

## Nonprofit Employees are more satisfied with non profit organization than other workers with their jobs

Each day, Ms. Brooks says, the manager shows up in the charity's kitchen, unaware of which donated foods she will have to help make up to 1,300 meals. What's more, she works with a constantly changing set of volunteers to prepare those meals.

"It sounds pretty stressful to most people," says Ms. Brooks. "But she says it's the easiest job she's ever had. She loves it."

The manager, she notes, signed on as a kitchen assistant three years ago, coming to Second Helpings from a for-profit catering business where she logged up to 80 hours a week -- and took what Ms. Brooks believes was a big pay cut to do so.

Another employee, she says, frequently brings to work a young deaf and autistic adult with whom she works as a volunteer "life coach" through another charity, with her employer's full support. The worker holds a master's degree, Ms. Brooks says, and recently told her boss, "If I were somewhere else, I would certainly make an excellent wage, but it wouldn't be as rewarding as what I do here."

Ms. Brooks's proud, dedicated colleagues are typical of the estimated 11 million employees who fill the nonprofit world, according to a new survey of the charity work force overseen by the Brookings Institution, a public-policy think tank in Washington. The telephone survey of 1,140 randomly selected nonprofit workers was conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates from late October 2001 to early January 2002 and, researchers claim, sampled a representative variety of charity employees. Atlantic Philanthropies and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation shared the survey's \$335,000 cost.

The survey results illuminate what charities have long known about their workers: They are driven by mission, not money.

### A 'Parallel Universe'

Nonprofit employees are much more likely than for-profit or government workers to say they took their jobs for the chance to help people and make a difference, according to the Brookings survey and parallel studies completed this year of workers in business and the federal government. Only 16 percent of nonprofit employees reported that they come to work for the paycheck, compared with 31 percent of federal employees and 47 percent of for-profit workers.

More nonprofit employees surveyed said they were proud of their employers than did other workers, and nonprofit respondents also held their co-workers in higher regard than did workers in other fields. Charity employees also believed their organizations to be more helpful, fair, and trusted than did workers in other fields. Ninety-seven percent of nonprofit workers surveyed said they feel they accomplish something worthwhile through their jobs.

In short, says Paul C. Light, director of Brookings' Center for Public Service, "Nonprofit employees were the most satisfied of all three sectors."

"I hear everybody talking about the talent war, except in the nonprofit sector," Mr. Light says. "It's like the nonprofit field is in some kind of parallel universe, where labor is plentiful and no one minds that they don't have benefits and resources and don't get paid well."

Sixty-eight percent of survey respondents were female, and nearly half said they have worked in the nonprofit field for 10 years or less. Seventy-nine percent of the respondents said they worked for organizations that were local in scope, with the largest group, 39 percent, working for educational organizations. Almost half said they worked for organizations with 150 or more employees.

### Among the survey's key findings:

Most nonprofit workers surveyed said they were content with their pay: Seventy-seven percent of respondents reported that they are at least "somewhat satisfied" with their salaries and 83 percent said the same about their benefits.

Overwork is a hazard for many charity workers: Seventy-three percent surveyed strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement that it is easy to burn out in their jobs, and the same percentage strongly or somewhat agreed that they always have too much work to do.

Many nonprofit employees feel that weak co-workers are not dealt with effectively: Forty-four percent of nonprofit workers in the Brookings survey said their organizations do not do a good job of disciplining poor performers, although this finding compared favorably with the 53 percent of for-profit workers and 67 percent of government workers who told researchers the same thing.

Mr. Light says that he was most surprised by the survey's finding that nonprofit employees are relatively content with their salaries and benefits. Although the survey found that nearly half of all charity workers believe they could make more money elsewhere, he says, many appear to have made peace with the trade-off: "In their heads, they discount salary and benefits. They feel that this is what you get for doing the work that you love."

Satisfaction with salary can vary, though, depending on a charity's location, says Sarah Boxx, who once led a children's charity and is currently client-services manager at Social Entrepreneurs, a management-consulting company in Reno, Nev., that works with nonprofit groups. (Ms. Boxx says money did not play a role in her decision to leave her charity, but says that her successor demanded and got a much higher salary than she had had.) A region's cost of living can create a demand for higher pay, she says, and even in inexpensive areas, charity workers may find themselves financially pinched compared with other employees. "A lot of nonprofit employees," she says, "could actually qualify for the services they offer."

### About the Author

CharityEmployers.com exist with the vision of saving Canadian charities thousands of dollars in non profit recruitment advertising costs

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