



Perceptions of Self and Work Survey

March 2005

An electronic survey was conducted in February 2005 with Personal Members of the Australian Institute of Management in Western Australia (AIM). The purpose of the survey, conducted in conjunction with Perception Mapping P/L (PM), was to gather a base-line profile on how positively or negatively people viewed themselves and their work environments.

Two shortened versions of Perception Mapping indexes, developed by PM, were used. The first was the Brain Fuel Depletion Index, which examined perceptions of self and includes lead indicators of present motivational states and potential depression, whilst the second index, the Positive Workplace Index, asked respondents to rate critical aspects of their work environment.

The research was prompted by a growing interest by AIM and PM in the need for heightened community attention on the issue of mental stress and its impact on the business sector. Concern with these issues have galvanised the two organisations to form the Positive Workplace Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation that provides education, consulting and research in support of the development of individual well-being and positive workplace practices. The findings of this survey only strengthen this concern, because in many aspects the findings reflect those being established through international data by revealing small but important pockets of respondents who express negative perceptions about themselves and their work.

The Survey Sample

The sample consisted of Personal Members of AIM-WA who were sent an electronic questionnaire via email. Respondents could reply immediately and results were calculated automatically using both traditional percentages and PM's unique pattern analysis. 966 Members, representing a response rate of 13%, responded to the survey.

The sample is not representative of the WA business community at large in that respondents were drawn from proportionally more large companies, and from reportedly more senior positions than is typically the case in the general WA workforce, and the research should be considered in the light of this sample bias.

Research Findings

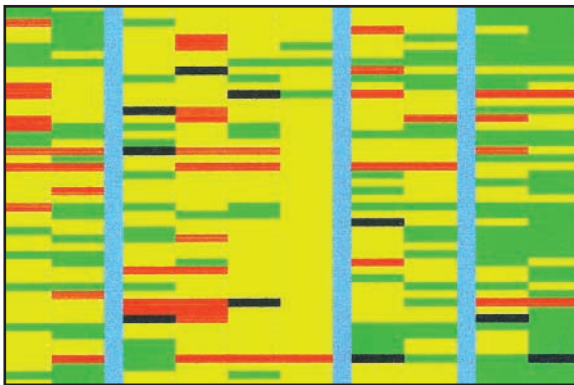
The research findings are presented in two Sections, and within each Section, in two formats; the first is a Perception Map, showing the degrees of positive and negative perceptions as indicated by a pattern of colours. These PM indexes are presented in the form of “DNA profiles” and are developed through proprietary algorithms, which identify the patterns and intensity of responses. These Maps are colour-coded, with green and yellow patterns representing quite positive perceptions, while red and black patterns indicate negative perceptions. In this study, each Perception Map comprises four segments (patterns), numbered 1-4, and each pattern on the Map indicates answers to different questions or sets of questions. Some findings are also presented as traditional pie charts with percentages.

Section 1: Brain Fuel Depletion Index - Perceptions of Self

The statements covered in this section of the research survey (to which respondents had to indicate their degree of agreement) were drawn from a shortened version of PM's Brain Fuel Depletion Index which examines perceptions of self and includes lead indicators of present and future motivational states and potential depression.

Brain Fuel Depletion (BFD) is a term used to describe a neuro-physiological state where neuro-transmitters or brain chemicals, such as dopamine and serotonin, become over depleted. In some people these chemicals are depleted to the point where it is difficult for the body to re-store them to normal operating levels. Minor, ongoing depletion can lead to chronic tiredness, poor concentration and regular mental errors, while major depletion becomes a precursor for various states of depression. All of which has serious implications for the health and workplace performances of such individuals.

