

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) for Winter 1999 with Winter 2001 Update Information

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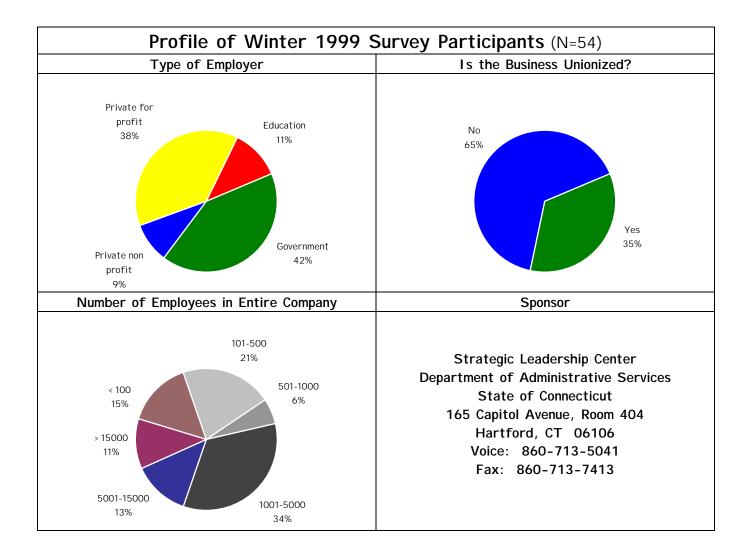
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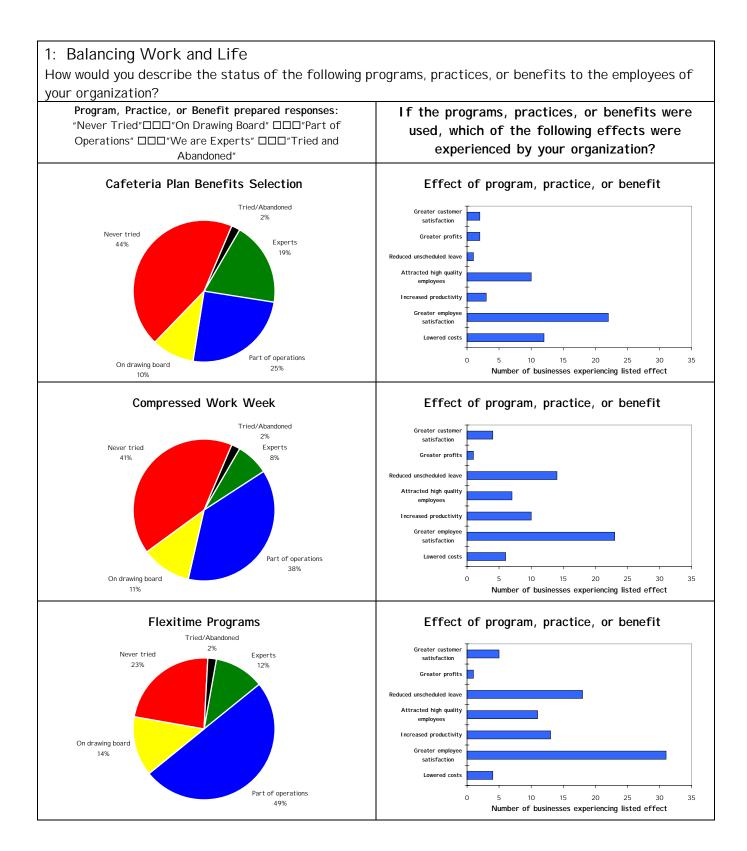
The Original Winter 1999 Results

