

Press release

Swiss HR Barometer 2022

Constructive approach to error-making boosts innovation

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This year's Swiss HR Barometer focuses on working conditions that promote innovative behaviours amongst employees. Approaching errors in an open manner, a practice prevalent in Switzerland, has a positive effect on innovative behaviour as well as attitudes to work. Scope for improvement is found in areas such as support for new ideas, personnel development and compensation.

The results of the Swiss HR Barometer were generated from a survey of over 2000 employees and show that a tendency towards both innovation and learning from errors are commonplace in Switzerland. Some 86% of employees believe that errors can be helpful for their own work, providing them with the opportunity to learn. This provides a solid foundation for the innovative strength exhibited by companies in Switzerland. Employees also report that they feel supported by leaders and colleagues alike and that, in many companies, there is a culture of psychological safety. A proactive approach to mistakes is promoted, with the view that any errors are reported and used as points of reflection. Another encouraging finding is that fewer than 10% of employees report that they tend to conceal their errors.

However, the survey also reveals potential for improvement, particularly regarding the willingness to allow employees more time to develop new ideas. As well as this, the study shows that cross-departmental management personnel could better support staff with their ideas. Employees could also be better supported when it comes to openly confronting the risks of making mistakes.

Impacts of innovation and error cultures

A company culture that promotes innovative behaviours and learning from mistakes amongst employees is not only desirable in respect of innovation, but also has a positive influence on general attitudes towards work, as well as employees' experience of their work situation. Those working in companies

with such a culture report less stress, more job and career satisfaction, greater commitment to the organisation and less intention to quit.

By the same token, alongside cultural factors, work design is also central to innovative behaviours and learning from errors. Autonomy, task variety and participation are the most important job characteristics in terms of promoting innovation. Whilst a great amount of autonomy and task variety are relatively common, there is a need for improvement as far as participation is concerned. This would involve a company allowing employees to contribute to its decision-making processes.

Trend towards increasing expectations

With regards to working circumstances more generally, which are also recorded by the Swiss HR Barometer, an overall positive picture emerges. This is certainly also a product of the current worker-friendly conditions within the job market. Employee expectations as set out in the so-called psychological contract (see box below) have increased somewhat, as has, in turn, what is offered to employees by companies. Furthermore, compensation deemed reasonable by employees and the availability of development opportunities are causes for concern. With respect to the latter, what is particularly concerning is that the trend towards fewer training days being taken, which had already emerged in previous editions of the Swiss HR Barometer, has become increasingly marked. Equally, performance reviews and career planning, two key components of personnel development, are not carried out or even offered frequently enough.

We can conclude that, if the state of the job market continues to be favourable to employees, working behaviours will become more dynamic. Currently, whereas intention to quit is low, perceived employability has risen for the first time in ten years and employees are reporting more dynamic forms of job (dis)satisfaction, indicating increasing expectations and more willingness to change. Companies should equip themselves with improved HR practices to combat this and pay particular notice to compensation and personnel development.

The Swiss HR Barometer

The Swiss HR Barometer measures how employees in Switzerland experience their work situation. Amongst the topics surveyed are: mutual expectations and obligations of employees and employers as a component of the employment relationship (psychological contract); HR management practices such as work design and personnel development; job satisfaction; employability; and career orientation. The study is published on a regular basis by Gudela Grote, professor of Work and Organisational Psychology at the ETH Zurich, and Bruno Staffelbach, Head of the Centre for Human Resource Management at the University of Lucerne, in cooperation with the University of Zurich.

The HR Barometer 2022 is based on a survey of 2088 employees selected from the sample register kept by the Federal Statistical Office. The focal topic of the latest issue is “Innovation and Failure”. The survey took place in the German-, French- and Italian-speaking regions of Switzerland between March and June 2022.

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The report can be downloaded at: www.hrbarometer.ch →

Bibliographical references

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