



OUTDOOR INDUSTRIES WOMEN'S COALITION

“WOMEN'S CAREER SATISFACTION STUDY 2009”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Outdoor Industries Women's Coalition launched its “Women's Career Satisfaction Study” to ascertain how women in the outdoor, snow and bicycle industries are compensated in their jobs and how satisfied women are with that compensation. In crafting the study, OIWC explores the many different ways that one receives compensation from her employer. The survey follows three general areas of compensation:

- (1) forms that are easily quantified, which covers topics such as pay, employer-provided insurance, retirement plans and vacation;
- (2) forms an employer may offer that contribute to her “quality of life,” such as discounted gear, professional development opportunities or flexible hours; and
- (3) forms of intangible benefits she draws from her employer, such as a company that offers her opportunity for advancement, international business experience, or has a committed stance on the environment, for example.

In addition to asking women what types of compensation they receive, how important that compensation is to them, and how well their employers are meeting their expectations, OIWC gathers the first-ever demographic profile of women in these industries. Results reveal income by job function, education levels, age and marital status among other factors.

METHODOLOGY

OIWC launched the study in the fall of 2007. OIWC volunteers with backgrounds in market research, management and human resources partnered with experts at the Leisure Trends Group (the main sponsor of the study) to craft the 15-minute questionnaire. Leisure Trends Group hosted the survey and its tabulations.

In September 2008, an online link to the survey was sent to 1,235 emails comprising OIWC's member database 1,022 of which were deliverable. A total of 247 members fully completed the survey for a response rate of 24.7%. The respondents are exclusively women working for retailers, product manufacturers, suppliers, media, non-profits or resort /travel services. Of the respondents, 77% work in the outdoor industry, 39% work in the snow sports industry, 34% work in the bicycle industry, and 19% work in the adventure travel industry. The total of these percentages is greater than 100% because many of the participants' job functions crossover into these four industry subsets. In addition, 90% of respondents are employed full time and 52% work for employers that have more than 100 employees.

KEY FINDINGS

When it comes to quantifiable forms of compensation, women are generally satisfied with the benefits offered by their employers. This is demonstrated by a correlation between whether a woman receives said benefit from her employer and what level of importance she attaches to that benefit. According to the findings, companies *are*

offering benefits that are most important to their female employees. Benefits ranked most important by women include:

- Paid vacation and/or sick leave (91%)
- Medical insurance (86%)
- A company-sponsored 401K plan (80%)
- Dental insurance (77%)
- Performance bonus (76%)

However, when we attach the subject of salary to the salary-plus-benefits equation, women's levels of satisfaction drop. Only 21% report *complete* satisfaction with her salary and benefits. And only 35% report *general* satisfaction with her salary and benefits. In fact, only half of the women (50%) agree that she receives a salary and benefits package that enables her to maintain a decent standard of living.

The study explored the issue of salary with several questions related to whether a woman thought she was:

- underpaid (41% stated they are underpaid)
- overpaid (just 1.6%)
- unsure of whether her pay was fair (35%)
- paid less than her co-workers in general (17%)
- paid less than her male co-workers specifically (30%)

Women are most likely to agree that they are underpaid in relation to what they would be paid in the same position in another industry (45%). The study found that the median salary range for women in these industries is \$55,000. The written report released in March will continue a listing of average salary by job role.

Regarding “quality of life” benefits offered by employers, we find that companies are generally offering women what are most important to them. However, there are critical areas where some companies fall short:

- Allowing for a flexible schedule – 90% of companies offer this perk but 95% of women consider it highly important (96% of women who don't have a flexible schedule wish they had one).
- Fostering an environment where males and females have equal access to promotion – 97% of women rank this as highly important but only 93% say this is something their employer demonstrates.
- Enabling professional growth – 89% of women highly rank having professional development seminars or training, but only 85% say this is something they have access to.

When it comes to what are traditionally referred to as “women's issues,” our finding is that the women in these industries are exceedingly practical. In the scope of all of the perks an employer might offer, institutionalized benefits such as on-site daycare, subsidized daycare and other issues relating to women in their prime family-managing years rank much lower in terms of importance than other more universal perks, such as subsidized gear or sabbaticals.

The highest-ranking benefits relating to family are paid family and/or medical leave (76% said this was important) and allowing her to work flexible hours following a family / medical leave (77% said this was important). Perhaps these women tend to be less reliant on their employer, choosing instead to self-manage issues as they relate to family. While 95% of respondents are in their prime child bearing or raising years (ages 25–54), only 34% have children living at home or attending college (26% have children under 18 and 8% are supporting at least one child at college). The median respondent age was 39.5 years old.

The study further explores several intangible benefits a woman might receive from her employer. This section includes wide-ranging subjects such as corporate citizenry, employee relations, personal fulfillment and professional development. The study asked women if each benefit was important to her and then asked her to rate how well her company was doing in delivering that benefit. The top five intangible benefits are:

- (1) Working for a company that is committed to its employees (100% said this is important to her)
- (2) Working for a company that has a sensible work-life balance (100%)
- (3) Having the ability to work on projects that offer her new challenges or opportunities (99%)
- (4) Working for a company that is committed to her (96%)
- (5) An employer that provides opportunity for internal advancement, leadership or mentoring (95%)

According to women, most of their employers have room for improvement in these areas. For instance, while 100% of women desire an employer that has a sensible work-life balance, only 53% say their company is doing a good job of executing this intangible benefit. This could be the nature of working in seasonal, weekend-dependent industries, but the need for employers to assist their female employees in striking a more equitable work-life balance is a clear refrain across the study.

Another area of improvement for companies is offering women more opportunities for challenging projects (only 66% say their company is meeting this desire) and providing opportunities for advancement, leadership and mentoring (only 43% say their company is meeting this desire). These two intangibles often go hand-in-hand and are hallmarks of the highly-educated females leading and working in these industries. The value these women place on education, continued learning and development is paramount. 88% of respondents have at least a college degree under her belt. Of those, a full 18% have an advanced degree. The results indicate that companies may be missing the opportunity to tap into a highly-educated, highly-motivated talent pool within the ranks of their female employees.

The study also asks women to choose which intangible benefit, from a condensed list, was most important to her in her career at this time. Women who work in the outdoor, bike, and adventure travel industries predominantly say that having an employer who provides good work-life balance is most important to them (51%, 43% and 50% respectively). However, women in the snow sports industry are split between having a good work-life balance (29%), having a meaningful role with their current organization (29%), and having an employer who offers her career progression in its organization (27%).

On the issue of gender, the study reveals mixed results. Women give generally satisfactory marks to their employers on tangible issues related to gender. For example, 42% disagree that they are paid less than males who perform similar jobs in their organization (31% agree and 27% neither agree nor disagree). Women also report their employers offering equal opportunities for advancement among males and females (93%) and providing opportunities for females to fill positions at the executive level (92%).

When it comes to intangible benefits many companies have room for improvement. For example, 94% of women say having a diverse and inclusive workplace is important to them but only 54% say their company is doing a satisfactory job fostering this. And 92% of respondents want an employer that values the female point-of-view but only 59% give their company a passing grade in this regard.

Lastly, the study sets out to provide a baseline of demographic markers of women in these industries. Results include median age, median salary, salary by job role, family status, marital status, years in the industry, education, and years with her current employer, to name a few.

Full results and additional findings from the OIWC Career Satisfaction Study are available at no charge to OIWC sponsors and members.