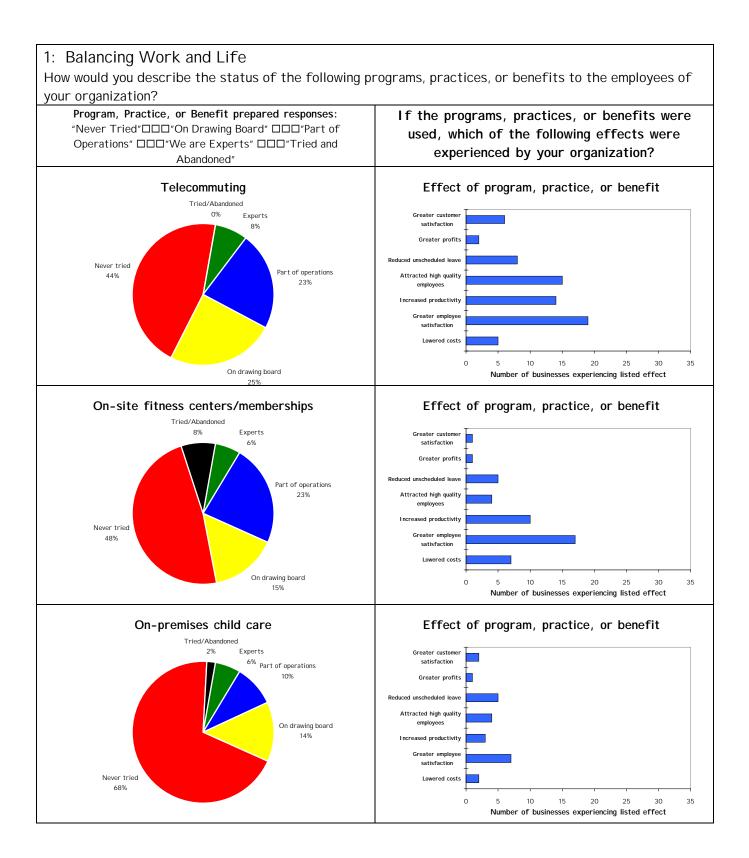
As part of a human resources strategic planning effort, human resources professionals from all over the globe were invited to participate in a survey that was administered over the DAS web site (http://www.das.state.ct.us¹).□□□The survey consisted of two parts. Part 1 sought to determine the prevalence 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 originally 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.

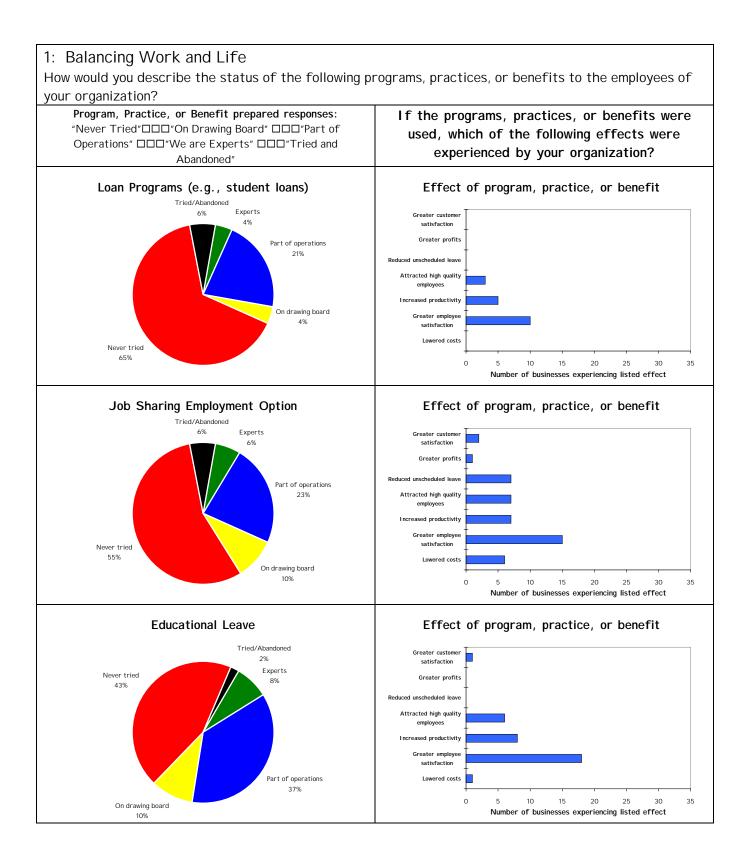
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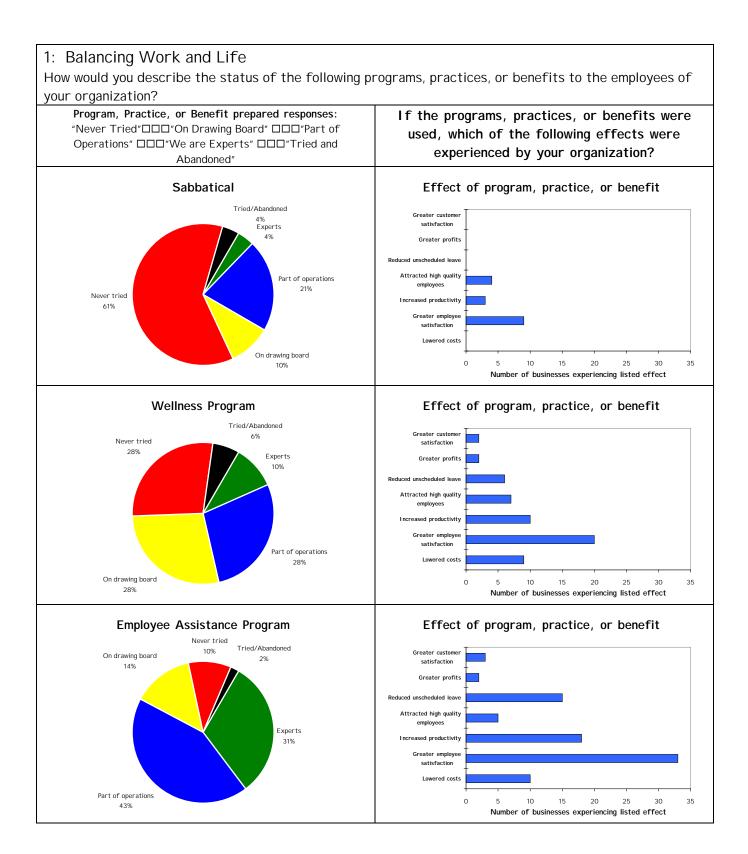
¹ Published on the web by William Skyrme

