



**FULFILMENT@WORK**  
A Report from Randstad UK  
2014



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# Introduction

## From Mark Bull, CEO, Randstad UK and Middle East

As a major recruiter and HR services provider, Randstad's work is centred on achieving fulfilment at work for both our clients and candidates. For every brief that we handle, we view our role as far more than finding a great person for an employer's latest vacancy, or finding a suitable new job for a candidate. It is about us understanding the essence of each employer's workplace and objectives, and the potential of each candidate's career, and working to enable those objectives and potential to be fulfilled.

Our passion to achieve this has inspired our new drive to place fulfilment at the forefront of all that we do. This month we launch a major new programme looking at professional fulfilment and how to achieve it – central to this is our new website 'How I Became':

<http://www.randstad.co.uk/howibecame>

We have produced this report to examine the future of fulfilment at work in the UK and look at what employers and employees need to know. The report is designed to provoke debate and help all who are participants in the world of work to achieve their maximum fulfilment.

**Mark Bull, CEO, Randstad UK and Middle East**

### Biography: Mark Bull, CEO, Randstad UK and Middle East



*After graduating from the University of London in 1987, Mark cut his teeth in the world of sales at ICL Computing and Capital Equipment before joining the recruitment industry in 1994. Rising through the ranks at Hill McGlynn, the specialist construction, property and engineering recruiter, Mark was appointed joint Managing Director of the business in 2005, before assuming the role independently in 2007. Mark oversaw the merger of Hill McGlynn and Beresford Blake Thomas to become Randstad CPE in 2009.*

*Mark was appointed CEO of Randstad UK and Middle East in April 2011 and is responsible for all of Randstad's operating companies in these territories. Mark's key focus is to drive the company's strategy and growth in these areas while helping build and refine the Randstad brand.*

# Foreword

## By Alain de Botton

The strangest thing about the world of work isn't the long hours we put in or the fancy machines we use to get it done; take a step back and perhaps the most extraordinary aspect of the work scene is in the end psychological rather than economic or industrial. It has to do with our attitudes to work, more specifically the widespread expectation, despite all the recent economic turmoil, that our work should make us happy, that it should be at the centre of our lives and our expectations of fulfilment. The first question we tend to ask of new acquaintances is not where they come from or who their parents were, but what they do. Here is the key to someone's identity and esteem. It seems hard to imagine being able to feel good about yourself or knowing who you were without having work to get on with.

It wasn't always like this. For thousands of years, work was viewed as an unavoidable drudge and nothing more, something to be done with as rapidly as possible and escaped in the imagination through alcohol or religious intoxication. Aristotle was only the first of many philosophers to state that no one could be both free and obliged to earn a living. Holding down a job, any job, was akin to slavery and denied one any chance of greatness. Christianity added to this analysis the yet grimmer conclusion that the misery of work was an unavoidable consequence of the sins of Adam and Eve. The idea that work could be fun, as opposed to simply useful and necessary, had to wait until the Renaissance to get any traction. It was then, in contemporary biographies of geniuses like Raphael or Leonardo da Vinci, that one gets the first glimmers of the idea that doing extraordinary work might be better than lying around as an idle aristocrat, indeed, that work might be the highest of blessings. A more optimistic

assessment of work as a whole had to wait until the eighteenth century, the age of the great bourgeois philosophers, men like Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Denis Diderot, who for the first time argued that one's working life could be at the centre of any ambition for happiness. It was during this century that our modern ideas about work were formed - incidentally, at the very same time as our modern ideas about love and marriage took shape.

In fact, there were remarkable similarities between the two realms of love and work. In the pre-modern age, it had widely been assumed that no one could try to be in love and married: marriage was something one did for purely commercial reasons, to hand down the family farm or ensure a dynastic continuity. Things were going well if you maintained a tepid friendship with your spouse. Meanwhile, love was something you did with your mistress, on the side, with pleasure untied to the responsibilities of child-rearing. Yet the new philosophers of love now argued that one might actually aim to marry the person one was in love with rather than just have an affair. To this unusual idea was added the even more peculiar notion that one might work both for money and to realise one's dreams, an idea that replaced the previous assumption that the day job took care of the rent and anything more ambitious had to happen in one's spare time, once the money had been hauled in.

We are the heirs of these two very ambitious beliefs: that you can be in love and married - and in a job and having a good time. It has become as impossible for us to think that you could be out of work and happy as it had once seemed impossible for Aristotle to think that you could be employed and human.

One of the great sources of satisfaction in work is the feeling that we are making a difference to people's lives, that we have - at the end of the working day - somehow left the planet slightly healthier, tidier, saner than it was at the beginning. I'm not necessarily talking of huge changes; the difference might merely involve sanding a stair banister, removing the squeak on a door or reuniting someone with their lost luggage. Industrialisation has made some of these feelings of helping others far less accessible, simply because of scale.