Brain Fuel Depletion Perceptual Map - Perceptions of Self

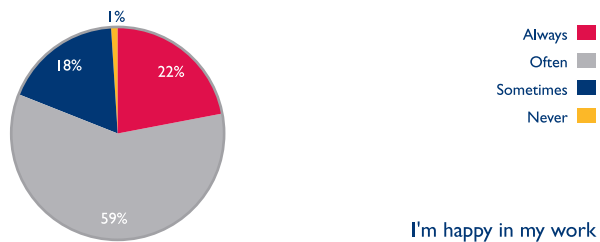


Pattern 1 Pattern 2 Pattern 3 Pattern 4

1.1 Happiness with Self and Work

In essence, the survey portrayed a sample which was generally positive with both their personal and work lives, and this pattern was consistent across all job positions, organisation size and type. These results are shown in **Pattern 1** on the Map.

That said, the chart below shows that almost one in five (19%) were at least sometimes, if not most of the time, unhappy in their work.

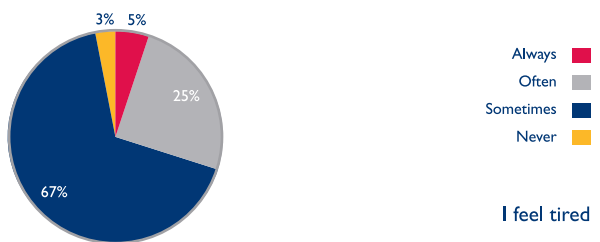


I'm happy in my work

1.2 Perceptions of Personal Energy Levels

Questions relating to the findings shown in **Pattern 2** on the Perception Map explored how respondents felt about their quality of sleep, general tiredness, ability to concentrate and the number of mistakes they make at work. The results indicated large numbers of people who perceived they suffer from tiredness and who make mistakes in their work some of the time. It also showed a small but concerning group who suffer from consistent poor sleep and tiredness. This is steady across all demographics, and matches international data that suggests the pace of modern working lives is leaving some people feeling tired and prone to mistakes.

The chart below shows that whilst 3% of the sample never felt tired, 30% were experiencing tiredness often or always. Not surprisingly, the research also found some respondents (17%) reported frequent trouble sleeping.



I feel tired

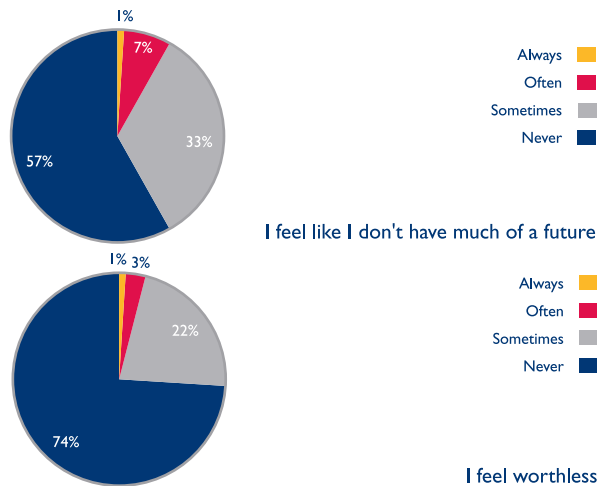
1.3 Moods and Motivation Levels

Pattern 3 of the Perception Map looked at perceptions of mood changes and motivational levels, and the pattern suggests that large numbers of respondents felt they sometimes lack motivation and have mood changes on a daily basis. The red and black patterns show a small number of de-motivated people but PM's own research suggests that these people can have a dramatic effect in de-motivating others.

1.4 Perceptions of One's Future and Self Worth

This Pattern, **number 4**, is somewhat extreme, with respondents being definite about their future and their self worth. The heavy green pattern indicates a very positive response group overall but the yellow, red and black patterns also point towards a spread of individuals who do not see much of a future. This pattern is consistent across all demographics.

The pie charts below show that whilst the majority of the sample felt positive about their futures, over 40% were less than rock solid, and a worrying one in four (26%) felt worthless at least some of the time (with 4% feeling this way frequently). This survey would therefore indicate that not everyone in their work or personal lives enjoys an inherent and constant sense of worth or future.