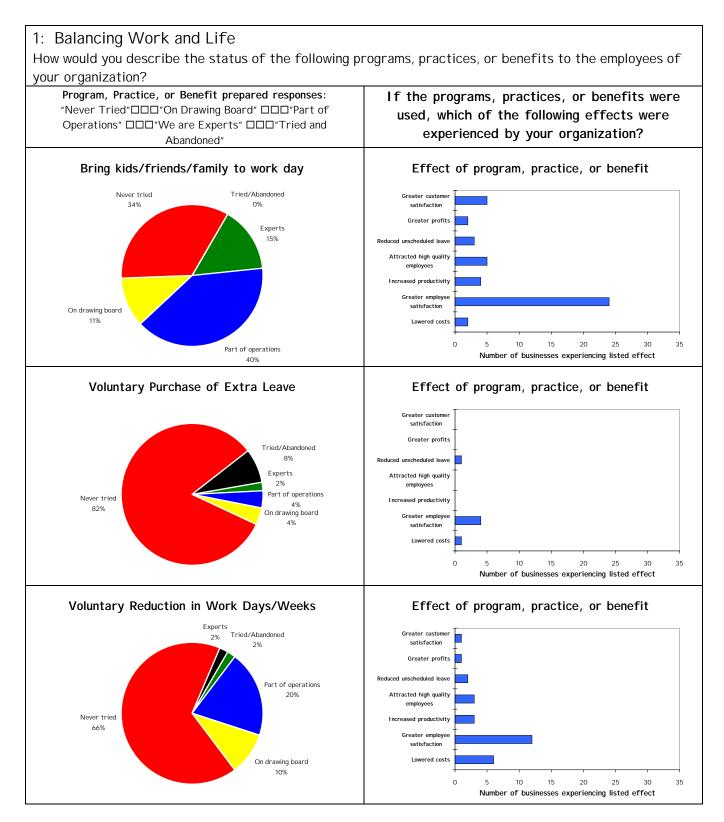












Programs, practices or benefits used by respondents not addressed in the foregoing:

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.

Desk massage; social time valued.

Programs, practices or benefits used by respondents not addressed in the foregoing:

Frequent employee family parties.

Sick childcare program and trained sick child care worker to go to home of employee with ill child.

Mildly ill childcare plan (reimbursement for daycare for sick child).

Fee waiver program for employees and dependents for undergraduate college courses.

Staff goes to school and use flextime to make up for work.

All employees are independent contractors and may work as much or little as they can afford to do.

Onsite childcare, 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.