Then again, a lot of your satisfaction at work is dependent on your expectation. There are broadly speaking two philosophies of work out there. The first you could call the working-class view of work, which sees the point of work as being primarily financial. You work to feed yourself and your loved ones. You don't live for your work. You work for the sake of the weekend and spare time - and your colleagues are not your friends necessarily. The other view of work, very different, is the middle class view, which sees work as absolutely essential to a fulfilled life and lying at the heart of our self-creation and self-fulfilment. Often one hears the refrain, 'it's not perfect, but at least it's a job...' We all say this to ourselves in some moods. But in others we also crave for more. We know that life is short and that as work is the greatest share of it, we want to make sure that our deepest selves are given a chance to express themselves through our labour.

These are some of the dilemmas around which this report and its accompanying events revolve.

There isn't a more timely issue out there.

### Alain de Botton

#### Biography: Alain de Botton



*Born in Zurich, Switzerland in 1969 and now living in London Alain de Botton is a writer of essayistic books on the 'philosophy of everyday life,' which have been bestsellers in 30 countries.*

*His first book, *Essays in Love*, was published when he was twenty-three. But it was with *How Proust Can Change Your Life* that Alain's work reached a truly global audience. It was followed by *The Consolations of Philosophy*, to which it was in many ways an accompaniment.*

*Alain then returned to a more personal style of writing. In *The Art of Travel*, he looked at the psychology of travel. In *Status Anxiety*, he examined anxiety about what others think of us. In *The Architecture of Happiness*, Alain discussed beauty and ugliness in architecture.*

*The Pleasures and Sorrows of Work saw Alain travelling across the world for two years, observing people in their workplaces and reflecting on the great themes of work: why do we do it? How can it be more bearable? What is a meaningful life?*

*In 2011/2012, Alain launched *Religion for Atheists*, looking at what committed atheists (like the author) might learn from religion.*

*His latest book, published in October 2013, is titled *Art as Therapy*.*

## What is professional fulfilment?

Recent research conducted for Randstad asked 2,000 UK workers what defined professional fulfilment for them<sup>1</sup>.

- 58% said it was a sense of satisfaction in their work
- 47% said it was a sense of satisfaction in their work/life balance
- 28% said it was a sense of satisfaction in their salary
- 28% said it was happiness that they have had the opportunity to fulfil their potential

1. Research undertaken by Canadean among a representative sample of 2,000 UK adults, August 2013

# Fulfilment now in Britain

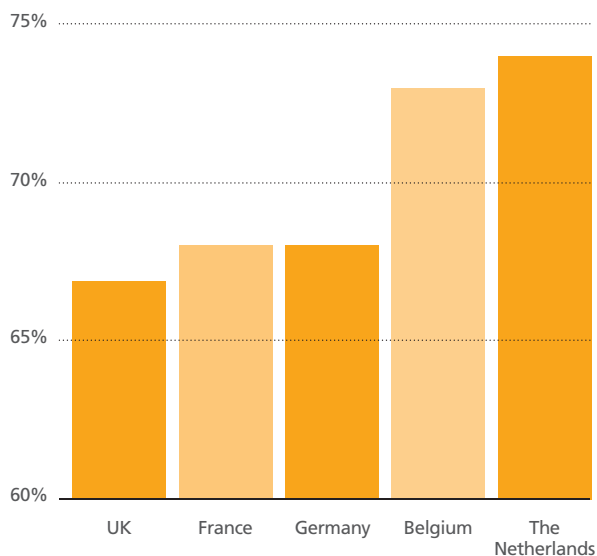
## 10 million employees across the UK are unfulfilled

Britain has a problem with professional fulfilment. Almost 10 million British employees say they are not happy with their current employer.

In a survey carried out by Randstad in the third quarter of 2013, when asked "how satisfied are you with your current employer?" 33% said they were not satisfied with their current employer. With the number of people in work within the UK now standing at 29.84 million<sup>2</sup>, the research suggests that, across the country, 9.85 million employees are professionally unfulfilled.

Not only that, but the UK's workers are less professionally fulfilled than their peers internationally. With only 67% of British workers satisfied with their current employer, the UK scores are lower than those across Britain's key competitors in the EU: France and Germany – as well as The Netherlands and Belgium.

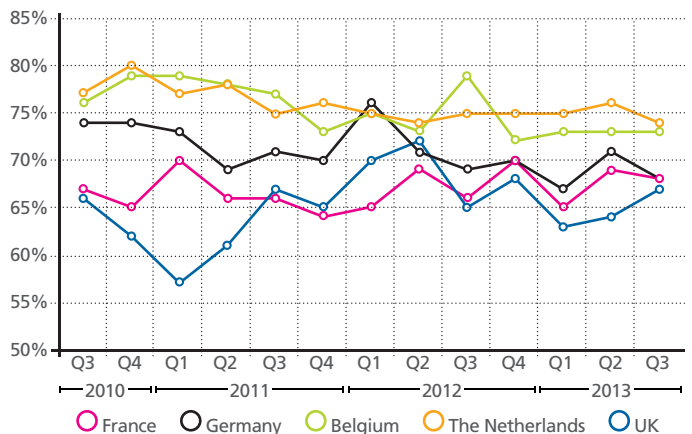
I am satisfied with my current employer: Q3 2013



## British workers are less satisfied than employees in key competitor countries

This snapshot is not a one-off phenomenon – job satisfaction is consistently lower in the UK than in our European peers. In a set of 13 similar quarterly surveys carried out over the course of three years, tracking job satisfaction levels internationally, Randstad has interviewed approximately 26,000 employees from the UK as well as Britain's peers in Europe. The UK had the lowest scores against its key Euro peer group for job satisfaction for 9 of the 13 quarters analysed<sup>3</sup>.

