International Brain Drain:

Contributed by GfK NOP
Monday, 25 July 2011
Last Updated Tuesday, 26 July 2011

Bleak economic future leads British workers to look overseas for a better job

Over 7.5 million UK employees willing to change countries to change their careers

Just under a quarter looking to leave their employer within 12 months

7.6 million British workers are willing to move overseas to improve their job prospects, new research by leading employee engagement researchers, GfK NOP Engage, reveals.1

The GfK International Employee Engagement Study reveals the extent of the brain drain facing Britain, as it struggles to emerge from recession. More than a quarter of British workers are willing to move country to find a better job (27 per cent), possibly driven by a desire to escape the UKâ€™s soaring cost of living and static wages.

And it is Britainâ€™s young, qualified employees who are most likely to feel this workplace wanderlust: well over two-thirds (36 per cent) of workers aged 18-29 agreed they are willing to move countries to find a better job, while that figure is one in three for degree holders (31 per cent) and nearly two in five for people with postgraduate qualifications (38 per cent). This is compared to just a fifth of employees educated to secondary-school level (23 per cent).

In news that further displays the levels of dissatisfaction felt by many UK workers, almost 6.5 million (23 per cent) are looking to change employer in the next year2.

Sukhi Ghataore, Director at GfK NOP Engage says,
"Our findings indicate Britain has a risk of â€˜brain drainâ€™ in the coming year, posing significant problems for companies looking to recover from the downturn. Both blue collar and white collar workers in the UK show a quarter (27 and 26 per cent respectively) of their number are willing to look overseas for work â€“ and that figure rises for the higher educated workers. Even if only a fraction of these people actually make the move abroad, UK businesses will face a significant loss of talent, just at the time they most need it.â€•

Latin America is hardest hit
Internationally, more than a quarter of the workforce in countries questioned (27 per cent) is willing to move to another country to find better employment.

Unsurprisingly, the findings show that Central and Southern America look set to be the hardest hit of the markets covered. Nearly six in 10 Mexican employees (57 per cent), half of Colombiaâ€™s workforce (52 per cent) and two fifths of staff in Brazil and Peru (41 and 38 per cent respectively) are ready to look across borders for better careers.

But the trend is not limited to developing markets. Other markets coming in at the top of the 17 countries asked about willingness to move countries to find a better job include: Turkey in 3rd place with 46 per cent, Hungary in 7th place (33 per cent), followed by Russia (29 per cent), and then Portugal and the UK coming in 9th equal with 27 per cent each.

Even the US and Canada â€“ countries traditionally stereotyped for their relative disinterest in living abroad - face a fifth of their workers saying that they are ready to move countries to find a better job, at 21 per cent and 20 per cent respectively.

Source: GfK International Employee Engagement Survey, 2011
As well as countries needing to guard against brain drain across borders, there is a warning for companies too, with more than one in four workers in the international study saying that they intend to leave their current employer within 12 months.

Of those, one in three is already actively looking for a new job right now (35 per cent) and one in five (18 per cent) is looking to move in the next six months. Just eight per cent of employees intend to wait until the economy is more secure.

The situation looks particularly worrying for Colombia and the USA, where 39 per cent and 23 percent respectively intend to leave in the next year and, of those, around half are actively looking to move jobs now. At the other end of the scale, Belgium faces a far more stable retention environment, with only 19 per cent intending to leave in the next twelve months and 15 per cent of those looking to change employers immediately.

Todayâ€™s globalised and fluid labour market
Explaining the figures, Ghataore continues, "The findings highlight just how globalised and fluid the labour market has become in many countries. The truth remains that, for many employees, moving country is no more daunting than moving company. Companies looking to recruit, engage and retain the best staff need to compete, not just against rivals in their own nations and markets, but from right around the world.

"The research also reveals that employees in multinational organizations are those most likely to look elsewhere. This suggests that allowing employees to work overseas is not just a perk but a valuable retention tool.â€•
About the survey

1 The UK population aged 18 or over is 48,675,400 (ONS latest statistics 2009); 57.85% of those are working full or part time (GfKâ€™s Financial Research Survey 2010) = 28,158,719; 27% of UK workers aged 18 or over say they would move abroad to find a better job (GfK International Employee Engagement Survey) = 7,602,854

2 28,158,719 British workers aged 18 or over, of which 23% are looking to change employer in the next year = 6,476,505.

The GfK International Employee Engagement Survey includes the opinions of 30,556 working adults in 29 countries who were interviewed between February 8th and April 4th 2011 using online, telephone or in-person interviewing techniques appropriate to the country.

Data were weighted to represent the demographic composition (industry, gender and age) of each country. To produce global statistics that combine countries, the data for each country was also weighted by GDP (PPP).

The questionnaire was developed by an international team of GfK experts, with input from experts in each of the 29 countries.

Countries surveyed were: Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Macedonia, Mexico, Netherlands, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, UK, Ukraine, USA.

About GfK NOP Engage
GfKâ€™s employee engagement experts offer a wide range of information and consultancy services that help organizations develop their talent more effectively, e.g. employee engagement, talent management, HR & team effectiveness, corporate culture, change management or working conditions including safety and health in the workplace.

27 June 2011