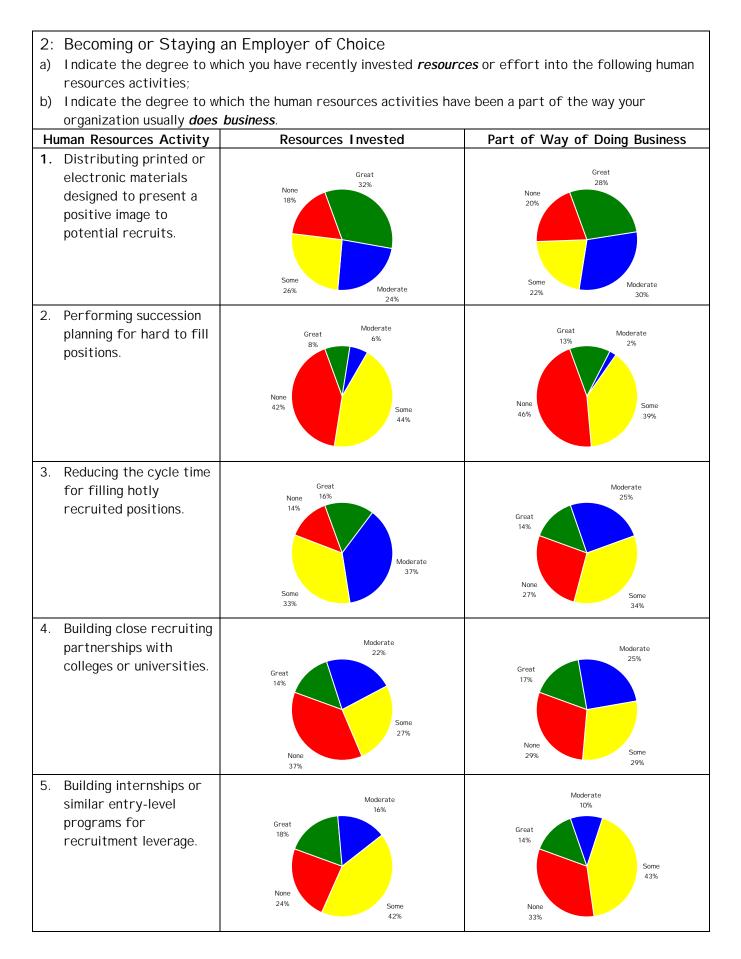
Transition services through out placement center to assist employees in making career choices.

