



The results of a recent survey by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) in London caused quite a stir in HR circles. The survey findings, summarized in a report entitled “Personnel Rewards,” showed that 56 percent of HR professionals in the United Kingdom are working an average of 20 percent more hours than they did in 2005.

“The original intent of the survey was to discover what compensation and benefits are currently enjoyed by HR professionals in the United Kingdom,” says Charles Cotton, rewards advisor at CIPD. “The finding about longer hours came as a surprise.”

Apparently, HR professionals in the United Kingdom are not the only ones working longer hours. Their American counterparts are spending more time at the office, too.

According to an annual census of its membership, WorldatWork, a Scottsdale, Arizona-based association, found that entry-level HR professionals in the United States work an average of 42 hours per week, while senior- and executive-level HR professionals work 48 to 54 hours per week.

# Chained to Your Desk? You're Not Alone

**Increased responsibility is keeping HR professionals at work longer.**

By Jennifer J. Salopek

# WorldatWork's survey results demonstrate that the further HR professionals advance up the career ladder, the longer their hours are likely to become.

Pete Ronza, compensation and benefits manager at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota, and member of the Society for Human Resources Management's Total Rewards Expertise Panel says, "That certainly describes my life. There is nothing there we don't know."

"Anecdotally, I find that most people think their hours are increasing," says Jennifer Schramm, manager of workplace trends and forecasting at SHRM.

## The changing face of HR

Schramm and Ronza identify two major workplace trends that may be contributing to increased hours among HR professionals: the changing nature of the profession—reflecting its stronger strategic links—and a labor market that is rebounding from years of stagnation and becoming increasingly competitive.

"In the past 20 years, HR has become more of a profession. The paper pushers are gone, and there has been an increase in responsible duties," says Ronza. "Although we have been more successful in demonstrating our return-on-investment, we are now killing ourselves because our supervisors and executives continue to pump us for more efficiency and more programs."

As their efforts become more closely tied to the formulation, implementation, and success of business strategy,

HR professionals may be seeing their hours expand as their duties do.

"Our human resources technology panel sees more technology in use, and increasing numbers of issues that stem from that," Schramm says. "For example, as employees increasingly use portable technology and mobile devices, our members have to be concerned with whether data is secure."

These mobile devices are also keeping workers connected 24/7.

"Our members have said that they are doing more with less, and working harder," says Tina Chiapetta, director of government affairs at the International Public Management Association for Human Resources in Alexandria, Virginia. "In particular, HR information-technology systems implementations are increasingly complex and time-consuming."

WorldatWork's survey results demonstrate that the further HR professionals advance up the career ladder, the longer their hours are likely to become. "The more senior the HR practitioner, the more likely she is working in a global environment that requires juggling multiple time zones and locations, which translates to working more hours," says Adam Sorensen, global total rewards practice leader for WorldatWork.

SHRM's Schramm notes that many senior-level HR professionals also are

managing multiple outside vendors. A survey by Hewitt Associates, a global HR services firm based in Illinois, showed that 94 percent of large companies outsourced at least one HR function or activity and planned to outsource more HR services by 2008. Respondents planned to expand outsourcing into leave management, learning and development, payroll, recruiting, health and welfare, and global mobility.

This could be a harbinger of increased hours for workplace learning professionals as well. Although neither ASTD nor the Canadian Society for Training and Development (CSTD) tracks the number of hours its members work, the CIPD study found that more than 60 percent of training managers reported working 40 or more hours per week.

"I think there is an increasing recognition that there is more integrity and value to the learning and development profession and its potential impact," says Lynn Johnston, president of CSTD in Toronto, Ontario. "As a result, we have always had to be smart about what 20 percent [of the work] to let fall off the desk."

## Increased responsibility

Some HR professionals welcome the increased expectations that are forcing longer hours.

"I think the comments from some CIPD members may be from those who have not been in the position long enough or have memory loss to what it was like 10 years ago," says Neil Lasher, CEO of Trainer1 in London. "The difference is that there is now a higher expectation on the HR professional to deliver. Organizations are looking closer at the results to determine value, and so they should. Maybe some had it a little 'easy' for a while."

CPID's Cotton notes, "Human resources are often at the forefront of many work-life balance initiatives. One unintended consequence may be the increase of their workloads."

A recent study demonstrates clearly that such issues are important to employees. SHRM's "2007 Job Satisfaction Report" explored 22 areas of job satisfaction and included input from more than 700 HR professionals and more than 600 American workers.

Researchers found that work-life balance was one of the top five aspects of job satisfaction, ranking only behind compensation, benefits, and security in importance, and was rated "very important" by 52 percent of responding employees.

"I do hear a lot about generational differences, and I know that we must be conscious of work-life balance, but I don't see any evidence of it actually happening," says CSTD's Johnston.

Many training and development professionals have found that balance by going into business for themselves as consultants.

"My direct billing hours average about 25 hours per week over one year," says Barry Nelson, president of Practical Management of Canada in Thorn Hill, Ontario. "I do very well financially, and I have a great life at all levels."

"Speaking for myself, I work fewer hours than I did a few years ago—a decision I made about lifestyle," says Kevin Lohan, coordinator of ASTD's Global Network in Australia.

HR professionals of all stripes may find themselves handling even heavier workloads in the near future.

The SHRM satisfaction report also notes, "About one-half of currently employed respondents reported that they were very likely to search for another job as the economy and job market continues to improve."

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