



# The Kenexa® Research Institute Finds That Expatriates Are More Engaged Than Nationals, But Still Considered “Flight Risk”

According to research conducted by the Kenexa® Research Institute, expatriates (expats) are generally more engaged than non-expatriates, yet they are still more of a retention risk.

More than 50% of expats seriously think about leaving their current organization within the year. This may be because they tend to see their relationship with their employer as project or task-oriented—when the assignment objective has been reached, the expat considers whether to re-engage or seek employment elsewhere. The survey results, from Kenexa’s 2008 WorkTrends™ study, also indicate that expats are more focused on the “here and now”—only 53% rarely think about looking for their next job at another organization.

Brenda Kowske, Ph.D., research consultant, Kenexa Research Institute, stated, “According to our survey results, expat and non-expats have similar drivers of engagement. They both need to feel confident in the future of their company as well as their personal future with the company. Work-life balance is also an important driver for both groups. Yet, there are several unique elements. For instance, to be engaged, expats need to feel a sense of personal accomplishment in their work and that their company leadership is committed to diversity. Non-expats, on the other hand, want a high level of excitement about their work and also to feel that management treats them with respect and dignity.”

For companies hiring expats, the results of this survey indicate that the process of strengthening employee engagement will be somewhat different for employees embarking on expatriate assignments. Overall, expats are more satisfied than non-expats

in the things that matter to engagement, such as confidence in the company’s future, commitment to safety and a promising future for the employee.

The survey also found that the make-up of expats is diverse—more than 30% are professional/technical workers, 23% are senior/middle management, 21% are clerical and 14% are supervisors.

## Database Overview

The WorkTrends database is a comprehensive normative database of employee opinions on topics including leadership, employee engagement and customer orientation. Comparisons are available for workers from Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

## Study Details

The WorkTrends survey questions were designed to evaluate employee engagement. The questions asked were:

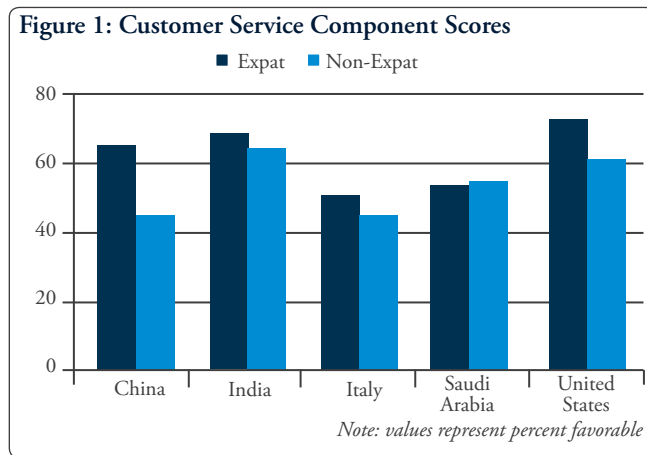
- I rarely think about looking for a new job with another company
- I would gladly refer a good friend or family member to my company for employment
- Overall, I am extremely satisfied with my company as a place to work
- I am proud to tell people I work for my company

Opinion items were rated using a 5-point Likert-like scale. The percent favorable is the percentage of people who chose either of the two most positive answers (typically “strongly agree” or “agree”).

Employee engagement is calculated by averaging the percentage of favorable responses across these four items. This results in a single score that reflects the overall employee engagement.

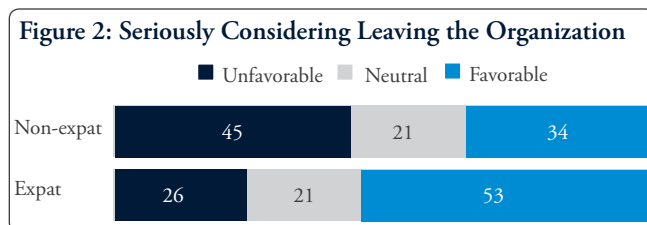
**Survey Results**

Expats, in general, are more engaged than non-expats, although the relationship switches for Saudi Arabia; nationals are very slightly more engaged than expats (see Figure 1).