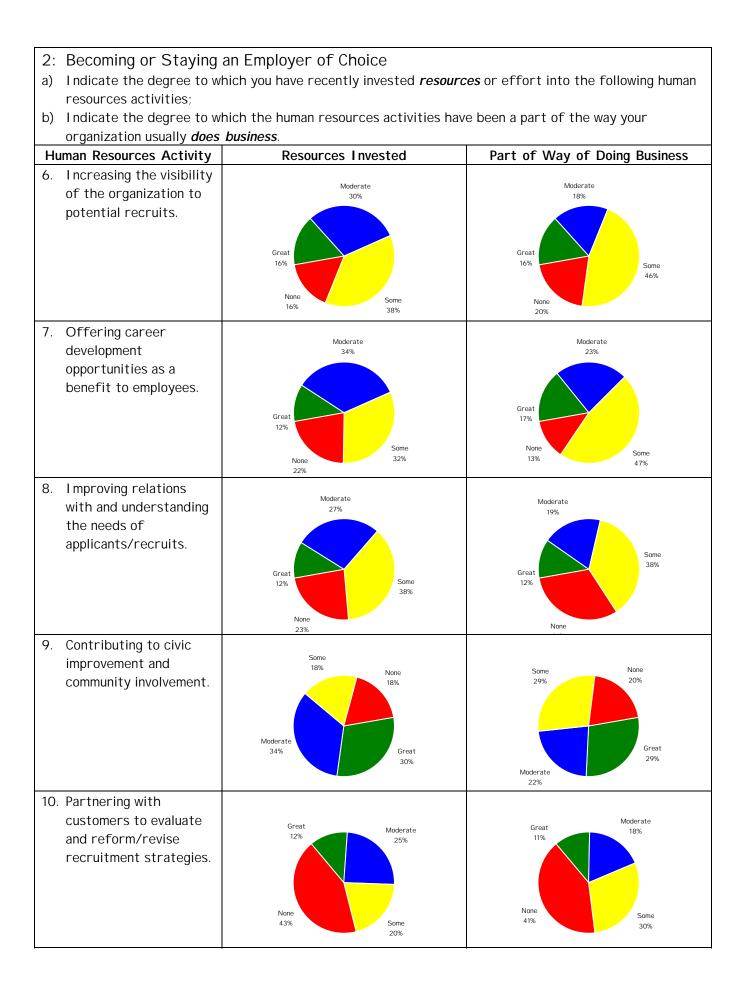
Balancing Work and Life—Summary

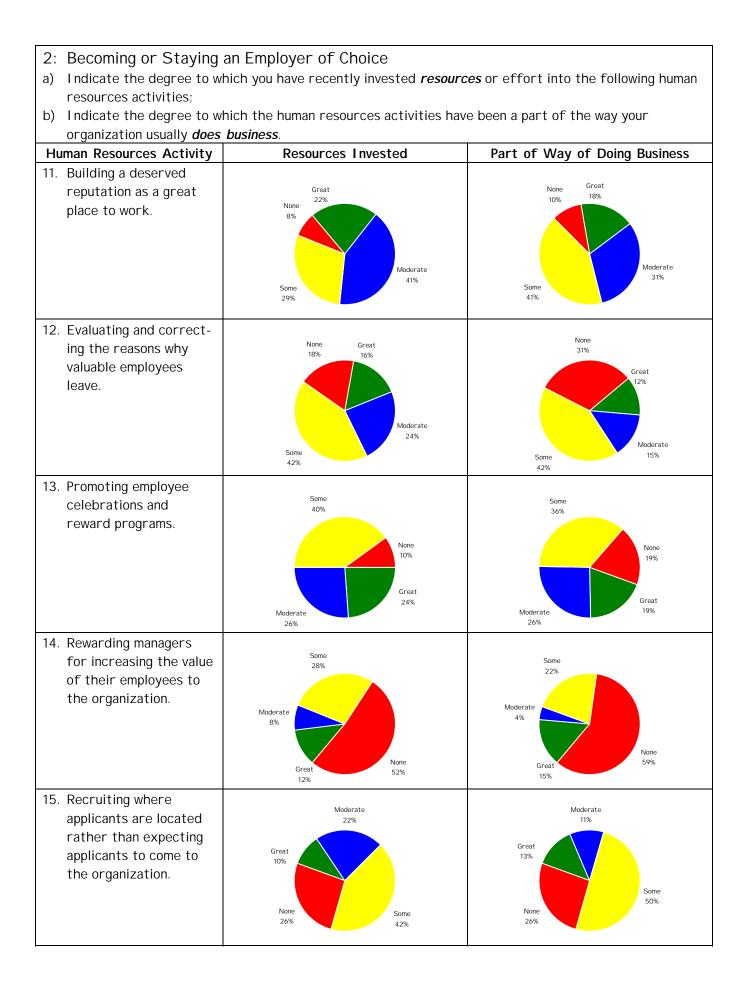
It appears from the obtained results that the tried and true programs are flextime, wellness, employee assistance, and bringing kids/friends/family to work days. Employee assistance programs seem to offer many rewards for both employees and employers.

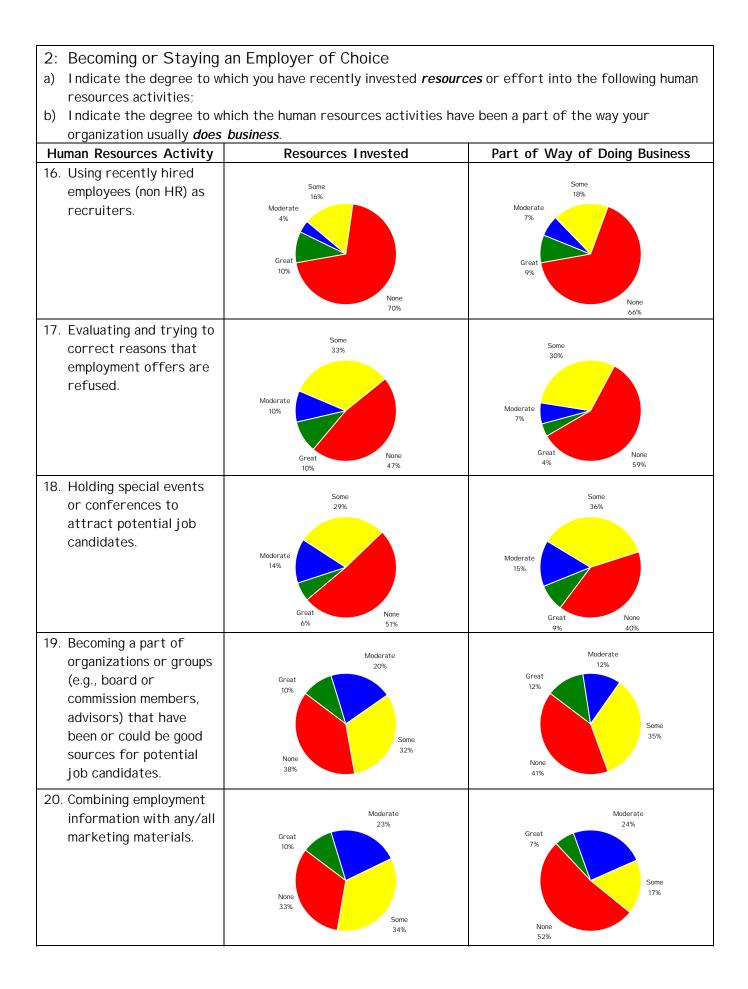
Programs that seem to most favorably impact employee satisfaction were cafeteria plan benefits, compressed workweeks, flextime, employee assistance programs, and bringing kids/friends/family to work. Employee satisfaction seemed to be the principle benefit of the instant constellation of programs, practices,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