I am satisfied with my current employer:  
Rhine Capitalism vs. UK



2. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10604117>

3. The original Randstad Workmonitor was launched in 2003, and now covers 32 countries around the world, encompassing Europe, Asia Pacific, and the Americas. The Randstad Workmonitor is published four times a year, making both local and global trends visible over time. The quantitative study is conducted via an online questionnaire among a population aged 18-65, working a minimum of 24 hours a week in a paid job (not self-employed). The minimal sample size is 400 interviews per country, using Survey Sampling International.

Furthermore, Britain is not making progress. In Q3 2010, 66% of UK employees said they were satisfied but, having dipped to 57% in Q1 2011 and risen briefly to 72% in Q2 2012, Britain is now back down to 67%.

Additional international research has demonstrated that this was not simply due to the differences between the Anglo-Saxon economic model and the Rhine Capitalism model epitomised by the German economy – the UK lags behind the rest of the Anglosphere too.

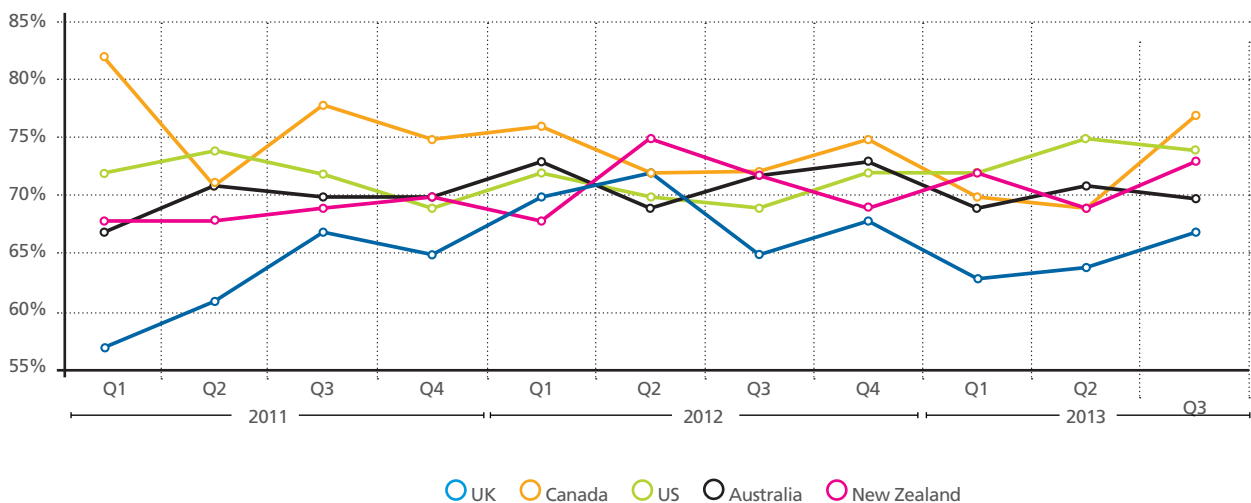
The Randstad research shows that in 70% of workers in Australia are currently satisfied with their employer, while 73% are satisfied in New Zealand. In the US, it's slightly higher at 74%: but UK lags even further behind Canada, where 77% are satisfied with their employer. Once again, this represents a consistent trend over time. In the last 11 quarterly surveys, polling approximately 18,000 workers, Britain's employees have been the least satisfied workers nine times<sup>4</sup>.

### In-Depth UK Focus

To understand professional fulfilment within the UK in more detail, Randstad undertook additional research among 2,000 workers from a wide range of different industries<sup>5</sup>. This revealed that just 62% of the UK workforce describes itself as professionally fulfilled, comparable to the Randstad Workmonitor<sup>3</sup> latest UK findings that 67% are satisfied with their current employer. However, just 16% (or one in six people) describe themselves as very fulfilled. Bridging the fulfilment gap represents a massive opportunity for UK plc.

Fortunately for the UK, there are bright spots. Those working in the IT sector and Professional Services sector (HR, Legal, Marketing & Sales) have the highest levels of professional fulfilment among UK workers (73% each), followed by the Hospitality and Education sectors (72% each). Those working in the Arts/Entertainment sectors, Construction and Engineering sector and Healthcare sector also have fulfilment levels above the UK average of 62%.

### I am satisfied with my current employer: Anglosphere



4. Ireland not included in study. Only 11 quarters of data available for New Zealand.

5. Research conducted for Randstad by Canadean among representative sample of 2000 UK adults, August 2013



At the other end of the spectrum, those working in Telecoms, Admin/Support services and the Public Sector are the least fulfilled. Only 40% of those in Telecoms are fulfilled and fewer than half of those in Admin/Support services and the Public Sector are.

