

Keeping you informed on HR & pay practices in Ireland

HR Update

AUTUMN 2012



What are the HR trends in 2012

We take an industry-wide look at what's going on



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Welcome to our second issue of IBEC's **HR Update** survey, which shows many employers are well positioned to take advantage of growth opportunities yet remain alert to the uncertainty in the current macroeconomic environment. Half of the employers surveyed will recruit temporary or permanent staff this year, though only a quarter will see an increase in employee numbers. Seven out of 10 organisations (69%) will freeze pay in 2012 and only 1% will decrease pay, the lowest figure for a number of years.

IBEC's second issue of **HR Update** surveyed 517 senior HR contacts in IBEC member companies on trends in pay and employment, performance and engagement, and the business impact of statutory sick pay. Future surveys will continue to capture pay and reward trends and will examine HR measures and the HR function in more depth.

Overall changes to labour costs compare favourably with European and US trends. According to EC forecasts, euro area countries and the EU as a whole will experience a 2% increase in compensation per head labour costs in 2012 with a similar outturn projected for 2013. These figures have been decreasing in Ireland, resulting in real net improvement in Irish labour cost performance compared to our main trading partners. However employers here were less positive about expecting to see increases in workforce flexibility in the next six months, at 43%, down from 50% in Spring 2012.

With performance management and engagement the main people management priorities in 2012, the survey found over two thirds of employers had a formal performance management process, nearly half had an employee engagement strategy, and less than one in three were dissatisfied with the level of employee engagement. Organisations felt they were strong on customer focus but their staff focus was weaker, as was the ability to match skills to jobs.

This **HR Update** survey reinforces earlier findings that employers will cut back on occupational sick pay schemes should the Government introduce statutory sick pay. In addition it shows the significant effect such a proposal would have on their business, effecting the recruitment of new employees, the retention of headcount and the maintenance of benefits. In Budget 2013 the Government needs to deliver the conditions for economic growth, rebuild confidence and address the weakness in the domestic economy. IBEC's four priority recommendations for Budget 2013 are:

1. no increase in labour costs;
2. innovative measures to support the domestic economy;
3. improve Ireland's tax offering for international business;
4. need to support investment in Irish SMEs.

Thanks to each of you who contributed to the HR Update survey and for your on-going support for IBEC. We will continue to provide up-to-date information on people management and employment practices. Please get in touch if we can support your organisation on any of these issues.

Brendan McGinty
Director IR/HR Services

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Pay update

Pay and benefit costs typically represent a significant proportion of business costs, with base pay generally being the most costly reward element. So getting the strategy and process for managing base pay right is a critical issue for every employer.

Trends in basic pay

In the Autumn 2012 **HR Update** survey 30% of employers reported that they expect to see an increase in basic pay in 2012, with 69% freezing basic pay. The proportion expecting to implement pay freezes has increased from 63% earlier in the year.

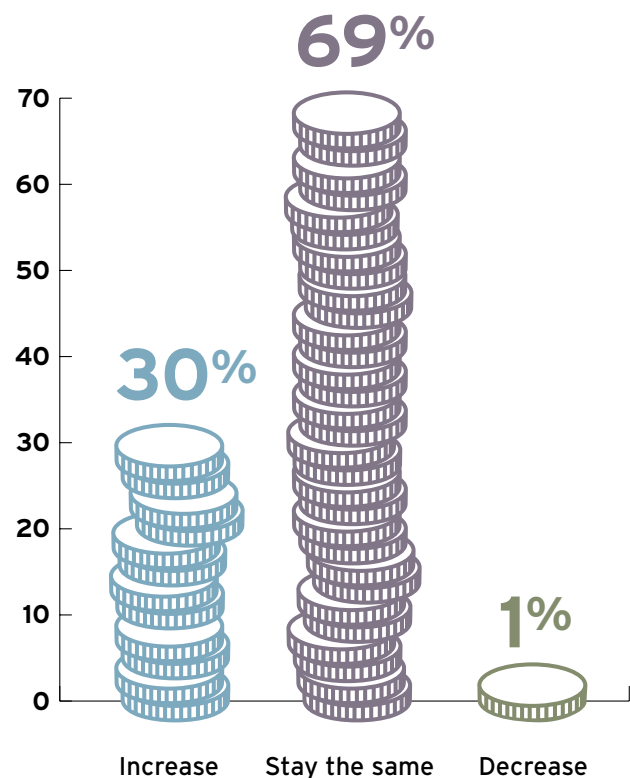
Among the organisations that provided information in relation to expected pay movements, only 1% will decrease pay in 2012 with the majority (69%) freezing pay (see figure 1). Where an increase was expected in 2012, the median increase was +2%. Where a decrease was expected, the median decrease was -10%. Overall the average change to basic pay was an increase of +0.63%. While the number of companies expecting to decrease pay dropped from the Spring **HR Update** survey (from 4% to 1%), the size of the projected decrease doubled from -5% to -10%.