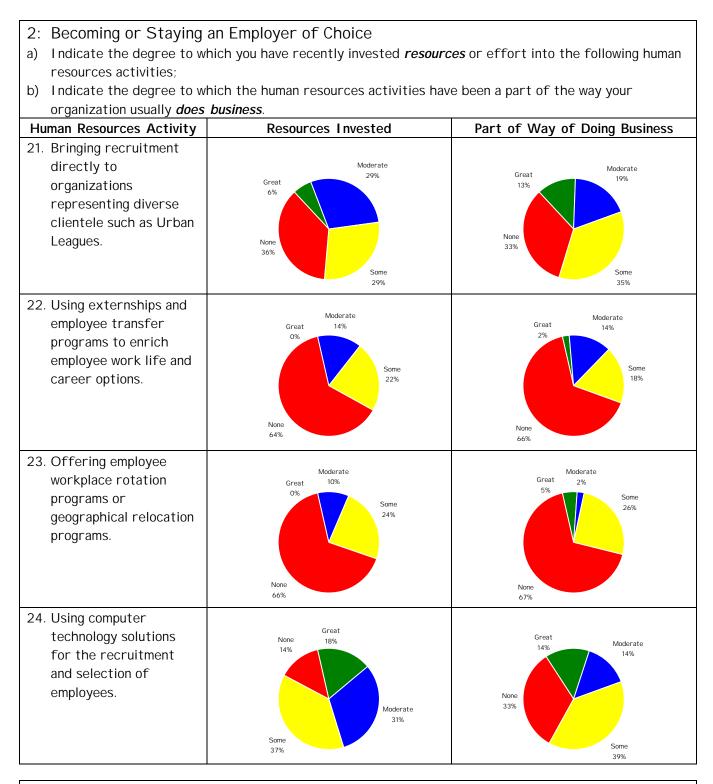
The programs that were seen to be emerging most strongly (are "on the drawing board" at the highest percentages) were telecommuting and wellness programs. Most others were being planned at a fairly consistent rate (10 to 15% of respondents).











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 teamwork and a commitment to services.

The organization supports internal and external learning—staff is intellectually challenged.

Offering cash compensation (finder fees) to any and all employees and associates.

Our organization participates in all available task forces, teams, committees, etc., that are charged with

HR Activities practiced by respondents not addressed in the foregoing:

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.

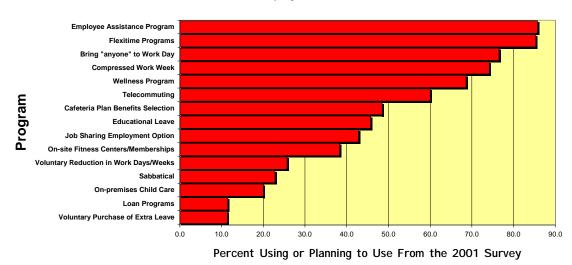
In reviewing gaps between "none" ratings for the resources being recently put into the organization versus how much the activity is a part of current business practices, there were clearly emerging activities within organizations; that is, activities many organizations seem to be trying to get off the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

The Winter 2001 Results

The identical Internet survey was administered the winter of 2001 to inspect any changes in the use of programs to help employees better balance work and life and to help employers stay or become an employer of choice. Not only did this re-administration of the survey help to establish the prevalence of certain employer practices, there was also the opportunity to learn if any practices were being used more or less frequently over the course of the two years that passed.



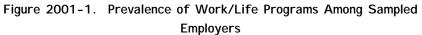


Figure 2001-1 shows the rank ordered prevalence of practices designed to help employees balance work and life. The two most prevalent were employee assistance (EAP) and flextime programs. Interestingly, ratings of the effects of the programs, practice, or benefit for the organization (refer to pages 3 through 7) were nearly identical from the data obtained two years ago. However, the prevalence rates did change for some of the "work-life" programs, practices, or benefits. The responses available for respondents to use with the surveyed items were "Tried/Abandoned", "Experts", Part of Operations", "On Drawing Board", and "Never Tried". The changes over the past two years are summarized below:

Program, practice, or benefit designed to help employees balance work and life	Change shown in the past two years
Employee Assistance Program	No change since 1999: Similarly high levels of use as a staple of helping employees
Flextime Programs	An increase of 16% use since 1999 reducing "never tried" from 23% to 9%
Bring "anyone" to Work Day	"Never tried" among the employers reduced from 34% to 17% since 1999
Compressed Work Week	Employers claiming this as "part of operations" increased from 38% to 54% since 1999
Wellness Program	12% went from "on the drawing board" to "part of operations" since 1999