A significant proportion - 25% of workers - are indifferent to fulfilment, signalling a worrying lack of engagement in their work. This is highest in the Utilities and Water (50%) and Telecoms (47%) sectors.

The industry with the most declared unfulfilled workers is the Financial Services/Accountancy sector – almost one in four (23%).

Industry	Fulfilled	Indifferent	Unfulfilled
IT	73%	20%	6%
Professional Services (Legal, HR, Marketing & Sales)	73%	17%	10%
Hospitality	72%	19%	9%
Education	72%	21%	7%
Arts / Entertainment	67%	24%	10%
Construction (including Property & Engineering)	66%	22%	12%
Doctors / Nurses	65%	24%	11%
UK	62%	25%	13%
Social Work	59%	26%	15%
FS / Accountancy	58%	19%	23%
Transport	57%	30%	13%
Wholesale / Retail	56%	26%	18%
Manufacturing	56%	32%	12%
Utilities & Water	50%	50%	0%
Public Sector	49%	32%	18%
Administration / Support Services	47%	38%	15%

### UK Regional Trends

The North East is home to the highest proportion of employees who feel fulfilled in their career at 78%. This is some margin above the next highest proportion of fulfilled workers (67%) in the East

Midlands. East Anglia has the lowest proportion of fulfilled employees at just 53%.

Region	Fulfilled	Indifferent	Unfulfilled
North East	78%	10%	12%
East Midlands	67%	24%	10%
South East	64%	25%	11%
N. Ireland	66%	16%	19%
South West	63%	23%	14%
Yorkshire & Humberside	63%	23%	14%
West Midlands	61%	30%	9%
North West	61%	25%	14%
London	59%	34%	7%
Scotland	56%	25%	19%
Wales	54%	25%	21%
East Anglia	53%	35%	13%

Wales has the highest proportion of unfulfilled workers with over a fifth (21%) stating they feel unfulfilled in their professional life. Both Northern Ireland and Scotland also had high proportions with 19% claiming they feel unfulfilled.

**the North East is home to the highest proportion of employees who feel fulfilled in their career**

London, the economic heartbeat of the country, has one of the highest levels of indifference when it comes to fulfilment among workers, at over a third (34%).

# Influences on fulfilment

## Gender and Age Matters

Our research also reveals evidence where there has previously been none regarding the influence of gender and age. Numerous academic studies have been conducted to determine the effect gender might have on job satisfaction but these have been inconclusive<sup>6</sup>.

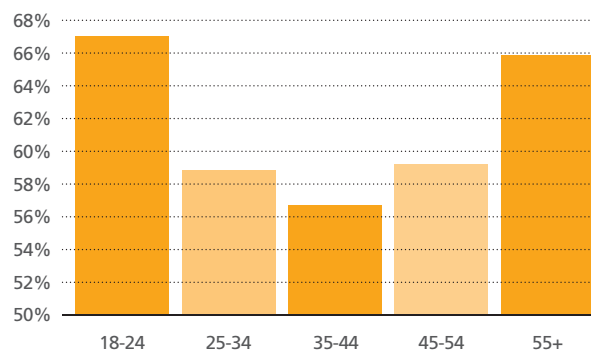
## fulfilment diminishes significantly during the middle of people's careers

Randstad's research reveals that women are more likely to be professionally fulfilled than men. A higher proportion of women feel very fulfilled than men (17% vs. 16%) while more men say they are not professionally fulfilled – 39% compared to 38%.

Academic research on the link between age and job satisfaction has also proved inconclusive<sup>7</sup>. The Randstad research shows that professional fulfilment is at its highest among those at the start or end of their career.

More than two thirds (67%) of 18 to 24 year olds feel fulfilled in their professional lives as do two thirds (66%) of those aged above 55. Fulfilment then diminishes during the middle of people's careers – the lowest proportion of those who feel fulfilled at work was among those aged 35 to 44 at 57%. The research revealed no correlation between the length of time a worker has spent in a career

## Percentage of UK employees who feel professionally fulfilled by age



and their level of fulfilment.

## Education and Qualifications Matter

Generally speaking, the higher the level of qualifications the higher the proportion of workers who are fulfilled in their professional life. 71% of those with a postgraduate degree (MA, PGDip, etc.) feel fulfilled in their career, with 23% saying they feel very fulfilled. 67% of those with a doctorate feel fulfilled (29% very fulfilled), all above the UK average level of 62%.

Those with a bachelor degree feel almost as fulfilled in their career as the average Briton (61%) while those with below university level education are less fulfilled than the average in the UK. However a higher proportion of those with GCSEs as their highest qualification feel fulfilled (56%) compared to those with A levels (53%), possibly because they have worked in apprenticeship or vocational careers and feel more fulfilled by them.

## Work Environment Matters

6. In the sixties, Saleh & Otis showed women are more satisfied than men (Saleh, S. D., & Otis, J. L. (1964). Age and level of job satisfaction, *Personnel Psychology*, 17(4). In the seventies, Near, Rice & Hunt found gender was not related to job satisfaction (Near, J.P., R.W. Rice & R.G. Hunt (1978). *Work and extra work correlates to life and job satisfaction. Academy of Management Journal*). Then, in the nineties, Hickson & Oshagbemi reported regression analyses indicating that women tend to be slightly more satisfied in their career than male counterparts – although the findings revealed a somewhat weak relationship.

