



Financial crisis has created lack of self-belief in workers

Greater intensity at work and the lack of social interaction is taking its toll on people's confidence, writes **Fiona Smith**.

Twelve months ago, workers were blaming their bosses for the fine mess they'd got us into. But now, their ill-feeling has turned inwards, and they are wondering if they are really up to the job.

A survey of 700 people shows the pressures wrought by the financial crisis have affected self-belief, which could affect productivity and encourage people to ditch their careers.

The poll by RogenSi, a performance consultancy, finds more people are agreeing with the statement: "Recently, I have found myself starting to doubt myself under pressure at work."

Asia Pacific director Dr Clark Perry, a psychologist, says most interesting was the discovery that women's belief in self was significantly lower than men's last year (at 67 per cent for women, versus 73 per cent) and then has plummeted over the past 12 months.

Women's self-belief now sits at about 56 per cent, while male self-belief has merely been dented in comparison, at about 69 per cent.

Male self-confidence at work would be expected to be higher than women's. It has long been said that men, when they are given a job or promotion, assume they can do it and that it is recognition of their abilities.

Meanwhile, women are more likely to spend more time trying to prove they are up to the job, wanting to justify their employers' faith in them.

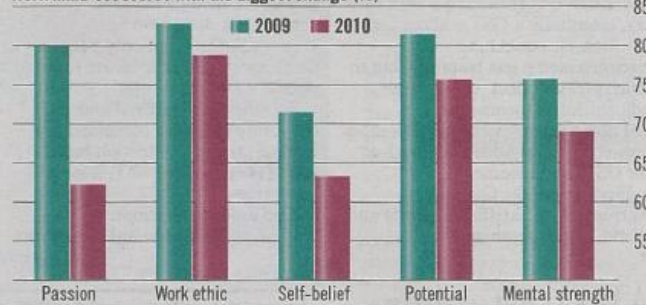
But the dramatic fall in women's confidence was not expected, says Perry.

Not quite knowing what was behind the statistics, Perry pulled together a focus group of 30 women last month to discuss how the financial crisis had affected them.

Not surprisingly, the women

Down, down, deeper and down

Work mind-set scores with the biggest change (%)



SOURCE: ROGENSI

discussed the long work hours with very little reward and recognition.

But then they started talking about the lack of social contact with others.

The greater intensity of the work meant that people no longer had the time for the little discussions that normally take place during the day.

It turns out women need the chat about work.

"They often rely on that feedback to know they are going well. In the absence of that feedback, they assume they are not up to it," Perry says.

What leaders have to do is start making time to talk to their people once more.

"They are really missing that social interaction in the workplace because people have been so busy.

"It is a stark reminder that, as leaders, you have to keep in touch."

Another telling point of the survey was that younger people have been harder hit.

Perry says the self-belief of younger people, in the 25 to 35 age group, was lowest, perhaps because they are in the crucial child-rearing years and most likely to be suffering mortgage stress.

Older people are also bolstered by

the knowledge they have seen recessions before.

Perry says younger women have the lowest scores of all.

"Young females are feeling increasingly isolated and undervalued – chipping away at their self-belief and passion for their work and negatively impacting organisational performance."

Other findings of the poll are that passion for work has dropped significantly (17.7 per cent) to a score of 5.36 on a scale of 1 to 8. This was exacerbated for younger people, who recorded an almost 25 per cent drop.

The sense of job potential fell 6 per cent, mental strength 6.9 per cent, and work ethic 4.3 per cent.

As well, 26 per cent of those polled were suffering "depressive agitators", which are common indicators of depression. This is in line with depression rates found in the general population but, again, would have a major impact on personal and organisational performance.

The good news, however, is that this situation is reversible, Perry says. What leaders have to do is start making time to talk to their people once more and invest in career planning.

Other tips are: find ways to reward effort as well as performance; invest in your people (it doesn't have to be monetary); sell people on "the vision"; and build a strong team culture.



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THE BUSINESS END

Management Update

Report: Leo D'Angelo Fisher

Global financial crisis takes toll on morale

Employees exhausted by the global recession are one of the biggest threats to an organisation's performance, research for the annual rogenSi Global Mindset Index shows.

The survey of 668 employees found many workers had less fervour for their jobs and confidence in their abilities than they did a year ago.

RogenSi director Clark Perry says that if left unattended, plunging workplace morale will result in "a wave of resignations" as employees seek greener pastures. "Following the global financial

crisis, some organisations have been operating at a frenetic pace and have become blinkered and focused on trying to achieve outcomes or indeed just survive," he says. "The result has been much more demand on employees' time with little or no reward or recognition."

The survey found that 26 per cent of employees were suffering from symptoms considered to be indicators of depression. Gen Y workers (aged 25-35) are feeling the brunt of the crisis of confidence, with one in four reporting they had less passion for their job.



