Job Security and Meaningful Work in High Demand for Today’s Workforce


San Francisco and New Brunswick, NJ -- May 23, 2012 -- A new nationwide study examining work life and jobs with meaning finds that 65% of university students expect to make an impact on causes and issues they care about in their future job.

The study, Net Impact’s Talent Report: What Workers Want in 2012, is a nationally representative sample of college-educated workers in three generations—Millennials, GenerationXers and Baby Boomers - and current college students. To read the executive summary or the entire survey, please visit www.netimpact.org/whatworkerswant

Critical findings include:

**Demand for “impact jobs”:** Two thirds (65%) of workers and students said that “the potential to contribute to society” and “a job that will make the world a better place” is very important to them, with about one in four deeming this to be essential.

- Most university students (65%) expect to be able to make some positive social or environmental difference through their work.

‘Having a job where they can make an impact on causes and issues that are important to them’, is something the vast majority of undergraduate and graduate students want out of their work life. Seven-in-ten say this is “very important” to them, which includes 31 percent who say it is “essential.” **Impact jobs” connect to job satisfaction:** Twice as many employees who say they have an opportunity at their job to make a positive social or environmental impact on the world report being very satisfied with their jobs compared to people who are in jobs that don’t have such an opportunity.

“For the first time, we have data that shows a direct connection between job satisfaction and making a difference at work,” said Net Impact CEO, Liz Maw. “Employees today don’t want to
check their values at the door when they arrive at their jobs, and the ability to live and work with strong social meaning is clearly important to them."

**Job attributes:**

The survey identified the five top job attributes, of 16 presented to rank, that workers want from their worklife: a good work/life balance, a positive work environment, good compensation, having interesting work to do and job security.

Cliff Zukin, the Rutgers Professor who directed the study commented, "We may be looking at the end of the millennial generation, a casualty of the recession. It seems unusual for those in their early 20s to so highly value job security given how self-confident and entrepreneurial the Millennial generation has seemed to be. It may well be that today's university students are the follow-up to the Millennial generation, and may more closely resemble the GenX generation, which came of age in a climate of economic insecurity."

**Students Facing Future Workplace Reality:** Undergraduates are under no illusions about how difficult it will be to find a job when they graduate into an economy where unemployment is close to nine percent.

- Just one in ten students think it is going to be 'very easy' to find a job, and only another 23 percent say it will be 'somewhat easy.' Nearly half (46%) say finding a job will be "somewhat difficult," with another 13 percent believing that it will be "very difficult."

- When a follow up question is posed asking them to rank how difficult it will be to find a job they really want to do, just under a quarter think it will be either 'very' or 'somewhat easy.' Just 11 percent believe they will have a great deal of choice in jobs when they graduate college.

- Two thirds of the undergraduates and three quarters of the graduate students surveyed say they expect to owe money for school or other reasons when they finish. The median debt for those juniors and seniors saying they will owe money is $25,000.

**Money and Meaning for Tomorrow's Leaders:** Despite current employment outlooks and a lack of real-world experience, graduating students still maintain a desire to work for and with purpose, even if means a smaller paycheck. Of the students surveyed:

- Over half (58%) would take a 15 percent pay cut to 'work for an organization whose values are like my own.'

- Almost half (45%) would take a 15 percent pay cut to 'have a job that makes a social or environmental impact on the world.'

- Over a third (35%) would take a 15 percent pay cut to 'work for a company committed to corporate and environmental sustainability.'

"Young people in college and grad school see making a social impact as a critical part of their career," says Maw. "Even in a depressed job market, these resilient and optimistic students are leading with their values."

The study was conducted to investigate what workers want out of their jobs in the year 2012; it examined demand for impact jobs, and how the youngest generation of workers might differ from
their older counterparts. The survey also set out to consider how life goals, job satisfaction, 'impact jobs' in practice and citizen activities rank in importance, value and fulfillment for current and upcoming generations.

A total of 1,726 respondents were surveyed in a statistically representative sample of Americans who had graduated from a four-year college and were working full-time when the study was conducted between February 15 and 18, 2012. The sampling error for the overall study is approximately ± 3 percent.

**Additional Survey Highlights**

**Workers:**
- Around 15 percent of workers say they will definitely have a social or environmental impact through their job over the next few years, with another 31 percent saying they probably will.

**Students:**
- A strong majority of students (72%) have a life goal to have a job that they can make an impact on causes and issues important to them.
- Female students were more likely to select government, small business, or nonprofit jobs as their first choice, with male students more likely to select corporate jobs.
- Female students are more likely to say that a company that prioritizes corporate responsibility is more important to their ideal job over male students by 60 percent v. 40 percent.
- Having a positive work environment / positive culture ranks as the top quality students seek in an upcoming job (91%), followed by job security (90%) with financials (compensation/benefits) in third place at 87 percent.

**A focus on Millennials:**
- Just four-in-ten Millennial graduates of four-year colleges report being firmly on their desired career path; a similar amount believe they are in jobs that will lead to a career path, and 20 percent say they are not on the way to a career in their current job—it's just something to get them by.
- Millennials are following GenX in eschewing the ballot box. Whereas 77 percent of Boomers say they have recently cast a ballot, just 56 percent of Xers and 46 percent of Millennials have. Current university undergraduate and graduate students look to do no better.

**All respondents:**
- A majority of all respondents (65%) believe that they have a personal responsibility for getting involved to make things better for society.
- A majority of respondents (76%) believe that most companies only care about how much profit they can make, vs. trying to balance profit with the public interest.

**About Net Impact's Talent Report: What Workers Want in 2012:** The study, conducted in February 2012, consisted of four samples. 1) Juniors, seniors and graduate students currently enrolled in four-year colleges (n=431); Millennials (n=807); GenX (n=230); Baby Boomers.
(n=258). Each was configured to be an independent probability sample of the respective groups. The survey was fielded by GfK Custom Research using Knowledgepanel. More details can be found in the methodological appendix of the formal report – www.netimpact.org/whatworkerswant

**About Net Impact:** Net Impact is a San Francisco-based nonprofit that’s changing the way the world works. The organization is building a movement of more than 30,000 people - in all industries, at every stage of career – who are using their jobs to make a positive impact. Across 300+ chapters worldwide, this movement is fueled by thousands of local events, the flagship Net Impact Conference, and online tools and resources that help people discover how to change the world at work. Learn more about Net Impact at [http://www.netimpact.org](http://www.netimpact.org)

**About the Heldrich Center:** The John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, based at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University, is a dynamic research and policy center devoted to strengthening the nation’s workforce. It is one of the nation’s leading university-based centers dedicated to helping America’s workers and employers respond to a rapidly changing 21st Century economy. The Center’s motto —“Solutions at Work”— reflects its commitment to offering practical solutions, based on independent research, that benefit employers, workers, and job seekers. The Center’s policy recommendations and programs serve a wide range of Americans at all skill levels. Learn more about the Heldrich Center at [http://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu](http://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu)

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