The variation in pay trends across sectors shows that the divergence in economic activity in Ireland continues. Nearly two thirds, 62%, of respondents in the high tech sector were planning increases in 2012, whereas less than a fifth, 17%, of employers in the other services sector expect an increase. Two out of five employers (40%) indicated that they provide performance-related pay increases to staff.

Table 1 2012 pay increases by sector (N=507)

Sector	Percentage of respondents in each sector planning pay increases	N
High tech manufacturing	62	74
Other manufacturing	27	98
Distribution (retail and wholesale)	20	61
Financial services	33	60
Electronic services	58	26
Other services	17	188

Figure 1 Basic pay changes 2012 (N=507)



Increases in basic pay in 2012 are most likely to occur in high tech manufacturing and electronic services companies.

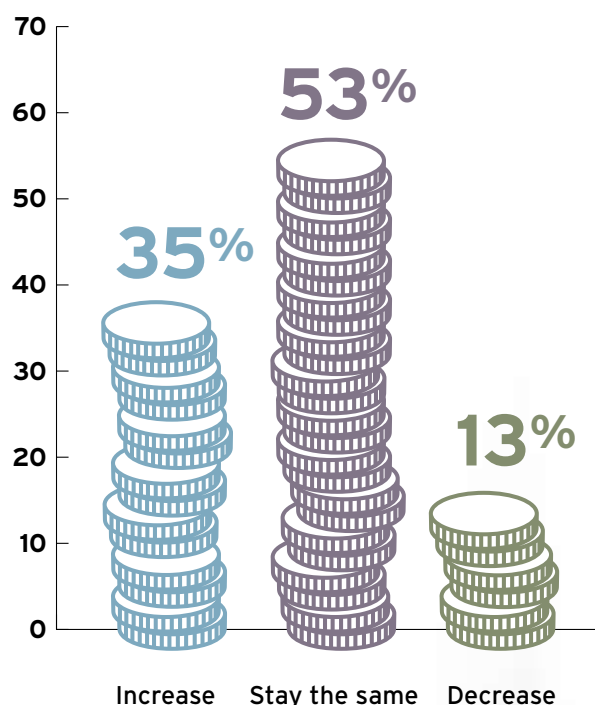
Trends in total pay bill

Just over a third of the employers surveyed (35%) expect their total pay bill to increase this year. A further 53% expect their total pay to remain static in 2012, while 13% expected it to decrease (see *figure 2*). The proportion expecting the total pay bill to remain the same has increased from 45% in the Spring HR Update survey to 53% in this survey, a combination of fewer companies expecting to see either an increase or decrease.

Where an increase in total pay bill was expected, the median increase was +2.3% and where a decrease was expected, the median decrease amounted to -5%. Overall the average change to total pay bill expected in 2012 was an increase of +0.3%.

The companies expecting to decrease their pay bill were more likely to be facing lay-offs, short-time working, or redundancies in the next six months.

Figure 2 Total pay bill changes 2012 (N=503)



Bonus arrangements

About a third of employers (35%) had no bonus arrangements in place for 2012 and a fifth (18%) had just one form of bonus scheme in place. The most popular type of bonus was a company performance bonus (see *table 2*).

Table 2 Bonus arrangements in 2012 (N=337)

Type of bonus	Percentage of organisations			
	For all employees	For some employees	Not available in 2012	Not applicable
Company performance bonus	31	43	6	20
Performance/merit bonus	25	40	7	27
Productivity bonus	6	18	6	70
Team performance bonus	6	15	7	72
Commission	1	44	4	52
Flexibility bonus	2	4	8	86
Piece-rate bonus	1	7	6	87

International labour costs

It is important to put changes to basic pay into an international context. The *European Commission Labour Cost Forecast (Spring 2012)* forecasts a reduction of -0.8% in labour costs in Ireland for 2012. Only Greece and Portugal are recording faster declines, while in the euro area as a whole labour costs are forecast to increase by 1.9%. UK labour market costs are predicted to increase by 2.4% this year and a further 2.6% in 2013 (see *table 3*).

The cumulative reduction in Ireland's labour market costs over the last three years is helping Ireland to make significant inroads into improving labour market competitiveness.

Since 2008 Ireland's average labour costs have fallen by 6.5% while in the EU (27) they have increased by a cumulative 8.7%, resulting in a labour cost competitiveness gain for Ireland of over 15%. When productivity gains are taken into account the unit labour cost improvement has been even larger than this.