Law firm takes action against unwanted risks

Alex Halliday, a partner and general counsel of law firm Minter Ellison, believes risk management is critical to the multinational firm's continued success. "The events of the last 18 months have highlighted the importance of good risk management," he says. "The key

challenge now is to manage the risk of uncertainty while preparing the business for an improving economy." Halliday nominates three keys to successful risk management: structure, communication and culture. All employees are trained to bring problems – and

potential problems – to the attention of their supervisors. "People know that they can make contact with someone about a problem, making sure that a potential risk doesn't turn into something serious," he says. "We educate all our people on the importance of not making mistakes but if a mistake is

made, they know to raise it immediately and have it addressed. If you can get that into the culture you get to address issues earlier and better." Having the structures and reporting lines in place is essential. "There's no point identifying a problem if you don't have the people and systems to address it," he says.

One-third of CVs are works of fiction

One-third of job applicants lie on their resumes or during job interviews, human resources consultant SHL has found in a survey of 1000 Australians who have been on a job interview in the past two years. The survey found that 32 per cent of job applicants had exaggerated work experience, offered fake references or lied about previous income. SHL national director Stephanie Christopher says that with so many candidates "massaging" their work histories, it is becoming more difficult for employers to hire the right people. The research found that the most common deceit was exaggerating work experience: 17 per cent admitted to embellishing their job history. The next most common lies were offering friends as false referees (16 per cent), lying about previous salaries (10 per cent), faking references (6 per cent) and fabricating qualifications (3 per cent). "Not only are organisations at risk of hiring the wrong candidate, there is real potential that they have cycled the best person for the job before reaching the interview stage," Christopher warns.

Another fillip for female board representation

The Australian Institute of Company Directors has introduced a scholarship program aimed at increasing the number of women on Australian boards.

It says 70 scholarships will be awarded to "board-ready" women over the next two years, providing them with free AICD membership and enrolment in AICD company director courses.

The scholarship program is the latest measure in a wider gender diversity initiative announced by the AICD in November last year. The centrepiece of that move was a mentoring program that

involves 56 chairmen and senior directors from S&P/ASX 200 companies working with 63 qualified women in a 12-month mentoring relationship.

Candidates for the scholarships will be selected by the AICD and the Australian Government Office for Women.

According to AICD data, the proportion of women on S&P/ASX 200 boards during 2010 has increased from 8.3 per cent to 9.5 per cent.

So far this year, 25 per cent of board appointments to S&P/ASX 200 companies have been women.

Recruiter lands international role

The president of the Recruitment and Consulting Services Association, Steve Shepherd, has been appointed a director of the Brussels-based peak body for private employment agencies, the The International Confederation of Private Employment Agencies. The body represents

42 national recruitment industry associations. Shepherd says the appointment will ensure the RCSA has a voice in international talks about changes to employment law. "In today's global economy, employment legislation in other parts of the world has

the potential to impact Australian organisations," he says. As a director, Shepherd will attend the confederation's board meetings three times a year. Shepherd, who has been RCSA president since 2005, is operations director at recruitment firm Randstad.



The Australian - 7/8/10

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Review

WORKOUT

Low morale risks mass resignations

A PERFORMANCE crisis may result from low morale and lack of proper leadership in companies over the past two years. Many employees have lost their passion for their jobs and a wave of resignations may follow, says a study from global consultancy **rogenSi**.

Lack of motivation is one of the key findings of **rogenSi**'s 2010 Global Mindset Index.

There is uncertainty and nervousness says **rogenSi** director and psychologist Clark Perry. "The result has been much more demand on employees' time with little or no reward or recognition for effort."

Gen Y employees, particularly young women, have been particularly affected. "It would appear that leaders are not doing enough to communicate the organisation's commitment to them," Perry says. The risk of inaction is mass resignations or poor performance, he warns.

The Advertiser - 7/8/10

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Employment

Heart just not in it these days for some employees

Key findings from global management consultancy **rogenSi**'s 2010 Global Mindset Index shows passion for their job fell 18 per cent on the previous year and that the self-belief of Generation Y workers plummeted during the global financial crisis with a drop off of 22.5 per cent. Only a year ago the index showed that while employees doubted their leaders, they still believed in themselves.

rogenSi director and psychologist Dr Clark Perry says these results "ring alarm bells" for organisations.

"Following the GFC, some organisations have been operating at a frenetic pace and have become blinkered and so focused on trying to achieve outcomes or indeed just survive," he says. "The result has been much more demand on employees' time with little or no reward or recognition for the effort."

"The message to leaders is take positive action now. If you delay, you risk mass resignations or poor performance on the job."