7. Synder, R. & Dietrich F., *Age / Job Satisfaction: Assessment of The Shape of the Relationship* (1992) *Personnel Review*

## people working for themselves are more likely to feel very fulfilled

The highest proportion of workers who said they feel very fulfilled work for themselves (27%). Of those who don't work for themselves, those who work in a school registered the highest level of fulfilment, with 22% saying they are very fulfilled. Working outdoors and working in a hospital, surgery or laboratory also produced higher proportions of very fulfilled employees (21% and 17% respectively).

The highest proportion of staff who feel unfulfilled in their professional lives were those who work in a factory or on a building site.

### Earnings Matter

The Randstad research showed that the more fulfilled you are, the more money you are likely to earn. The median UK income according to the ONS is £26,500, and there is a direct correlation between fulfilment levels and incomes above and below this.

Level of Fulfilment	Average Income
Very fulfilled	£32,276
Moderately fulfilled	£28,235
Indifferent	£26,381
Moderately unfulfilled	£26,134
Very unfulfilled	£24,766

# Why fulfilment matters

## The impact of unfulfilled employees

Poor levels of job satisfaction and professional fulfilment have huge ramifications for the British economy, particularly in a globally competitive world.

The most recent ONS data on international comparisons of productivity showed that output per hour in the UK was 16 percentage points below the average for the rest of the major industrialised economies in 2011, the widest productivity gap since 1993<sup>8</sup>. On an output per worker basis, UK productivity was 21 percentage points lower than the rest of the G7 in 2011. Outside the G7, UK output per hour (in 2011) was significantly lower than in the Netherlands, Belgium and Ireland, and a little lower than Spain, which together with the G7 countries, are the economies that account for over half of the UK's exports and imports.

### Professional Fulfilment and Retention

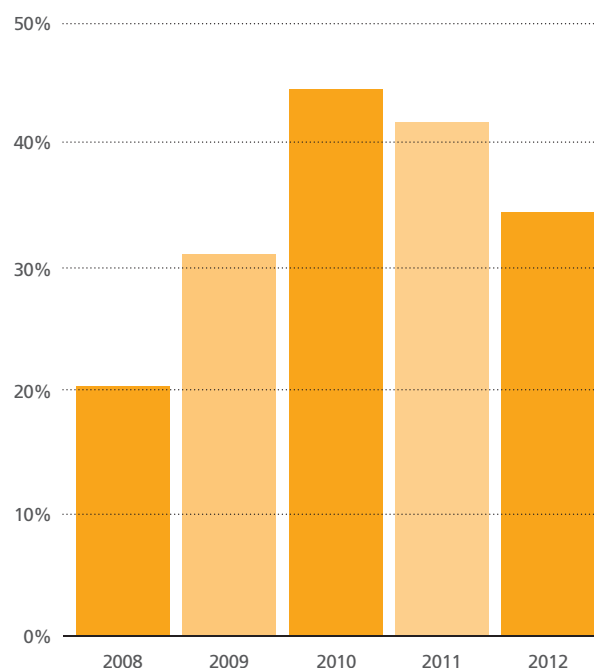
Professional fulfilment affects retention. It is important to employers that their employees don't quit voluntarily. Experienced staff know what they're doing – practice makes perfect, as Syed has pointed out<sup>9</sup>. Research from PwC has found that the cost of replacing a competent employee can amount to the equivalent of a year's salary once the costs of lost skills and productivity, replacement and training of new recruits are factored in<sup>10</sup>. As well as holding on to *experienced* staff, employers also need to cling on to their top talent – their high fliers.

In McKinsey's seminal paper on 'The War for Talent' they highlighted that the best talent is worth fighting for. Back in 1998 they forecast that the war for senior executive talent would remain a

defining characteristic of the competitive landscape for decades to come<sup>11</sup>. Yet they found that most employers were ill prepared for the talent war, and even the best were vulnerable to losing out on the best people.

In the last five years the intensity of McKinsey's conflict may have eased somewhat. But the graph below – taken from the 2013/2014 Randstad Guide to HR, (*the WorkPocket*) – shows that following a hiatus during the start of the economic downturn, the number of organisations reporting *no retention difficulties* has fallen. With economic difficulties increasingly being viewed as the norm, employers can no longer rely on the economic downturn to keep talented staff.

Percentage of organisations reporting no retention difficulties<sup>12</sup>



Randstad's World of Work 2011/2012 report found that many employees *wanted* to leave their employer but had been waiting for the economic situation to improve before moving on. With the upturn in the British economy, the problems posed by poor rates of retention are likely to escalate.

To their credit, employers are reacting to this and are intensifying their efforts to retain their best talent. Last year's *Resourcing & Talent Planning Survey* conducted by the CIPD found that 55% of organisations were planning to focus more on retaining talent in 2012 than the year before<sup>13</sup>.