Table 3 European Commission labour cost forecast (Spring 2012)

				Spring 2012 forecast		
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Belgium	3.6	1.1	1.4	3.3	3.1	2.3
Germany	2.1	0	2	3	2.7	2.8
Estonia	9.7	-3.4	1.4	1.4	4	5.4
Ireland	5.4	-1.2	-3.2	-1.4	-0.8	0.1
Greece	6.1	4	-3.3	-3.2	-8	-1.3
Spain	6.1	4.3	0	0.8	0.1	0.1
France	2.4	1.8	2.1	2.8	2.1	2
Italy	3.8	1.7	2.3	1.4	1.5	1.4
Cyprus	3.2	5.3	-0.2	2	-0.8	-0.3
Luxembourg	2.2	1.8	2.6	2	3.2	3.5
Malta	4.7	3.3	-0.4	0.4	1.5	2.4
Netherlands	3.3	2.5	1.4	1.7	1.9	1.5
Austria	3.1	2.2	1.4	3	3.6	1.9
Portugal	3	2.8	1.4	-0.8	-3.1	-0.6
Slovenia	7.2	1.8	4.3	2	0.5	1
Slovakia	7	3.6	4.4	0.9	2.3	2.6
Finland	4.4	2.3	3.5	2.7	3.3	3.3
Euro area	3.3	1.7	1.7	2.2	1.9	1.9
Bulgaria	16.3	9.4	11.2	7.3	5.2	5.1
Czech Republic	4.2	-1.2	3.7	1.6	2	2.1
Denmark	3.5	2.8	2.5	1.7	1.7	1.6
Latvia	15.7	-12.7	-5.5	4.2	1.7	2.2
Lithuania	14.3	-9.9	-0.9	3.4	2.1	3.3
Hungary	6.8	-1.4	-2.3	5.8	3.7	2.9
Poland	8.9	3.5	5.7	5.1	4.7	5.1
Romania	31.9	-1.9	7.6	3.7	3.2	4.2
Sweden	1.5	1.6	3	0.8	2.9	3.1
United Kingdom	1.7	2.7	3.6	1.9	2.4	2.6
EU	3.2	1.8	2.3	2.2	2.1	2.1
Croatia	9.3	1.1	5.3	1.5	0.9	1.3
USA	3.3	2.1	2.7	3.2	2.5	4.1
Japan	0.2	-3.8	0.2	1	1.2	1.2

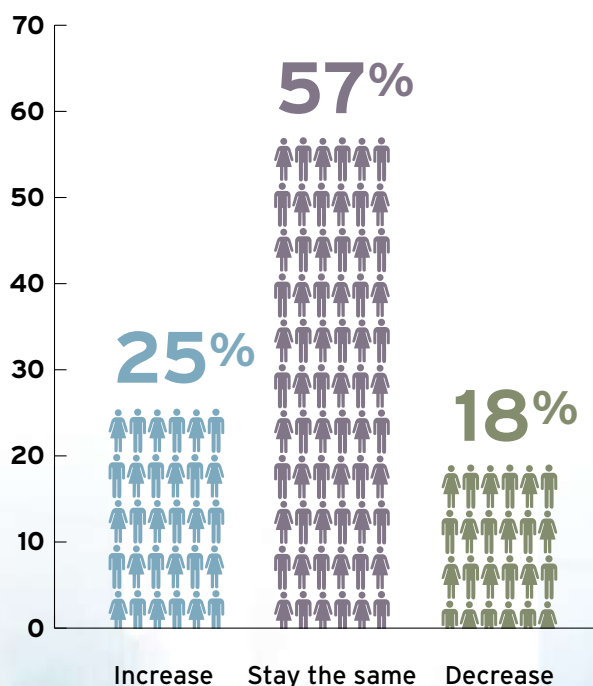
Resourcing update

Employment levels

The number of companies (25%) who expect to increase employee numbers in 2012 has not changed since the Spring **HR Update** survey. In the current survey, over half (57%) of organisations expect no change to employee numbers for 2012 and almost one in five (18%) expect their employee numbers to decrease this year.

Where organisations expect employee numbers to increase, the average increase was +8.8%. Where a decrease in employee numbers is expected, it is in the order of -7.8% (both of these down a percentage point from the Spring survey).

Figure 3 Changes to employee numbers in 2012 (N=492)



Employment trends

The **HR Update** survey found that half of the employers surveyed (49%) expect to recruit permanent or temporary staff in the next six months. Nearly two in five are likely to recruit permanent staff and 36% expect to recruitment temporary staff. Only 7% expect to increase their use of agency staff in the next six months (see *table 4*).

The number of organisations planning short-time working, redundancies or temporary lay offs remains at less than 10% for each, though a number of employers have these under consideration or are unsure about their plans over the next six months, into 2013.