Program, practice, or benefit designed to help employees balance work and life	Change shown in the past two years
Telecommuting	17% increase in being "part of operations" since 1999
Cafeteria Plan Benefits Selection	No change since 1999: Similar levels of use
Educational Leave	Employers trying and abandoning this practice increased from 2% to 9% since 1999
Job Sharing Employment Options	No change since 1999: Similar levels of use
On-Site Fitness Centers/Memberships	Employers trying and abandoning this practice doubled from 9% to 18% since 1999
Voluntary Reduction in Work Days/Weeks	No change since 1999: Similar levels of use
Sabbatical	No change since 1999: Similar levels of use
On-site Child Care	Reduction of "never tried" of 24% from previous level of 68% in 1999
Loan Programs	No change since 1999: Similar levels of use
Voluntary Purchase of Extra Leave	No change since 1999: Similar lack of use

Summarizing the foregoing information, it is pretty clear that employers have increased the use of flexible time programs, "bring friends/family to work" days, compressed work weeks, wellness programs, telecommuting, and child care options as strategies to assist employees in balancing life and work and more easily retaining them in just two years. On the other side of the coin, educational leave and fitness centers are strategies fewer employers are trying as compared to 1999. The information is instructive in that there clearly are strategies an increasing number of employers are rapidly adopting in order to retain their current workforce and assist their workforce in balancing work and life.

Other Programs shared by respondents in the 2001 survey not specifically mentioned in the foregoing:

Consideration of programs next fiscal year involving elder care, pet care, and legal aid. We offer ongoing courses on-site for alternative medicine, individual job and career satisfaction, and educational programs for parents and families.

Relaxed policy for family emergencies including telephone use and visits that don't interfere with work. Family coupons for zoo and YMCA/YWCA membership at reduced rates. Family events highlighting employee achievements such as Employee Value Day

We are in the process of implementing an on-site childcare center for City Employees.

We have started advancing 6 days sick leave and 6 days vacation to new employees so they don't feel so much stress from not having accumulated leave.

Tuition reimbursement program; enhanced training/professional development opportunities; "sick leave bank".

Family leave and Wisconsin's "substitution" law which allows employees to substitute any paid leave for unpaid family leave is a real benefit to Employees

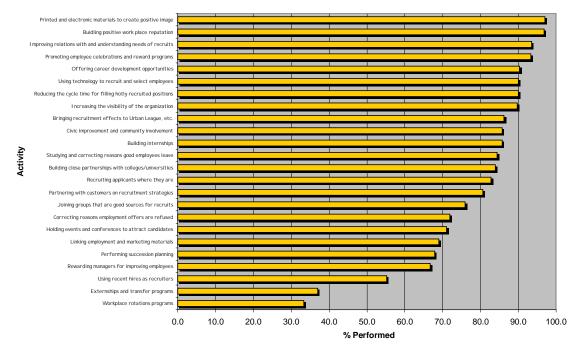


Figure 2001-2. Activities Performed for EOC

Table 2001-2 shows the prevalence rates of 24 practices that research has show that organizations use to retain or achieve status as an employer of choice.

Clearly from the obtained prevalence rates, twenty-two of the twenty-four listed practices were staples of at least half of the organizations. This is not surprising in and of itself since the list of practices came from literature on EOC activities of organizations. What are interesting are the types of changes that have taken place over the past two years. It may be important to identify which strategies have been adopted at an increased rate in response to the stresses of remaining a viable employer in today's economy. Recall that the responses for "Resources I nvested" and "Part of Way of Doing Business" available to respondents were "Great", "Moderate", "Some", and "None". The comparisons found below focus on the percentage of organizations investing nothing ("None") for the listed employee of choice practices in 1999 compared to 2001 and the direction that has taken.

Human Resources Activity	Resources Invested	Part of Way of Doing Business
1. Distributing printed or	"None" reduced from 18% to 3%	"None" reduced from 20% to 4%
electronic materials designed to present a positive image to potential employees		
2. Performing succession planning for hard to fill positions	"None" reduced from 42% to 34%	"None" reduced from 46% to 32%

Human Resources Activity	Resources Invested	Part of Way of Doing Business
3. Reducing the cycle time for filling hotly recruited positions	"None" reduced from 33% to 9%	"None" reduced from 27% to 10%
4. Building close recruiting partnerships with colleges and universities	"None reduced from 37% to 20%	"None" reduced from 29% to 16%
5. Building internships or similar entry level programs for recruitment leverage	"None" remains at 24%	"None" reduced from 33% to 14%
6. Increasing visibility of the organization to potential recruits	"None" reduced from 16% to 14%	"None" reduced from 20% to 10%
7. Offering career development opportunities as a benefit to employers	"None" reduced from 22% to 14%	"None" reduced from 13% to 10%
8. Improving relations with and understanding the needs of applicants/recruits	"None" reduced from 23% to 9%	"None" reduced from 31% to 7%
9. Contributing to civic improvement and community involvement	"None" increased from 18% to 27%	"None" reduced from 20% to 14%
10. Partnering with customers to evaluate and reform/revise recruitment strategies	"None" reduced from 43% to 26%	"None" reduced from 41% to 19%
11. Building a deserved reputation as a great place to work	"None" reduced from 43% to 9%	"None" reduced from 43% to 3%

