

How Well Staffed is Your HR Department?

written by Rory Lodge | April 21, 2014



Over half of working Canadians report being overwhelmed by their lives. According to the Conference Board of Canada, respondents also report that the workplace is their biggest stressor.

According to a 2010 survey from the Conference Board of Canada, based on data from 2008-2009, the FTE (full-time equivalent) HR ratio to staff was 2.02 HR staff per 100 employees.

In a 2013 survey conducted by Mercer Metrics, based on data gathered from around the globe, a similar ratio of 2% HR to staff was reported. In most countries, the staffing ratios for finance staff to employees were much higher than HR staff to employees. Across most regions, HR staff was also maintained at a higher level compared to IT staff, except in North America where IT outnumbered HR, averaging over 4% compared to the 2% for HR.

In early April, we asked HR insider readers a general question about your staffing levels and this is what you told us:

How well staffed is your HR team or department?

- 1) I am satisfied with current HR staffing levels
- 2) We do not really have an official HR staff member, so one would be great!
- 3) I could use more help but do not another full-time HR staff
- 4) I need one more full-time person
- 5) I am struggling due to significant understaffing



Most HR Insiders Report Being Understaffed

60% of HR Insider readers reported that they were in need of additional staffing, though they varied on how much more staffing they would require. Only 40% of HR Insider readers reported that they were satisfied with current HR staffing levels.

A closer look at the data indicates a wide range of additional staffing needs. Over 1

in 10, or 12%, reported that they were significantly understaffed; 20% indicated they needed another full-time HR professional; 20% reported that a little additional help would be appreciated and 8% said they were making it without any formal HR staff.

What Can We Take Away From This Survey?

Understaffing can lead to a range of workplace challenges. Problems with morale, reduced productivity, and increased errors are commonly manifested in an overworked workforce.

This survey did not ask you to identify HR to staff ratios, but your perceptions of staffing levels. Accordingly, it is worth the time to stop and examine your current HR staffing levels and identify how you can resolve any understaffing issues. Your options could include:

1. Hiring an additional part-time staff on a contract or a permanent part-time staff. If budgets are tight you may consider bringing in a new graduate in a junior role;
2. Bringing in a temporary employee hired through a staffing agency to support your department on an as-needed basis;
3. Hiring a contract HR professional to work on specific projects to free up existing staff to manage other tasks;
4. Bringing in new HR technology or automating some processes to take up some of the workload; and/or,
5. Reviewing workflow to determine if time and resources are being efficiently undertaken.

Being overwhelmed leads to stress that can impact your personal health and the health of the organization. If you are among the 40% who feel staffing levels are adequate, you're in good shape. Make sure to review your staffing levels in 6 months, just to ensure you're on the right track.

Source

[The Conference Board Of Canada Q&A: HR and Compensation](#)

Mercer Metrics for Your Workforce Webcast April 2013