Table 4 Employment trends in the next 6 months (N=517)

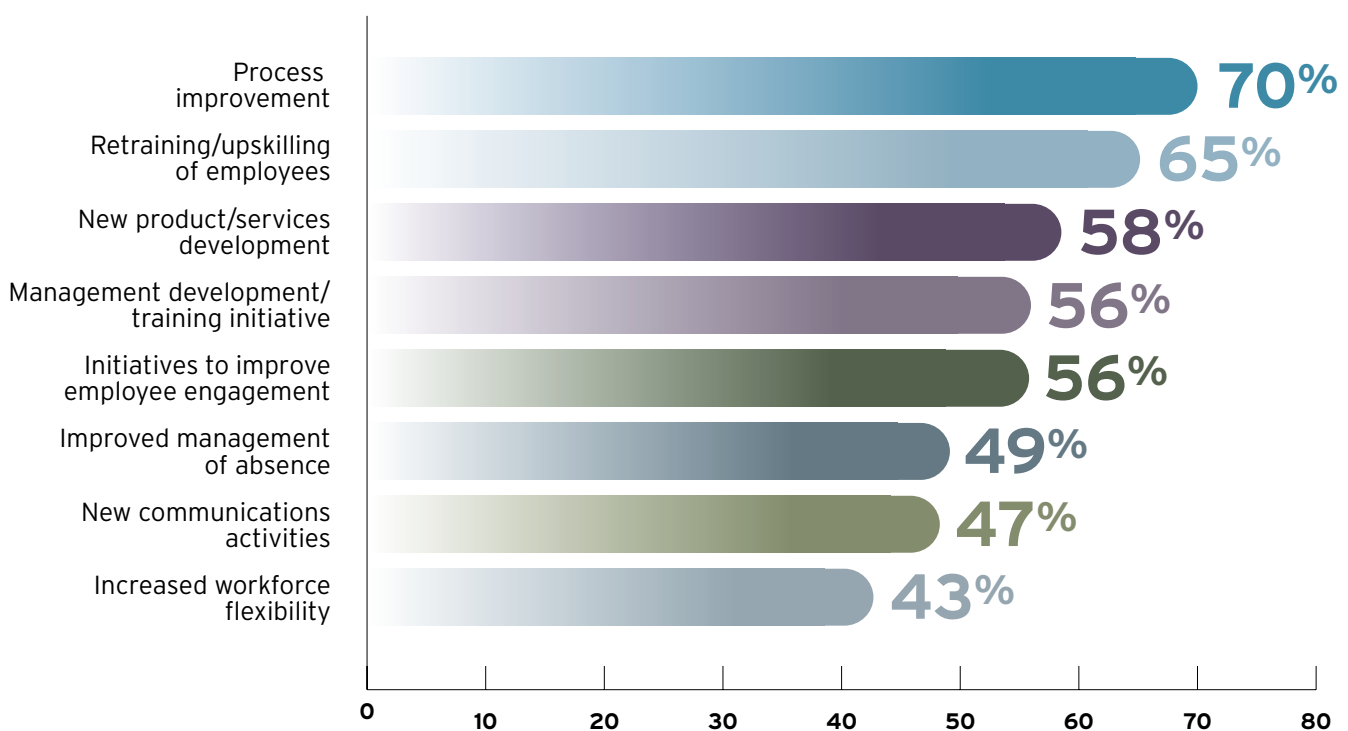
Activity	Percentage of organisations	
	Yes	Under consideration
Recruitment of temporary staff	38	13
Recruitment of permanent staff	36	12
Increased use of agency staff	7	6
Implementation of voluntary redundancies	9	7
Implementation of compulsory redundancies	9	6
Implementation of short-time working	8	8
Implementation of lay-offs	5	7

Initiatives in the next six months

The two most common initiatives that organisations are expecting to implement in the next six months remain process improvement and retraining/up-skilling employees. Both of these are expected to happen in about two thirds of those surveyed. Over half of the companies expect to be involved in management development and employee engagement initiatives (56%), and a similar number expect new product/service development (58%). While communication and absence management initiatives appear more popular than the previous survey, workforce flexibility is the one area that has slipped back, with only 43% of organisations expecting it to increase, down from 50% in the Spring survey.

Expectations around process improvements, retraining/upskilling of employees and management development initiatives were most evident in the high tech manufacturing sector. Improvements in the management of absence and workforce flexibility were expected least in the distribution and electronic services sectors.

Figure 4 Initiatives expected in the next six months*



* (N ranges from 450 to 471)

Ireland's attractive skill base

The IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook published in May 2012 highlights Ireland's extensive pool of highly skilled graduates and how our skill base makes Ireland attractive as an inward investment location. Ireland ranked:

- 1st for availability of skilled labour
- 1st for flexibility and adaptability of workforce
- 1st for investment incentives
- 1st for attitudes towards globalisation
- 2nd for business legislation- openness to foreign investors
- 2nd for large corporations that are efficient by international standards
- 2nd for adaptability of companies

Performance management update

The Autumn **HR Update** survey explored the nature of performance management practices in organisations in Ireland. Performance management has been identified as the number one people management priority for 2012. Some 71% of the employers' surveyed indicated that they operated a formal (i.e. documented) performance management/appraisal process. Performance management processes were most evident in the electronic services sector (100%), the high tech manufacturing sector (88%) and the financial services sector (85%).