The Courier-Mail - 7/8/10

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Work in progress

Lacking lustre

COMPANIES may have survived the economic downturn but employees are struggling to bounce back, according to **rogenSi**'s 2010 Global Mindset Index. It finds that passion for jobs has plummeted this year, with Gen Ys and women recording the biggest slumps - more than 20 per cent compared with last year. The index also finds that 26 per cent of people are suffering from symptoms specified by the World Health Organisation as indicators of depression.



On Line Articles

HR Leader - 5/8/10

Link: <http://www.humanresourcesmagazine.com.au/articles/0e/0c06b70e.asp>

Australian workers' passion for job damaged by GFC

The GFC has hit Australian employee engagement hard, with new research revealing that workers' passion for the job has dropped 18 per cent in the past year.

RogenSi's Global Mindset Index also revealed that workers have lost self belief, as well as in their leaders, while one fifth of employees are suffering from symptoms of depression.

Dr Clark Perry, director and psychologist at RogenSi, said: "These results ring alarm bells for organisations. Uncertainty and nervousness across the global marketplace are now being internalised and have dramatically affected employees.

"Following the GFC, some organisations have been operating at a frenetic pace and have become blinkered and so focused on trying to achieve outcomes or indeed just survive. The result has been much more demand on employees' times with little or no reward or recognition for the effort."

Last year's report showed that while employees doubted their leaders, they still believed in themselves.

The 2010 Global Mindset Index looked inside the mindset of the workforce across 26 key behaviour areas including company prospects, passion, worth ethic, leadership, motivation, self-belief, organisation strategy and teamwork.

A total of 668 employees were surveyed across various age groups, job titles and industry sectors, with some dramatic downward trends emerging:

Here are the key findings:

- Workforce passion for the job: a key internal motivating mindset, dropped an alarming 18 per cent on the previous year - significant because it is the largest indicator of self belief
- Generation Y (25-35 year olds): 23 per cent drop in passion for the job and as a group, they are questioning themselves more than any other age group
- Generation Y females: displayed a massive 23 per cent drop in passion for the job as well as falls in self belief and mental strength
- 26 per cent of the workforce surveyed is suffering from symptoms specified by World Health Organisation (WHO) as indicators of depression. While in line with depression levels found in the general population, these can significantly impact personal and organisational performance.



Dynamic Business - 3/8/10

Link:<http://www.dynamicbusiness.com.au/articles/articles-news/employee-depression-productivity-0007.html>

Employee depression killing workplace productivity

Australian employees have lost their passion for the job as well as their belief in themselves and their leaders, a new survey has found.

The 2010 Global Mindset Index, released by global consultancy rogenSi, has found a dramatic erosion of motivation and a loss of mental toughness in the workplace since last year. It found that workforce passion for the job, the largest indicator of self-belief, dropped 18 percent on the previous year.

These results ring alarm bells for organisations, according to rogenSi Director and psychologist Dr Clark Perry.

“Uncertainty and nervousness across the global marketplace are now being internalised and have dramatically affected employees,” said Dr Perry.

“Following the GFC, some organisations have been operating at a frenetic pace and have become blinkered and so focused on trying to achieve outcomes or indeed just survive. The result has been much more demand on employees’ times with little or no reward or recognition for the effort,” added Dr Perry.

The survey also found that Generation Y has been most adversely affected by the GFC, recording an almost 25 percent drop in passion for the job. Young women aged 25-34 years old are also suffering, recording a 23 percent drop in passion for the job as well as a fall in self-belief and mental strength.

Leaders must take action now to avoid mass resignations or poor performance on the job, says Dr Perry.

“For females and Generation Y workers, it would appear that leaders are not doing enough to communicate the organisation’s commitment to them. In addition, they are failing to provide adequate feedback on performance and are neglecting to outline their professional progress within the organisation,” said Dr Perry.

“Disaffected team members will limit Exceptional Performance. It will also become much tougher to retain skilled and capable staff who have years of service and potential ahead of them.”



Human Capital - 3/8/10

Link: <http://www.hcamag.com/news/when-a-volcano-meets-a-tornado-gfc-wrecking-ball-collides-with-gen-y/48613>

When a volcano meets a tornado: GFC wrecking ball collides with Gen Y

Alarming results from two recent surveys reveal erosion of motivation and a loss of mental toughness has fully spawned in the workplace with Gen Y females the worst affected.

The rogenSi 2010 Global Mindset Index looked inside the mindset of the workforce across 26 key behaviour areas including company prospects, passion, worth ethic, leadership, motivation, self-belief, organisation strategy and teamwork.

Gen Y responded worst with their self-belief hammered by the GFC.

They recorded an almost 25% (22.5%) drop in passion for the job from last year's results and as a group they are questioning themselves more than any other age group.

