
News and Information

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Contact:

Marcia McDougall, Hewitt Associates, 416.227.5713, marcia.mcdougall@hewitt.com

Focusing on Employee Engagement Helped 2010's 50 Best Employers in Canada Weather Recession, According to Hewitt Associates' Research

Depth of Data Enables Organizations to Determine Whether Employees are Likely to Stay Once Economy Recovers

TORONTO—When the economy is in a nosedive, organizations would do well to keep their attention focused on their employees in order to cope with the downturn and be better positioned for recovery, according to findings from the 2010 Best Employers in Canada study, conducted by Hewitt Associates, a global human resources consulting and outsourcing company.

“The 50 organizations that appear on the 2010 list of the Best Employers in Canada faced the same challenges confronting virtually all employers, yet managed to maintain high employee productivity and commitment to organizational success,” said Neil Crawford, national leader of the Hewitt study. “Now that the economy is starting to recover and the demand for talent is heating up again, these employers will be able to retain key people, thanks to their focus on sustaining and improving high employee engagement.”

The list of the 50 Best Employers in Canada for 2010 (attached) appears in the January issue of The Globe and Mail's *Report on Business* magazine and in La Presse. One hundred and thirty-four Canadian organizations registered to participate in the study. The results from this year's study are based on survey responses from more than 108,000 Canadian employees, with additional input from over 1,200 leaders and human resources professionals.

Economic Downturn Results in Higher Engagement

Data from Hewitt's 2010 Best Employers in Canada study indicates that average employee engagement across all study participants is higher than it was a year ago—69 per cent versus 65 per cent. “The fact that employee engagement increases during an economic downturn is not unexpected,” stated Ted Emond, a senior consultant in Hewitt's Toronto office. “One of the determinants of engagement is a willingness to remain with one's current employer, so when there are fewer options, many employees are glad to stay put and hang on to the job they have.”

However, the “stay” factor is only one of three behaviours Hewitt assesses using answers to the employee survey component of the Best Employers in Canada study. The other two are “say”—how positively employees speak about their employer to others—and “strive”—how motivated they are to go “above and beyond” to contribute to business success. When employees respond positively to questions about all three factors, they are engaged. The average engagement score for the organizations that ranked amongst the year’s 50 Best Employers was 80 per cent, up from 76 per cent for last year’s list.

“The ‘say’ and ‘strive’ responses are important factors to consider, especially during a recession,” stated Emond. “When employers drill down into the data they receive as a study participant, they are able to determine whether their scores are higher because overall engagement has increased, or simply because employees are stuck. If the latter, organizations run the risk of losing key talent to competitors once the economy improves.”

“Recession-Proof” Behaviour

“Intuitively, it makes sense that having high employee engagement would make it easier to manage through a recession,” said Crawford. “Findings from the Best Employers study confirm this belief.”

Organizations with high engagement stated that their employees exhibited the following behaviours during the recent downturn:

- Support for improving productivity. Employers reported, for instance, that employees endorsed the introduction of new technologies and processes. They were ready to make changes to help improve the business.
- Willingness to make trade-offs. In several cases, for example, employees opted for reduced salaries and/or hours of work for all staff rather than see some co-workers laid-off.
- High trust and confidence in leaders. Employees really believed that their leaders were the right people to confront and overcome the challenges faced in tough times.

The “right way” to engage employees varies from one workplace to the next. For some, it means focusing on drivers of engagement like pay or recognition, while others will get positive results by revamping their approach to managing performance or career development. However, one characteristic common to all organizations with high engagement is open, transparent, complete and timely two-way communication, according to Emond. “During the last year, employees were well aware of the challenges the organization was facing, understood the possible solutions, proactively offered input, and committed to the course of action the organization’s leaders decided to follow.”

For the 50 organizations that appear on the 2010 Best Employers list, clear communication is nothing new. “The recent economic difficulties have not altered the Best Employers’ efforts to maintain a positive relationship with their employees,” said Crawford. “If anything, these challenges have provided an opportunity to renew their focus on employee engagement and build a sense of loyalty that will last beyond the recession.”