Large organisations were much more likely to have a process in place than smaller organisations. *Table 5* shows the direct link between company size and the existence of a performance management process. A quarter of the companies that did not have a performance management system in place expected to implement such a system within the next year.

In three-quarters of the organisations operating performance management systems, all employees were included. It is clear that in the main, business managers own the objective setting process. The majority of performance objectives were set either by line managers/team leaders, 68%, or by senior managers, 62%. HR and line managers together set objectives in 22% of companies.

The on-going need to refine and refocus performance management processes was evident from the fact that almost one third (30%) of respondents had made changes to their scheme in the year preceding the survey, and a further 31% expect to make changes to the scheme within the next year.

Table 5 Performance management process and company size (N=493)

Number of employees	Percentage of organisations	
	Yes	No
Less than 50 employees	60	40
50 - 99 employees	76	24
100 - 249 employees	84	16
250 - 499 employees	86	15
More than 500 employees	90	10
Total	71	29



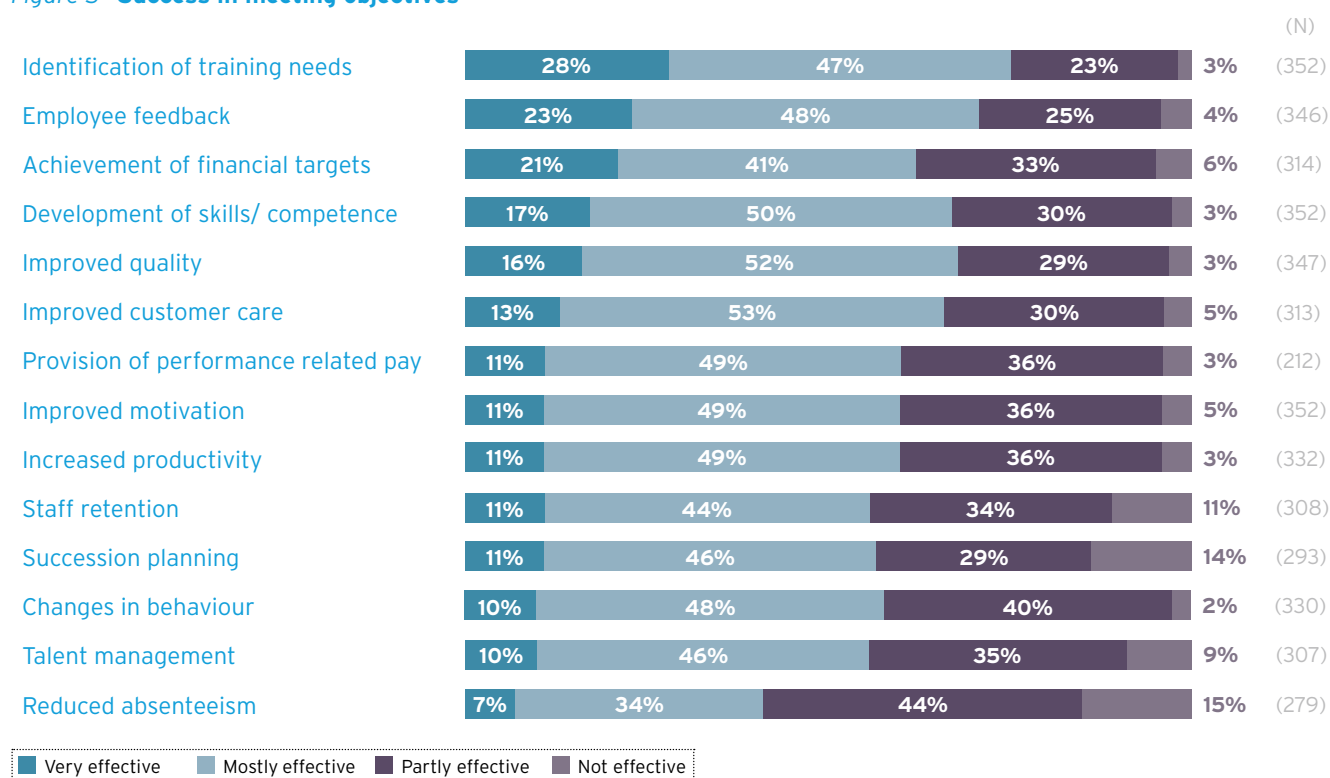
Effectiveness of performance management

The survey explored how successful employers think their performance management process is at meeting its objectives. Among those for whom it was an objective, performance management systems were seen as most effective in enabling the identification of training needs (75% very or mostly effective), employee feedback (71% very or mostly effective), development of skills/competence

(67% very or mostly effective) and improved quality (68% very or mostly effective).

Provision of performance related pay was not a key objective in almost two out of five (38%) performance management systems, and reduced absenteeism was not a key objective of one in five schemes.