Both these measures of future assessment and self worth are lead indicators of people who may suffer some form of depression, now or in the future, and the pattern matches international data that indicates that up to 20% of human populations suffer from mild to severe depression.

Section 2: Positive Workplace Index - Perceptions of the Work Environment

The statements included in this second section of the research survey (again to which respondents indicated their degree of agreement) were drawn from a shortened version of PM's Positive Workplace Index, and asked respondents to rate some critical aspects of their work environment.

Positive Workplace Index Perceptual Map - Perceptions of the Work Environment

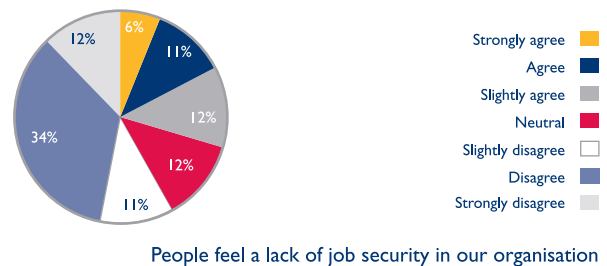


Pattern 1 Pattern 2 Pattern 3 Pattern 4

2.1 Organisational Care and Support

Pattern 1 in the Perception Map shown above examines how much people perceive their organisation really cares about and supports them as workers. Overall, the pattern shows some positive signs, but there are also large groups of people perceiving they do not work in a supportive workplace. The pattern showed least satisfaction with financial rewards. The horizontal patterns of red and black show disgruntled people across all aspects of organisational care and support. This pattern is consistent across all demographics.

Looking at the data relating to Pattern 1, but in percentage response terms, one in four of the sample (24%) was negative in their perceptions of their organisation's level of care for staff. Furthermore, as the pie chart below shows, 29% of respondents believed, to a greater or lesser extent, there was job insecurity in their organisation.

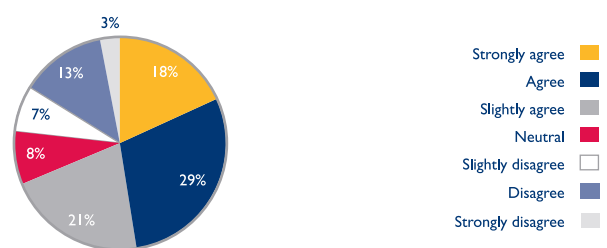
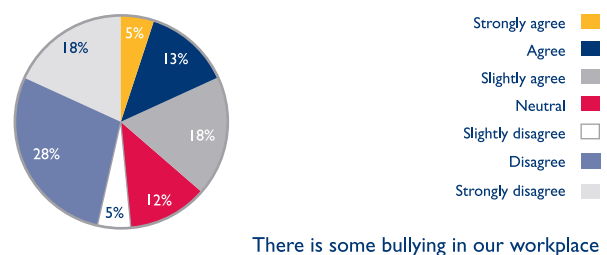


The vast majority of the sample agreed that people within their organisation support each other like friends. However 13% did not.

2.2 Negativity and Bullying in the Workplace

Pattern 2 highlights the degree to which people feel they work in a negative workplace and how much bullying they see or experience. Both these patterns are very dark on the Perception Map and are concerning when, by law and by the evidence of best practice work cultures, no-one should suffer from bullying at work. This pattern is consistent across all job positions, organisation size and type.

As the pie charts reiterate, 36% of respondents agreed that bullying exists in their workplace, to a greater or lesser extent, and the majority of the sample (68%) agreed, at least slightly, that their workplace has significant pockets of negativity.