Gen Y results reveal females to be suffering the most with a massive 23% admitting to a drop in passion for the job as well as falls in self-belief and mental strength.

The workforce on a whole responded badly with key internal motivating mindset down and a passion for the job shrinking, the results dropping an alarming 18% on the previous year.

Possibly the most distressing of all findings was the discovery that 26% of the workforce is suffering World Health Organisation indicators of depression.

rogenSi director and psychologist, Dr Clark Perry, said only a year ago the Index showed that while employees doubted their leaders, they still believed in themselves. "These results ring alarm bells for organisations. Uncertainty and nervousness across the global marketplace are now being internalised and have dramatically affected employees.

"Following the GFC, some organisations have been operating at a frenetic pace and have become blinkered and so focused on trying to achieve outcomes or indeed just survive. The result has been much more demand on employees' times with little or no reward or recognition for the effort," Perry said.

And these results are not alone, Sydney based firm Aequalis consulting have released their own survey findings showing 22% of workers would consider leaving their current employer without an opportunity to go to. Sixty-seven per cent suggested progression was their main motivator for their job search, whilst a further 23% claimed increase in pay was their draw card.

An alarming 54% confirmed low morale and stress caused by increase workload during 2009 beginning of 2010 was a major contributor.

These results completely conflict with a survey conducted in May last year, with 72% of respondents confirming they would stay in their current job due to the uncertainty in the economy, even if they were unhappy.

Director of Aequalis Consulting, Simon Boulton, said these results come as no surprise as many employers have taken advantage of the economic conditions, and neglected their employees at huge costs. "Employers need to better understand the changes in employees' sentiment and expectations, and need to address succession planning and re introduce employee benefits such as training and development," he said.

Whilst hiring is on the increase, and teams are expanding, Boulton predicts that many employers will need to have retention strategies in place as disgruntled employees are prepared to walk. "Now is a good time for employers to empower hiring managers, and equip them with training and development in how to hire," he said.



12 August 2010 8:23am

How to assess workplace culture

Employers often make the mistake of treating their workplace culture aspirations differently from their more concrete goals, says rogenSi director Jim Robertson.

Instead, the question of whether an organisation's existing culture will support its goals must to be asked in the *planning phase* of all new business strategies, he says.

If the answer is no, the leadership team should decide what culture *would* be most effective in supporting its goals, and devise a strategy for bridging significant gaps.

Robertson, who describes policy as "what is prescribed" and culture as "what actually happens", says how workers interpret the behaviour of those around them - particularly leaders - is often of greater "relevance" than written instruction.

But "the direction in which they're steered by the organisation's processes and systems" - such as compensation arrangements and bonus systems - will obviously influence how staff "feel about, think about [and] orientate themselves towards, the business".

Because assessments of workplace culture involve "the way people are thinking and feeling" - which is "fluid" - they will always lack precision.

But with the right approach, "you can certainly get a pretty good fix on it", he says.

According to Robertson, assessments of workplace culture should utilise:

- **Instruments** - such as surveys. Anonymity facilitates honest answers, and benchmarking can achieve a degree of objectivity.
- **Indicators** - patterns of behaviour or activity, such as staff turnover or attendance at social functions, are also telling. In many cases, the relevant indicators will depend on context. If a manufacturer is assessing its safety culture, indicators would include statistics on workplace incidents and near-misses; if a financial services company is assessing its risk culture, it might look for spikes in debt activity.
- **Intelligence** - both intellectual and emotional ("what we see, what we feel, what we hear") - of leaders and managers should be used to connect with people and gauge their thoughts and feelings. "Ultimately, it's about talking to people - and having an opportunity to hear from people - in a safe, candid and authentic manner."



Culture is a "critical enabler"

Robertson says having a clear understanding of the link between a company's culture and goals is "critical" to achieving success. If, after assessing its culture, an employer identifies a need for change, it should:

1. **Set direction** - clarify aims and ensure they are realistic and achievable. Paint a "very rich picture" of what the end result should look like, and devise clear strategies. This is the time to identify "blockers", for example, past failures of the organisation that could - if unaddressed - discourage staff, or dissension among leaders that needs to be resolved.
2. **Engage and excite the team** - ensure leaders are clear about the direction and how to realise it. Give them the opportunity to air concerns, and ensure the change is perceived as "real" and "safe".
3. **Execute** - in order of priority. Remember the "change agents" responsible for execution have day jobs. Ensure they are well-equipped and capable, then hold them accountable for playing their part.
4. **Sustain momentum** - the greatest challenge leaders face is sustaining momentum, Robertson says. If momentum is lost and the change "unravels", the culture will need to be re-examined all over again. "You'll either be back to square one, or you'll be half done," he warns. You might even be further away, because you've "scattered" people's views of your aims.

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