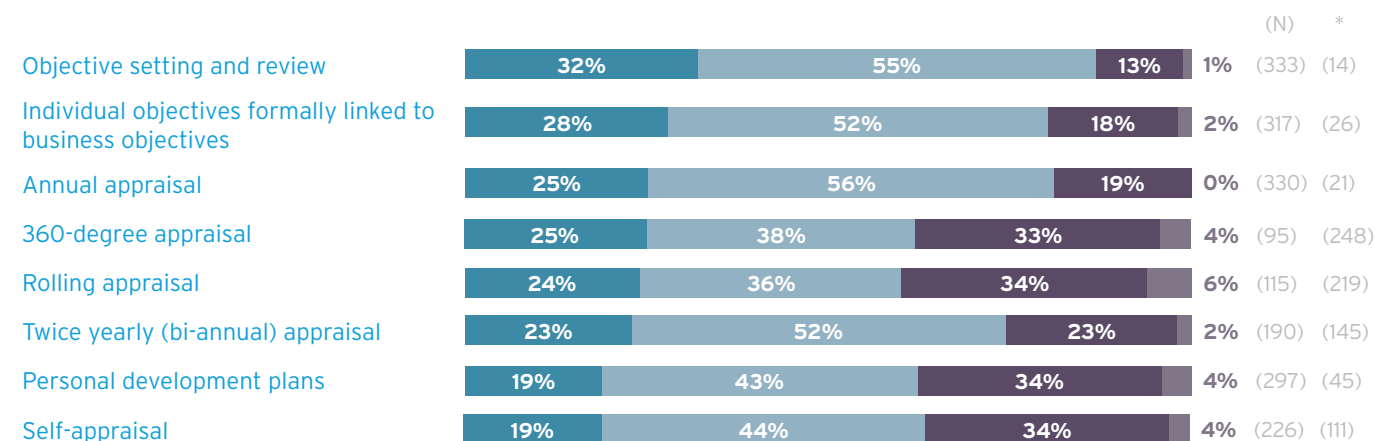
Figure 5 Success in meeting objectives

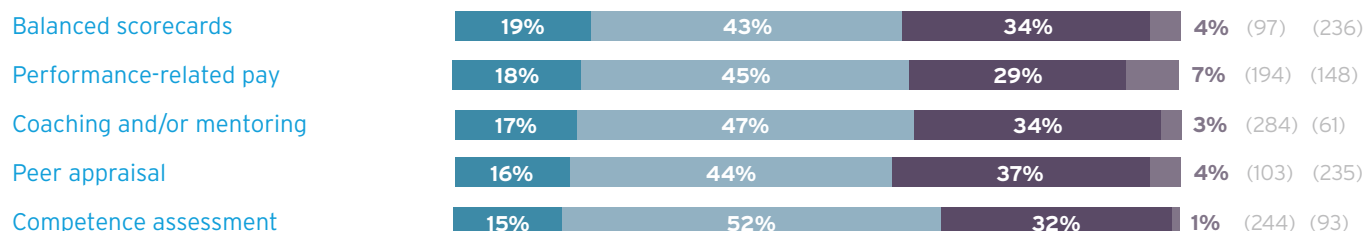


Objective setting and review was both the most common and the most effective element of the performance management system, with more than four out of five organisations rating it either very or mostly effective. Annual appraisal was rated as very or mostly effective by 81% of those who used it. The linking of individual objectives to business objectives

was rated as very or mostly effective by four out of five users. Rolling appraisals, 360-degree appraisals, balanced scorecards, and peer appraisals were less common and not part of the performance management process in at least three out of five respondents (see figure 6).

Figure 6 Effectiveness of performance management features





* N where not part of process

■ Very effective ■ Mostly effective ■ Partly effective ■ Not effective

Key challenges

Just under a third (31%) of those who ranked the key challenges faced in the successful implementation of a performance system believed that their number one challenge was the capability of line managers to manage the process. *Table 6* shows that 64% of companies ranked it in their top three challenges. Getting employees to buy into the scheme was number one for 10% of these companies, and in the top three challenges for 25% of companies. Over a third, 36%, consider that differentiating between high and low performers is one of their top three challenges.

Table 6 Top three challenges to successfully implement performance management (N=108)

	%
Capability of line managers to implement the process	64
Differentiating sufficiently between high and low performers	36
Getting employees to buy into the scheme	25
Keeping the system fresh and relevant	22
Affordability of link to pay	20
Gaining senior management support	19
Developing performance, skills and competence	19
Integrating business unit/team and organisational objectives	17
Integrating individual and organisational objectives	16
Integrating pay with job performance	15
Lack of attention to performance management in previous years	15
Sustaining the system following removal of pay or bonus link	8
Communicating the system to staff	6

Use of ratings

In almost two thirds (65%) of those companies with a performance management process in place, performance was rated on a rating scale. Almost two out of three (58%) of those who used ratings (237 companies) indicated that they used a five-point rating system. Four-point scales were used in one in five companies with ratings, and three-point rating systems were used in one in ten companies.