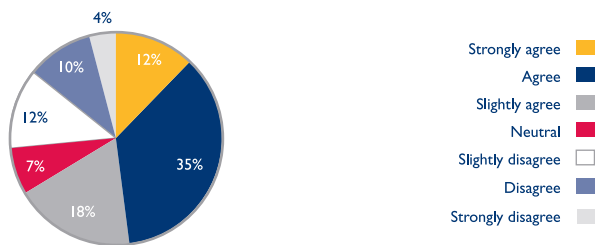
Our workplace has significant pockets of negativity

2.3 Work Overload and Management Support

Pattern 3 on the Perception Map represents the level to which participants in the survey perceive they receive good management support for the work they perform and how overloaded they feel. While they generally feel supported, the pattern reveals that the survey group perceive they have too much work to complete. This may correlate with the tiredness some individuals feel, reported in Section 1 of this report.

Looking at the data in percentage terms, whilst one in five respondents (21%) were neutral in their feeling towards the issue of workload, and the same percentage (20%) did not feel this way, the majority (58%) did consider they had too much work to do.

Furthermore, one in four respondents (21%) did not believe that their organisation provided good training and development.



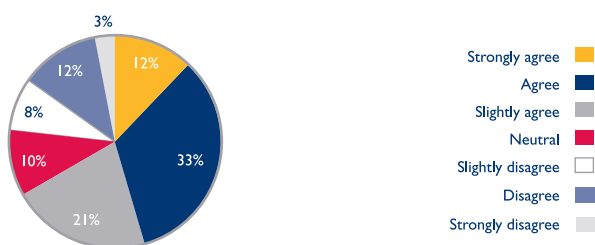
We have good management support for the work we do

As the chart above indicates, two-thirds of the sample (65%) agreed that they get good management support, but a further one-quarter (26%) disagreed.

2.4 Fun and Involvement at Work

Pattern 4 pursues the degree to which people feel involved, a sense of ownership and enjoyment in their work environments. The perception pattern here is quite positive across all demographics but red and black patterns do suggest more work needs to be done to make some workplaces more involving.

The chart below shows that respondents indicated a positive perception about the sense of ownership within their organisation, with two-thirds of the sample (66%) agreeing with the statement shown. However, almost one quarter (23%) felt a lack of ownership.

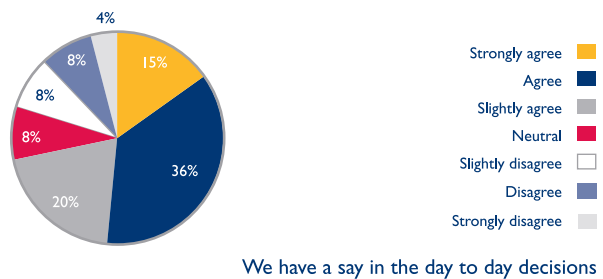


People here feel a sense of ownership

Four out of five respondents (81%) agreed, to a greater or lesser extent, that their organisation is a great place to work. However, 13% did not agree.

Furthermore, whilst most respondents (72%) agreed that they would recommend their organisation to a friend seeking employment, a further 15% indicated that they would not.

Moreover, as the chart below shows, one in five (20%) respondents clearly felt disengaged from the day to day decisions within their organisation.



We have a say in the day to day decisions

Also, two-thirds of the sample (67%) agreed, to a greater or lesser extent, that they have lots of fun at work. However, almost one in four respondents (18%) disagreed with this statement.

Summary of Section 2's Findings

The survey sample was generally positive in perceptions of organisations' care and support, although there was clearly some job insecurity within a sizeable proportion of workplaces (29%). Of greatest significance was the research's indication as to the extent to which bullying appears to exist in some WA workplaces, with 36% of the sample believing it occurred in their organisation. Furthermore, most believed negativity in the workplace existed. Management support was also in some cases lacking, although the sample generally felt supported, and involved. Of course improvements are always possible, and the areas of creating fun in work and a sense of ownership, as well as improved financial benefits, and training and development, were just some of the areas for scope.

For more information on the Positive Workplace Foundation contact AIM on (08) 9383 8088.

Positive Workplace Foundation will partner with you to build a strength-based organisation that brings out the best in its people, emphasising critical thinking with regard to self-awareness, interpersonal relations, motivation and teamwork.