Human Resources Activity	Resources Invested	Part of Way of Doing Business
12. Evaluating and correcting the reasons why valuable employees leave	"None" reduced from 18% to 6%	"None" reduced from 31% to 16%
13. Promoting employee celebrations and reward programs	"None" remained at around 10%	"None" reduced from 19% to 7%
14. Rewarding managers for increasing the value of their employees to the organization	"None" reduced from 52% to 38%	"None" reduced from 59% to 33%
15. Recruiting where applicants are located rather than expecting applicants to come to the organization	"None" reduced from 26% to 20%	"None" reduced from 26% to 17%
16. Using recently hired employees (non HR) as recruiters	"None" reduced from 70% to 43%	"None" reduced from 66% to 45%
17. Evaluating and trying to correct the reasons that employment offers are refused	"None" reduced from 47% to 27%	"None" reduced from 59% to 28%
18. Holding special events or conferences to attract potential job candidates	"None" reduced from 51% to 37%	"None" reduced from 40% to 29%
19. Becoming a part of organizations or groups (e.g., boards, commissions) that represent job candidates	"None" reduced from 38% to 29%	"None" reduced from 41% t o 24%
20. Combining employment information with any/all marketing materials	"None" increased from 33% to 41%	"None" reduced from 52% to 31%

Human Resources Activity	Resources Invested	Part of Way of Doing Business
21. Bringing recruitment	"None" reduced from 36% to 27%	"None" reduced from 33% to 14%
directly to organizations representing diverse clientele such as the Urban League		
22. Using externships and	"None" increased from 64% to 70%	"None" the same from 66% to 63%
employee transfer problems to enrich employee work life and career options		
23. Using employee rotation programs or geographical relocation programs	"None" increased from 66% to 71%	"None" reduced from 67% to 26%
24. Using computer technology solutions for the recruitment and selection of employees	"None" remained at 14%	"None" reduced from 33% to 10%

Other EOC strategies shared by respondents not captured in the foregoing:

Many programs such as Employee Value Day, Employee Recognition, Tuition Reimbursement, IT Training, World Day on the Mall (diversity), presence at the state fair, Web and interaction recruitment and selection.

Extensive e-recruiting on line, information transfer, participation in national groups for focused best practices, HR certification as an added quality incentive program, competency based incentives, job sharing/part-time recruitment for retirees.

We have adopted a COTS to develop OARS (on-line automated recruitment system). All applications are taken over the web, and evaluated by the computer—lists of eligible candidates can get to the manager within 4 days.

Out of state testing, consolidation of recruiting/testing processes through "cluster testing", career management assistance for existing employees, training on testing and interview skills for existing employees, tuition reimbursement for job-related testing.

Continuous improvement programs, employees are first customer, "ground-up" management, working to build a collaborative workforce; TQM, internal communications committee, quality council, employee rewards and recognition programs, training and development programs.

As a high-tech start-up, the market is very tight for our sector. Finding qualified candidates is a challenge, but our business model is very attractive.

These trends from 1999 to 2001 lead to some interesting speculations:

There will be fewer introductions of internships, employee recognition programs, and technological solutions for recruiting and selecting employees as employer of choice strategies. That is, these areas won't be considered the emerging battlegrounds where employers will be trying to outdo other employers for employer of choice status in the near future. However, note that 90% of sampled employers have technological solutions for recruiting and selecting employees;

- Civic & community involvement initiatives, angling for employees by sending out employment information with other company/organization information, externships and employee rotation programs are being abandoned as ways of becoming employers of choice;
- If an organization wants to keep up with other organizations in deploying effective employer of choice strategies, they need to use printed and electronic materials to bolster their image, build on positive images about their workplace, know their recruits and improve relationships with them, have strong employee celebrations and reward programs, offer career development opportunities, use lots of technology--right now to attract, recruit and select employees, reduce the cycle time to hire, and make the organization visible;

Where is the area where there has been the greatest change for resources invested? Building a deserved reputation as a great place to work. Only 9% now say they are doing nothing in this area for 2001 when 43% were doing nothing in 1999.