And this is where Fulfilment@work comes into the equation. Job satisfaction is one of the main determinants of voluntary turnover<sup>14 15</sup>. Job satisfaction (as well as commitment and work-life balance satisfaction) has an important effect on levels of engagement and intention to quit<sup>16</sup>. Furthermore, if job satisfaction is sufficiently low, employees develop an *intention* to quit the job<sup>17 18 19</sup>. The intention may lead to job search activities, which if successful, would lead to turnover<sup>20 21</sup>. And this is where productivity is negatively affected: *intention to quit* can have negative effects on performance<sup>22</sup>. It's also a self-fulfilling prophecy: high staff turnover in an organisation makes it more likely that employees will feel dissatisfied with their job<sup>23</sup>.

### Professional Fulfilment & Absenteeism

High levels of professional fulfilment are also important for combating absenteeism<sup>24</sup>. Nearly 160 million working days a year are lost in the UK due to absence from the workplace. Research carried out on behalf of the CBI<sup>25</sup> reveals that the average UK worker takes 5.3 days off sick every year. Public sector absenteeism stands at 6.9 days per employee per year. While these figures are down from higher levels recorded in the 1980s and 90s, it remains a

major problem. The average cost of absence per employee per year is now £975<sup>26</sup>.

Once again, we find a link to Fulfilment@work. Among work attitudes, low job satisfaction is a strong predictor of absenteeism. That suggests increasing job satisfaction and organisational commitment are potentially good strategies for reducing absenteeism and turnover intentions in the future<sup>27</sup>.

8. ONS final estimates for 2011 issued February 2013
9. Syed, M., (2011). *Bounce: The Myth of Talent and the Power of Practice*
10. Randstad Work Pocket 2013/2014 – Your Essential Guide to HR, p.255
11. Chambers, E., Foulon, M., Handfield-Jones, Hankin, S., Michaels, E., *The War for Talent, The McKinsey Quarterly*, 1998, Number 3
12. Randstad Workpocket 2013/14 p.238
13. CIPD, 2012
14. Borda, R.G. and Norman, I.J. (1997), 'Factors influencing turnover and absence of nurses: a research review', *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, Vol. 34
15. Hayes, L.J., O'Brien-Pallas, L., Duffied, C., Shamian, J., Buchan, J., Hughes, F., Spence Laschinger, H.K., North, N. and Stone, P.W. (2006), 'Nurse turnover: a literature review', *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, Vol. 43
16. Baptiste, N. R. (2008). *Tightening the link between employee wellbeing at work and performance: A new dimension for HRM. Management Decision*, 46(2)
17. Appelbaum, S.H., Wunderlich, J., Greenstone, E., Grenler, D., Shapiro, B., Leroux, D. and Tronger, F. (2003), 'Retention strategies in aerospace turnover. A case study', *Career Development International*, Vol. 8 No. 6
18. Freund, A. (2005), 'Commitment and job satisfaction as predictors of turnover intentions among welfare workers', *Administration in Social Work*, Vol. 29
19. Yieth Chen, T., Long Chang, P. and WenYeh, C. (2004), 'A study of career needs, career development programs, job satisfaction and the turnover intentions of R&D personnel', *Career Development International*, Vol. 9 No. 4
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21. Spector, P.E. (1997), *Job Satisfaction: Application, Assessment, Causes, and Consequences*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
22. Krishnan, S.K., & Singh, M. (2010), 'Outcomes of intention to quit of Indian IT professionals', *Human Resource Management*, 49 (3)
23. Adam, G. A., & King, B. D. (1996). *Relationship of job and family involvement with job and life satisfaction. Journal of Applied Psychology*, 81(4), 411-420.
24. Economic and Social Research Council, 2006
25. CBI Absence and Workplace Health Survey 2013
26. CBI, Absence & Workplace Health Survey 2013
27. Cohen, A., & Golan, R. (2007), 'Predicting absenteeism and turnover intentions by past absenteeism and work attitudes', *Career Development International*

# What we can do about it

## Practical solutions for the future

As things stand, employees feel their employers are not doing enough to encourage higher levels of professional fulfilment across their workforces – Randstad’s research shows 42% of employees see a lack of support from employers as the biggest roadblock to fulfilling their potential<sup>28</sup>.

Companies have two options. They can fix the problem at the source. Or they can try to game the system.

Randstad research has identified a number of important issues that employers who take professional fulfilment seriously can examine in more detail.

### Pay

Randstad has found the top four factors in 2013 for choosing a job are, in order of importance: competitive salary and benefits, a pleasant working environment, long-term job security, and interesting job content<sup>29</sup>. While pay is right up there in terms of attracting people to a job, it also helps job satisfaction. Although not the only factor, studies suggest pay is among the most important. Being in an organisation with low compensation is one of the most common reasons given for job dissatisfaction: as the McKinsey team put it in *War for Talent*, money alone can’t make a great employee value proposition, but it can certainly break one<sup>30</sup>.

Creating professional fulfilment is a complicated recipe. Salary (and a competitive benefits package) is one of the key ingredients<sup>31</sup>.

Randstad’s latest research mirrors the findings from the academic studies. We have observed a strong

correlation between pay and fulfilment. Our research has found that employees who earn above the median income of £26,500 reported higher levels of fulfilment than those earning below it. The average income for workers who felt fulfilled was higher than workers who felt only moderately fulfilled, indifferent, moderately unfulfilled and totally unfulfilled.

