part of the way your organization usually ***does business***.

Human Resources Activity	Resources Invested	Part of Way of Doing Business
6. Increasing the visibility of the organization to potential recruits.		
7. Offering career development opportunities as a benefit to employees.		
8. Improving relations with and understanding the needs of applicants/recruits.		
9. Contributing to civic improvement and community involvement.		
10. Partnering with customers to evaluate and reform/revise recruitment strategies.		

2: Becoming or Staying an Employer of Choice

a) Indicate the degree to which you have recently invested ***resources*** or effort into the following human resources activities;

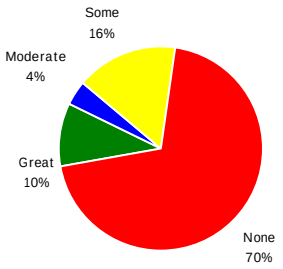
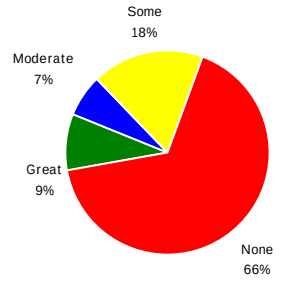
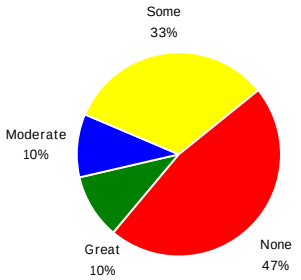
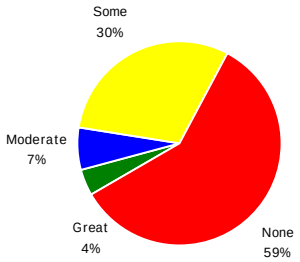
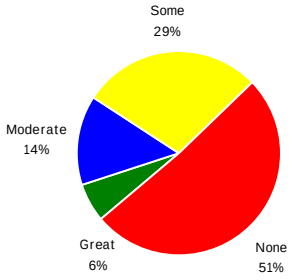
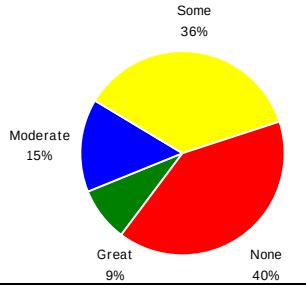
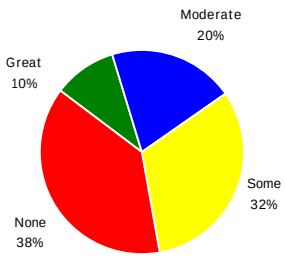
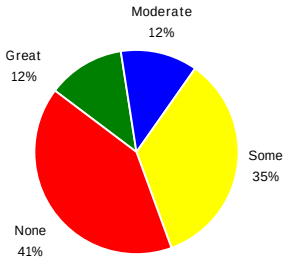
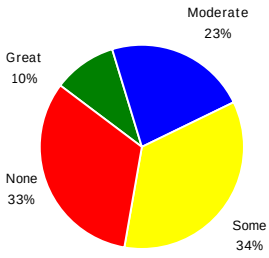
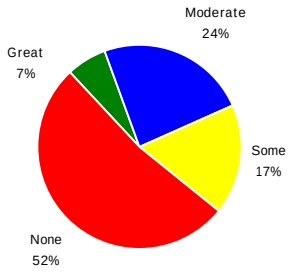
b) Indicate the degree to which the human resources activities have been a part of the way your organization usually ***does business***.

Human Resources Activity	Resources Invested	Part of Way of Doing Business
11. Building a deserved reputation as a great place to work.		
12. Evaluating and correcting the reasons why valuable employees leave.		
13. Promoting employee celebrations and reward programs.		
14. Rewarding managers for increasing the value of their employees to the organization.		
15. Recruiting where applicants are located rather than expecting applicants to come to the organization.		

2: Becoming or Staying an Employer of Choice

a) Indicate the degree to which you have recently invested ***resources*** or effort into the following human resources activities;