Where ratings existed, they were used for personal development planning in 63% of companies, to identify training needs in 57%, to determine bonuses in 55%, to determine pay increases in 54%, to identify top talent in 54% and to develop talent in 49%.

Half of those with a rating system in place had an appeals mechanism in place. A methodology to calibrate or measure consistency was in use in 46% of those with a rating system, and forced distribution was reported by only 18% of organisations with ratings.



Employee engagement update

The Spring **HR Update** survey identified that employee engagement is a key people management priority for 2012. In this survey almost half of the respondent companies (47%) had a strategy in place in relation to employee engagement. Almost a third (30%) had measured employee engagement in the past year. The majority (55%) however had not.

Over a quarter (28%) of organisations were dissatisfied with the level of employee engagement in their organisation. Some 63% indicated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the level of employee engagement. This is down from 81% who were satisfied with engagement among organisations who had surveyed employees in IBEC's *Essential guide to HR Practices in Ireland*, 2011.

Table 7 Satisfaction with the level of employee engagement (N=455)

Satisfaction level	% of organisations
Very satisfied	10
Satisfied	63
Dissatisfied	26
Very dissatisfied	2

In looking at the resilience of organisations to achieve and maintain a high performance culture, a number of indicators were listed against which respondents were asked to rate their organisation as good, average or poor. *Table 8* provides a summary and the sectoral variation in responses.

Overall, most organisations rated themselves as good at customer focus (80%), staff retention (70%), cost management (66%) and clarity of purpose (64%). Companies were more likely to rate themselves as average on their staff focus (53%), matching skills to jobs (49%) and profitability (47%).

However some interesting sectoral variation existed. A greater proportion of high tech manufacturing firms classified themselves as good on clarity of purpose and profitability, more other manufacturing companies were good on cost management and staff retention, distribution companies were good on absence management, cost management and the commitment, trust, engagement of employees. Financial services considered themselves good on terms and conditions, recruitment and employee wellbeing. A greater number of electronic services companies rated themselves good at flexible working and matching skills to jobs, the same areas that Other services companies tended to be good at (see *table 8*).

Table 8 Organisational performance

Element	Rating	Percentage of organisations						
		Total	High tech manufacturing	Other manufacturing	Distribution	Financial Services	Electronic services	Other services
Absence management	Good	64	65	63	80	62	62	60
	Average	31	29	33	18	37	35	34
Clarity of purpose	Good	64	69	60	70	53	42	68
	Average	34	31	34	27	45	58	31
Commitment, trust, engagement	Good	54	48	46	63	52	42	60
	Average	40	46	44	34	42	58	34
Cost management	Good	66	62	74	77	62	58	63
	Average	31	37	22	23	37	42	34
Customer focus	Good	80	70	81	82	79	73	84
	Average	20	29	18	18	21	27	16
Employee wellbeing	Good	58	55	51	55	69	54	60
	Average	39	39	43	40	31	46	37
Flexible working	Good	43	29	38	48	37	54	51
	Average	44	52	46	33	50	46	43
Matching skills to jobs	Good	48	38	44	43	45	58	55
	Average	49	56	52	57	53	42	43
Profitability	Good	39	54	40	44	47	39	29
	Average	47	36	32	44	51	50	60
Recruitment practices	Good	57	61	42	52	69	52	63
	Average	39	37	51	42	29	44	34
Staff focus	Good	45	46	37	37	48	42	50
	Average	53	52	60	59	52	58	46
Staff retention	Good	70	64	78	77	71	39	70
	Average	28	33	22	20	27	54	28
Team working, staff involvement	Good	56	57	47	54	60	39	63
	Average	40	41	47	42	39	50	35
Terms and conditions	Good	62	59	65	61	77	50	59
	Average	36	38	32	39	23	50	38



Sick pay and absence update

Occupational sick pay

The management of absence, sick leave and sick pay are on-going concerns for employers. Absence was by far the most measured aspect of HR, according to IBEC's 2011 *Guide to HR Practices in Ireland*, measured by 91% of organisations. Some 77% of the organisations in this **HR Update** survey had an occupational sick pay scheme in place.

In response to Government proposals in this area, the **HR Update** survey sought information on likely responses to the introduction of statutory sick pay. IBEC has already pointed out that a requirement on employers to pay an additional €89 million to cover the cost of four weeks illness benefit would cost 3,500 jobs, put struggling firms out of business and force many companies to reduce pay and benefits.

Reinforcing the findings of the Spring 2012 edition of **HR Update**, employers will cut back on occupational sick pay benefits should the Government introduce statutory sick pay. Four out of five employers would curtail sick pay benefit if they are required to pay some element of State illness benefit.

Reducing the duration of sick pay tops the list of potential actions that employers would take if they had to pay some element of State illness benefit, at 38%. More than a third would reduce the level of payment to staff and a quarter would change the eligibility criteria, if a statutory sick pay scheme was introduced. Other actions include closing the scheme to new entrants, closing it entirely or revising other benefits (see *table 9*).