Level of Fulfilment	Average Income
Very fulfilled	£32,276
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Of course, giving everyone on the payroll a rise might not be practical. The best way to ensure the right employees get the most money is to increase the pace of their career progression – it puts individual high performers on a different compensation trajectory without disrupting overall pay structures.

Money is not the be-all-and-end-all of professional fulfilment, however. Pay is important, and increases fulfilment. But only up to a point.

Once important organisational rewards like pay reach a certain level, employees become more concerned with task rewards and work-life balance. Card, Mas, Morretti and Saez have argued that fulfilment doesn’t increase once an employee begins to earn larger sums of money<sup>32</sup>. Added to that, research shows employees on high incomes are prepared to give up salary to obtain a higher level of non-financial job satisfaction<sup>33</sup>.

Put simply: the more advanced an employee's career is, and the more they are paid, the less effective financial reward is at increasing feelings of fulfilment. In 2013, leadership experts have been clamouring for employers to realise the importance of non-financial rewards as a way of increasing feelings of engagement and fulfilment in the workplace<sup>34</sup>.

Once pay ceases to drive fulfilment, non-financial aspects of fulfilment, like variety and autonomy, become more important.

### Provide Employees With Greater Variety

A mix of tasks is important to psychological wellbeing in the workplace<sup>35 36</sup>. Internal secondments can represent valuable opportunities to introduce more variety into an employee's career, as well as providing the opportunity to learn new skills. Some blue chip employers have increased variety in the workplace very creatively with US firms taking a clear lead: Google, for instance, has allowed employees to devote time to personal projects while on the clock. Its "20% time" allocated staff a day each week to focus on their own creations – Gmail was a result of this policy. In a similar vein, Microsoft lets employees go into Bill Gates' old office to tinker on fun pet projects and be creative. It also holds an annual science fair, which anyone in the company can enter their own personal creative projects, which the whole company attends for judging and prizes.

Other examples include San Francisco based online event firm EventBrite which offers employees 'Zen rooms' with specially low lights, no noise, and soft sofas on which to nap and think, as they believe that dim lighting boosts creativity. And at Sagmeister and Walsh in New York, designer Stefan Sagmeister gives his employees a whole year off every seven years to let them rejuvenate and refresh their creative outlook.

More prosaically, employers can develop secondment programmes and create special project teams. These help foster leadership development and give employees project management experience, as well as opportunity to learn new skills<sup>37</sup>. Currently, these big job assignments aren't being used effectively

by employers: McKinsey found 42% of executives had never made a cross functional move and 40% had never worked in an unfamiliar business unit<sup>38</sup>. Sadly, moving employees is disruptive, as divisions like to hoard their best staff, and the answer to the question "who can do this job best right now?" often dominates staffing decisions, to the detriment of offering employees more variety.

### Give Employees More Autonomy

Employers can help increase feelings of fulfilment in the workforce by giving key staff 'elbow room' – setting employees clear goals and giving them the freedom to carry out tasks, particularly for big projects and jobs. The temptation – particularly during an economic downturn – is for employers to resort to command-and-control leadership. Studies have shown this has a negative impact on productivity, makes employees feel threatened, and reduces their engagement with the company<sup>39</sup>.

Instead employers need to take the opposite approach: give employees thinking space, or 'headroom', where they can make decisions without having to wade through the treacle of bureaucratic procedures. At a structural level, large employers need to consider what they can do to form smaller, more autonomous units, while still maintaining a necessary level of control.

Introducing a new paradigm for employer/employee relations is the policy of yet another Silicon Valley company, Netflix, to offer unlimited vacation days, with the reasoning that if they

28. Research conducted for Randstad by Canadean among 2000 UK adults, August 2013

29. Randstad Award 2013

30. Adam, G. A., & King, B. D. (1996), 'Relationship of job and family involvement with job and life satisfaction', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 81(4), 411-420.

31. Bianchi, M. (2012), 'Financial Development, Entrepreneurship & Job Satisfaction', *The Review of Economics & Statistics*, p.273 – 286

32. Card, D., Mas, A., Moretti, E., & Saez, E., (2010), 'Inequality at work: The effect of peer salaries on job satisfaction', *NBER Working Paper* 16396

33. Helliwell, J. F., & Huang, H. (2005), 'How's the job? Well-being and social capital in the workplace'

34. Deci, EL, Koestner, R, and Ryan, RM (1999), 'A meta-analytic review of experiments examining the effects of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation'

35. Kahneman, D., Diener, E. and Schwarz, N. (1999, Eds), 'Foundations of Hedonic Psychology: Scientific Perspectives on Enjoyment and Suffering', New York: Russell Sage Foundation

36. Seligman, M. (2002), 'Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfilment. New York: Free Press.

37. Randstad WorkPocket 2013/2014 on Secondments, p.244-245

38. McKinsey Quarterly 1998, Number 2

39. Head Heart + Brain (April 2013), 'Threat in the Workplace'

hire adults who practice adult behaviours, such requirements as dress codes and set vacations aren't necessary. Nobody keeps track of the amount of days an employee is in or out of the office.