**Retention/Flight Risk**

- Despite the higher engagement, expats are more of a retention risk, with 53% of them seriously thinking about leaving the organization within the year (Figure 2)
- They may be more focused on the here and now—the same percentage rarely thinks about their next job at another organization
- They may also see work as a more project- or task-oriented relationship with their employer: When they’ve met their expat assignment objective, it provides a reasonable stopping point in which the employee might consider whether or not to re-engage, or seek employment elsewhere



**Drivers of Expat Engagement**

- Figure 3 contains highlighted cells, which indicate unique drivers
- Expat’s engagement has very similar top 10 drivers than non-expats, with some unique elements (personal accomplishment, diversity, customer satisfaction) and some nuanced differences (skill improvement vs. satisfaction with on-the-job training; senior management abilities vs. confidence in leadership)
- Non-expats have unique drivers as well: respectful managers, work excitement and recognition (see Figure 4)
- These results indicate that the process of strengthening employee engagement will be somewhat different for employees embarking on expatriate assignments

**Figure 3: Expat Employee Engagement Drivers**

Drivers
Confidence in organization’s future
Safety is a priority
Promising future for one’s self
Organization supports work/life balance
Opportunity to improve skills
Senior management has ability to deal with challenges
Work gives a feeling of personal accomplishment
Leadership is committed to diversity
Customers are very satisfied with the products/services they receive
Organization’s commitment to social responsibility is genuine

**Figure 4: Non-Expat Employee Engagement Drivers**

Drivers
Confidence in organization’s future
Promising future for one’s self
Organization supports work/life balance
Safety is a priority
Excited about one’s work
Confidence in organization’s senior leaders
Satisfied with on-the-job training
Manager is respectful
Organization’s CSR efforts increase overall satisfaction
Satisfied with recognition

*Are Expats' Drivers of Engagement Fulfilled?*

Overall, expats are more satisfied than non-expats in the things that matter to engagement. Larger differences are highlighted in Figure 5, and happen to be the items that tend to be at the top of the top 10 list.

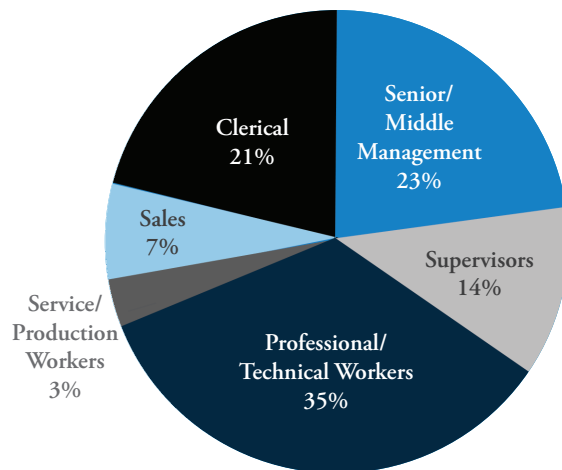
**Figure 5: Satisfaction With Drivers of Engagement Items**

Engagement Driver	Expat	Non-Expat
Confidence in organization's future	62	60
Safety is a priority	63	64
Promising future for one's self	54	47
Company supports work/life balance	53	52
Opportunity to improve skills	58	55
Senior management's ability to deal with challenges	62	54
Feeling of personal accomplishment	79	74
Leadership commitment to diversity	61	57
Customers satisfied with prod/svcs	67	66
Organization's commitment to CSR is genuine	66	61

*Who Are Expats?*

Expats need to be trained for their assignment, but also within the context of the job they do. Certainly, a management experience will be quite different from a clerical worker's task.

**Figure 6: Expat Job Types**



**About Kenexa**

Kenexa provides business solutions for human resources. We help global organizations multiply business success by identifying the best individuals for every job and fostering optimal work environments for every organization. For more than 20 years, Kenexa has studied human behavior and team dynamics in the workplace, and has developed the software solutions, business processes and expert consulting that help organizations impact positive business outcomes through HR. Kenexa is the only company that offers a comprehensive suite of unified products and services that support the entire employee lifecycle from pre-hire to exit.

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