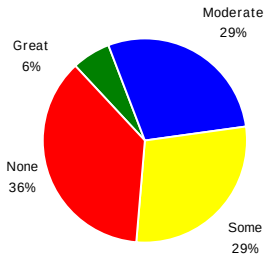
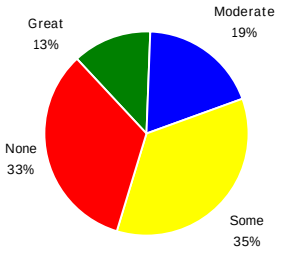
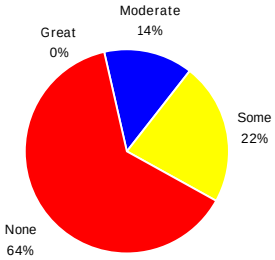
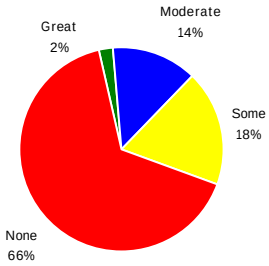
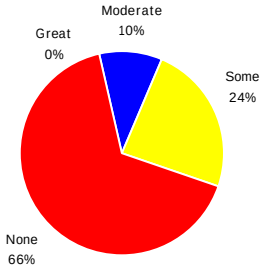
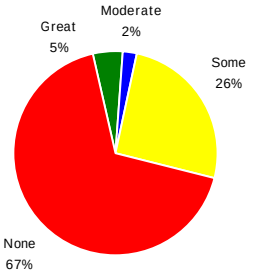
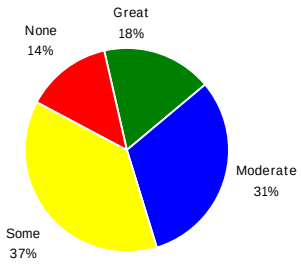
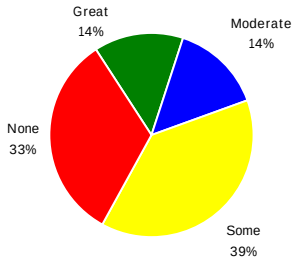
b) Indicate the degree to which the human resources activities have been a part of the way your organization usually ***does business***.

Human Resources Activity	Resources Invested	Part of Way of Doing Business
16. Using recently hired employees (non HR) as recruiters.		
17. Evaluating and trying to correct reasons that employment offers are refused.		
18. Holding special events or conferences to attract potential job candidates.		
19. Becoming a part of organizations or groups (e.g., board or commission members, advisors) that have been or could be good sources for potential job candidates.		
20. Combining employment information with any/all marketing materials.		

2: Becoming or Staying an Employer of Choice

a) Indicate the degree to which you have recently invested ***resources*** or effort into the following human resources activities;

b) Indicate the degree to which the human resources activities have been a part of the way your organization usually ***does business***.

Human Resources Activity	Resources Invested	Part of Way of Doing Business
21. Bringing recruitment directly to organizations representing diverse clientele such as Urban Leagues.		
22. Using externships and employee transfer programs to enrich employee work life and career options.		
23. Offering employee workplace rotation programs or geographical relocation programs.		
24. Using computer technology solutions for the recruitment and selection of employees.		

HR Activities practiced by respondents not addressed in the foregoing:
The health insurance and retirement we offer.
Everyone is involved in the annual Plan & Goal setting process.
Maintain competitive pay plan with an excellent benefits program.
Seek out ways to involve employees with issues directly impacting them.
Promote team work and a commitment to services.
The organization supports internal and external learning—staff are intellectually challenged.
Offering cash compensation (finder fees) to any and all employees and associates.

HR Activities practiced by respondents not addressed in the foregoing:
Our organization participates in all available task forces, teams, committees, etc., that are charged with improving employee recruitment, retention and workforce improvements.
Putting employee first and gaining trust so if funding problems we don't have problems of distrust.
Internally walking the talk by having all top executives MBWA-this is what is communicated by employees to the outside world.
In the works, retention strategy, career management, succession planning.
Leader in Mental Health Practice.
Good reputation as supportive employer.
Benefit programs are incredible for area.
Trying to be more family friendly and recognizing diversity of the workforce.
Recruiting the Passive Worker.
All state government vacant positions will be listed on the internet and applicants may complete an application on-line.
Recognition (monetary), exit interviews, quality initiatives, team and individual non-monetary awards, etc.

Becoming or Staying an Employer of Choice--Summary

The practices that seem to be the orphans of the group are 16. using employees as recruiters; 17. trying to evaluate and correct reasons employment offers are refused; 22. using externships and 23. workplace rotation programs.

In reviewing gaps between "none" ratings for the resources being recently put into the organization versus how much the activity is a part of current business practices, there were clearly emerging activities within organizations; that is, activities many organizations seem to be trying to get off the ground at about the same time:

Emerging activities to become the employer of choice are interpreted to be:

- Reducing the cycle time for filling hotly recruited positions.
- Building internships or similar entry level programs for recruitment leverage.
- Improving relations with and understanding the needs of applicants/recruits.
- Evaluating and correcting the reasons why valuable employees leave.
- Promoting employee celebrations and reward programs.
- Evaluating and trying to correct reasons that employment offers are refused.
- Holding special events or conferences to attract potential job candidates.
- Combining employment information with any/all marketing materials.
- Using computer technology solutions for the recruitment and selection of employees.