For additional information about the Best Employers in Canada study and to register online, please visit the Best Employers Web site at www.hewitt.com/bestemployerscanada

About Hewitt Associates

Hewitt Associates (NYSE: HEW) provides leading organizations around the world with expert human resources consulting and outsourcing solutions to help them anticipate and solve their most complex benefits, talent, and related financial challenges. Hewitt consults with companies to design and implement a wide range of human resources, retirement, investment management, health management, compensation, and talent management strategies. As a leading outsourcing provider, Hewitt administers health care, retirement, payroll, and other HR programs to millions of employees, their families, and retirees. With a history of exceptional client service since 1940, Hewitt has offices in 33 countries, including Canadian offices in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary and Regina, and employs approximately 23,000 associates who are helping make the world a better place to work. For more information, please visit www.hewitt.com/canada.

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The 2010 List of the 50 Best Employers in Canada

2010 marks the 11th anniversary of the Best Employers in Canada study. This year, the list of the Best Employers in Canada includes 25 organizations from Ontario, nine from Alberta, six from British Columbia, four from Quebec, three from Saskatchewan, one from Manitoba, one from Nova Scotia and one headquartered jointly in Ontario and Quebec. Eight organizations have never appeared on the Best Employers in Canada list before.

Rank	Organization	Headquarters
1	PCL Constructors Inc.	Edmonton, AB
2	EllisDon Corporation	London, ON
3	Cisco Canada	Toronto, ON
4	Bennett Jones LLP	Calgary, AB
5	CIMA+ Partner in Excellence	Laval, QC
6	WestJet	Calgary, AB
7	JTI-Macdonald Corp.	Mississauga, ON
8	BC Biomedical Laboratories Ltd.	Surrey, BC
9	Farm Credit Canada	Regina, SK
10	Edward Jones	Mississauga, ON
11	Wellington West Holdings Inc.	Winnipeg, MB
12	Stikeman Elliott LLP	Montreal, QC/Toronto, ON
13	Aecon Group Inc.	Toronto, ON
14	Marriott Hotels of Canada Ltd.	Mississauga, ON
15	GlaxoSmithKline Inc.	Mississauga, ON
16	Chubb Insurance Company of Canada	Toronto, ON
17	McDonald's Restaurants of Canada Limited	Toronto, ON
18	The Co-operators	Guelph, ON
19	Flight Centre Canada	Vancouver, BC
20	Delta Hotels and Resorts	Toronto, ON
21	LoyaltyOne Inc.	Toronto, ON
22	G&K Services Canada Inc.	Mississauga, ON
23	OMERS Administration Corporation	Toronto, ON
24	Scotiabank Group	Toronto, ON
25	AstraZeneca Canada Inc.	Mississauga, ON
26	TD Bank Financial Group	Toronto, ON
27	Conexus	Regina, SK
28	Earl's Restaurants Ltd.	North Vancouver, BC
29	Novartis Pharmaceuticals Canada Inc.	Dorval, QC

Rank	Organization	Headquarters
30	Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc. (Canada)	Toronto, ON
31	Ivanhoe Cambridge Inc.	Montreal, QC
32	Co-operators Life Insurance Company	Regina, SK
33	Graham Group Ltd.	Calgary, AB
34	Bentall LP	Toronto, ON
35	Canadian Western Bank	Edmonton, AB
36	ATB Financial	Edmonton, AB
37	Ericsson Canada Inc.	Town of Mount Royal, QC
38	Keg Restaurants Ltd.	Toronto, ON
39	Federal Express Canada Ltd.	Mississauga, ON
40	Coast Capital Savings Credit Union	Surrey, BC
41	Nova Scotia Community College	Dartmouth, NS
42	Envision Financial	Langley, BC
43	Meyers Norris Penny	Calgary, AB
44	Ceridian Canada Ltd.	Markham, ON
45	Cintas Canada Limited	Mississauga, ON
46	British Columbia Automobile Association	Burnaby, BC
47	Clark Builders	Edmonton, AB
48	Procter & Gamble, Inc.	Toronto, ON
49	Nexen Inc.	Calgary, AB
50	Novotel Canada	Mississauga, ON

For additional data from the 2010 study, or to speak with one of the year's Best Employers or a consultant from Hewitt Associates, please contact Marcia McDougall, 416.227.5713, marcia.mcdougall@hewitt.com