Tipping Scales: Work-Life Balance Outweighs Salary as Top Perk for Canadian Workers

One-third of working Canadians surveyed say work-life balance plays a more important role than prior to the pandemic

TORONTO, Sept. 15, 2021 /CNW/ - While salary and benefits historically top the list of incentives for current and prospective employees, a new study by ADP Canada and Maru Public Opinion indicates work-life balance now outweighs pay. The study found respondents prioritizing work-life balance as a top factor for remaining in their current workplace and when exploring new opportunities.

Eyeing New Industries and Opportunities

While there is no doubt the pandemic hasn't left any sector untouched, it's also affected how working Canadians feel about their industry or current position. According to the survey, 15 per cent of employed Canadians voluntarily transitioned to a new position, a new industry or left the workforce altogether during the pandemic. When looking at just remote workers, that number grew to 22 per cent.

When asked why they decided to change their career path, working Canadians cited changes in their personal lives (33%), the need to limit workload and stress (29%) and the desire for more flexible hours (28%) as their top three reasons - underscoring that work-life balance played a key role in their decision for change.

As for who's been making the jump to a new industry, young Canadians, aged 18-34, were the most likely to report transitioning to a new industry during the pandemic at 13 per cent, compared to only three per cent of those aged 35-54.

The Rise of Remote Work

Throughout the pandemic, many industries transitioned to remote work. What started as a short-term solution is now a new way of life for many Canadian employees, and an expectation for new candidates.

According to the survey, nine-out-of-ten remote workers hope to continue working remotely some or all days during the week, citing, work-life balance as the most important factor. When asked to compare their current priorities to those before the pandemic, 31 per cent of working Canadians say that a job that respects their work-life balance is more important to them now, compared to only 20 per cent who felt salary had become more important.

This focus on work-life balance was even more apparent when it came to remote workers, with 39 per cent saying work-life balance is more important to them now than pre-pandemic. Canadians aged 35-54 also felt this way, with 42 per cent putting work-life balance at the top of the list, compared to 37 per cent of respondents aged 18-34 and 38 per cent of respondents aged 55+.

"The data shows there has been a significant shift in what working Canadians value within their current workplace, and what they're looking for from future employers," said Heather Haslam, Vice President Marketing, ADP Canada. "For what appears to be the first time ever, more and more Canadians - especially those who work remotely - are prioritizing work-life balance, over salary."

Impact on Recruiting

This prioritization of work-life balance also appears to be influencing how companies recruit new talent.

According to the survey, one-in-five (19%) of employed Canadians have been approached by a competing employer in the past six months offering better work conditions – and this strategy appears to be working. When asked about their next work-life move, 63 per cent of Canadians have started to think about it.

As to what they're looking for in a new role, work-life balance topped the list once again, with one-third (32%) of working Canadians stating that an organization that respects their work-life balance is most important to them when they're looking for a new job. This was followed by salary at 25 per cent.

"This data draws a clear picture of what working Canadians are looking for, and what workplaces should be prioritizing as we move forward," adds Haslam. "Work and life are not independent entities fighting for a 50/50 balance. To attract and retain employees, companies need to acknowledge work and life are intertwined with one affecting the other."

Survey Methodology

From September 1st to September 3rd 2021, an online survey of 3,032 randomly selected Canadian adults who are Maru Voice Canada panelists (of whom 1,775 were employed) was executed by Maru/Blue. For comparison purposes, a probability sample of this size has an estimated margin of error (which measures sampling variability) of +/- 2.2%, 19 times out of 20. The results have been weighted by education, age, gender and region (and in Quebec, language) to match the population, according to Census data. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

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