However, assuming employers don't want to commit significant management resources and money to improving professional fulfilment, there are two other ways that employers could improve professional fulfilment without having to change the way they work.

### Game The System: Gender

We've established that women are more likely to feel professionally fulfilled than men. If employers increase the number of women in their organisation, that will have an effect on the overall job satisfaction of the workforce. There's certainly scope to employ more women in the UK – in 2010, male employment was 74%, compared to just 64% for women<sup>40</sup>. By way of comparison, in the Netherlands, the employment rate for women was 69%.

How can employers encourage more women to participate in the workforce? Looking at what women want is a good place to start. Top of that wish list is work-life balance, and in particular flexible working. For women, it is a particularly important piece of the fulfilment jigsaw. It is a trend that has increased over the last 20 years. Randstad's latest market insight report, *flexibility@work2013*, shows the percentage of the UK's total employed workforce working part-time has risen from 20% in 1990 to 25% in 2010. Employers need to ensure they are flexible and are providing working conditions that suit women. A culture of long hours and presenteeism won't deliver that.

An example of a company leading the way is the Mentor Mums programme of PriceWaterhouse Coopers. Designed to help make parenthood manageable for its employees, the firm offers free counselling to expectant mothers, who are paired up with other mums at the company who can offer advice and guidance on how to maintain a good work-life balance. The programme starts four months before the baby's due date and lasts all the way up until the child's first birthday.

40. Randstad, *Into The Gap*, p.176

## a mid-career crisis is a very real phenomenon

### Game The System: Older & Younger Workers

We have also seen that Randstad's research has revealed younger and older workers have higher levels of professional fulfilment than the average member of the workforce, suggesting employers should be encouraging older workers to work beyond the state pension age and striving to recruit younger workers too.

The mid-life crisis has long been a dreaded part of growing older, but is often seen as a figment of people's imagination. Our research shows a mid-career crisis is a very real phenomenon. Those who are midway through their career often reflect on the professional path they have taken and where that path is leading them. This leaves many with a feeling of anxiety that they are not fulfilled in what they do; nor are they fulfilling their potential.

Only 57% of people aged between 55 and 64 are employed in the UK. In the US and Australia, it's 60% and 61% – so there's plenty of scope to improve the level of participation of older employees in the workforce.

The statistics for youth unemployment in the UK do not make happy reading. The latest ONS data shows that the unemployment rate for 16 to 24 year olds was 21.0% for May to July 2013, up 0.5 percentage points from February to April 2013 and almost three times the national average of 7.7%. While 3.6 million 16-24 year olds were in employment between May-July 2013, this was down 77,000 from February to April 2013. There were 960,000 unemployed 16 to 24 year olds, up 9,000 from February to April 2013. There is enormous scope for more of this youthful potential to be brought into the workforce.



# Conclusion

This report reveals that Britain has a problem with professional fulfilment, with almost 10 million British employees saying they are not happy with their current employer, and the UK's workers being less professionally fulfilled than key peers internationally. Our analysis has delved beneath the surface to seek to understand what is influencing this, and shows that certain industry sectors, age, gender, and education, all play a part in determining individual professional fulfilment, along with pay, and workplace environment.

We believe that employee fulfilment should matter to employers because it has a correlation with important factors such as retention and absenteeism and potentially UK worker productivity levels, which are currently below that of its international peers. We have offered our views and recommendations about how to tackle and improve fulfilment – such as increasing female, youth and older worker employment, and introducing greater career variety.

However we recognise that this is a complex subject and one that will require many solutions to tackle. Our intention with this report is to provide ideas and provoke debate and our resolve is to continue to monitor and support the goal of improving fulfilment at work in the UK.

**Mark Bull**  
CEO, Randstad UK and Middle East

# How Randstad can help you

## Fulfilment starts with the right match

At Randstad, we believe finding the right fit for your role is fundamental to the success of your organisation. And our success in matching the best candidates to your role is based on many years of experience.

We don't just rely on instinct, though we do have it. Over the last 50 years we have developed our matching process into both an art and a science.

We test and measure more than anyone else. Our process for clients is the same for ourselves - ensuring we attract and retain the best talent.

Not only do we work hard to secure the best candidates for your vacancies, we can offer you insight into market trends, salaries and a view of the rest of your marketplace.

We aim to make the whole process as smooth as possible, unlocking a wealth of talent and knowledge along the way.

From the initial meeting and working with you to create the best possible job brief through to sourcing the right person for your role, we aim to bring more fulfilled workers to your organisation.

All of this is backed up by our extensive post-placement care process.

### how we make the right match

**Most recruitment is done on the basis that a candidate fits a job.**

**At Randstad it's different.**

**Your consultant will match candidates by considering three different dimensions:**

**Job fit:** do they have the technical skills and experience to successfully perform the job?

job  
fit

**Boss fit:** will they suit the managerial structure and find a space to contribute to the success of your organisation?

boss  
fit

**Company fit:** do the candidate's values, priorities and ambitions complement those of the organisation?

company  
fit

the  
right  
match

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