Table 9 Actions in response to the introduction of statutory sick pay (N=456)

	Percentage of respondents
Reduce duration of payment	38
Reduce payment level	38
Change eligibility criteria	24
Close scheme to new entrants	12
Close scheme entirely	6
Revise other benefits	5
Other	13
No revision of existing scheme	24

* Organisations could answer more than one option above. 'No revision to existing scheme' is a standalone answer.

Organisations were also asked to indicate if a requirement to pay some element of the current State illness benefit would negatively affect their business, specifically their ability to recruit new employees, expand their business etc. Two thirds (65%) indicated that such a requirement would have an effect on their ability to retain existing benefits to staff, 49% indicated that it would effect their ability to recruit new employees and 47% said that it would affect their ability to retain existing staff. For 42% of respondents, it would effect the sustainability of their business in Ireland (see *table 10*).

“Over three quarters of employers are likely to curtail their sick pay scheme should the Government advance statutory sick pay proposals.”



Table 10 Impact of requirement to pay element of the current state illness benefit

Objective	Major effect	Minor effect	No effect	Don't know	N
	Percentage of organisations				
Recruit new employees	20	29	35	15	439
Retain existing headcount	15	32	39	14	440
Retain existing benefits	36	28	21	14	439
Sustain your business in Ireland	16	26	43	15	419
Expand business	19	27	37	17	419

Absence management

Companies also indicated how their management of absence would change if they were required to pay some element of the State illness benefit. Only 16% of respondent companies would expect no revision to their current approach to absence management. Almost half (47%) would expect to revise company policy on absence management while almost two out of five (39%) would increase the monitoring of absence. Organisations would also introduce new initiatives to manage absence (32%) and improve how they implement their existing policy (31%). Over a quarter would improve the recording/reporting of absence and train managers in this (see table 11).

Table 11 Potential actions by companies in relation to absence

Likely action	Percentage of respondents
Revise company policy on absence management	47
Increase monitoring of absences	39
Introduce new initiatives to manage absence	32
Improve the implementation of existing absence management policy	31
Improve recording and reporting of absence	28
Train managers in absence management	27
No revision to current approach	16

* Companies could answer more than one option above. 'No revision to current approach' is a standalone answer.

“The survey demonstrates how an increase in the cost of employment would reduce Ireland’s attractiveness as an investment location as well as the capacity to maintain and create employment, and would serve to undermine the hard won competitiveness gains of recent years.”

The HR Update survey

The IBEC HR Update survey is conducted twice a year and focuses on topical and strategic people management issues affecting employers in Ireland. This is the second edition and the series will continue to address topics such as pay and employment, employee performance and engagement HR priorities, the HR function and flexible working arrangements.

We are grateful to members who provided us with information and we thank you in advance for your on-going participation.

The data is collected by the Research unit and reports will be available to IBEC members on the IBEC website www.ibec.ie/hrnews.ie

Respondent profile

The Autumn 2012 survey data was collected in August to September 2012 from 517 senior HR contacts in IBEC member organisations. Not all questions were answered by all respondents.

The profile of respondents is similar to IBEC's Spring 2012 **HR Update** survey. Around a third of respondents employed fewer than 50 employees. Almost a quarter of respondents (23%) employed over 250 employees (see *table 12*).

Table 12 Respondents by employee numbers

Employee numbers	Percentage of organisations	Number of organisations
Less than 50 employees	37	190
50 - 99 employees	20	102
100 - 249 employees	21	110
250 - 499 employees	11	59
Over 500 employees	11	56
Total	100	517

One in seven respondents was engaged in high tech manufacturing, which includes all chemical, medical devices and electronics manufacturing. Just over half the respondents (54%) were engaged in the services sector (see *table 13*).

Table 13 Respondents by sector

Sector	Percentage of organisations	Number of organisations
High tech manufacturing	14	74
Other manufacturing	20	101
Distribution (retail and wholesale)	12	63
Financial services	12	60
Electronic services	5	27
Other services	37	192
Total	100	517

Further information



IR/HR

For HR queries, IBEC members can contact their IR/HR Advisor or Employee Relations Information Unit
Tel: 01 605 1542
Email: erinfo@ibec.ie

Research

For research queries, IBEC members can contact the Research Unit
Tel: 01 605 1635
Email: research@ibec.ie

Government schemes providing financial support for Irish business

Full details on www.djei.ie

Starting your own business

- Seed capital scheme
- Three year corporate tax exemption
- Back to work enterprise allowance (self-employed)

Growing your business

- The employment and investment incentive scheme
- R&D tax credit
- Innovation vouchers
- Accelerated capital allowance

Recruiting

- Revenue job assist
- Employer job (PRSI) incentive scheme
- Jobbridge
- Succeed in Ireland

Accessing Credit

- Code of conduct for business lending to SMEs
- Credit review office
- Micro-finance fund
- Credit guarantee fund







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