

Employees Surveyed:

- Four 20-29 year olds
 - Three 30-39 year olds
 - Two 40-49 year olds
 - One 50-59 year old
 - 3 males
 - 7 females
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- 5 single income households
 - 3 main incomes
 - 2 secondary incomes
 - 2 students (1 living with parents)

I interviewed 10 people from a variety of employment backgrounds including general office work, retail, personal fitness, and the food industry. All of the interviewees make less than the living wage; there was a mix of single, married, on their second marriage or divorced/ separated people included in this report. When looking for people I could speak with I found that there are much fewer men in really low-income, customer service type jobs than women. Some of the techniques the people interviewed used to find their current employment are: various online job searches such as monster.ca, jobbank.gc.ca, craigslist, etc., word of mouth, and by inquiring at a mall directory.

9 of the 10 employees own their own vehicle and 2 own their own home. In the group interviewed 1 person has a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration with an HR concentration. One of the students is currently working towards a Bachelor's degree in Criminology and plans to eventually get her Masters degree. Two people have certificates that were job specific and both have since moved away from that career path.

Students are working mostly to pay for their schooling and for personal bills such as food and cell phones. The secondary income earners are working for things like cars, children costs, contributing to utilities and paying back debt. The main income earners typically contribute to the most to expenses like rent and basic bills like hydro and gas.

One interviewee is a 50-59 year old single grandmother who makes less than \$14/hour at her clerical job. She pays \$800 per month on her LOC to pay off her townhome on top of all of her other home expenses, car payments, etc. If one only knew about the clerical job this single

grandparent may be thought to be not making enough to support herself now and save for retirement in a few years. However, she shares that she is working to supplement a pension cheque from her first husband who passed away as well as her own pension cheque each month. She plans to work until her home is paid off and then she plans to retire. In a follow up conversation after the interview, she noted that her old position as Captain has become open at the Canadian Armed Forces and she planned to apply and go back to that work.

Most of the interviewees did feel some level of loyalty to their current employers. Reasons for this loyalty include: the development of friendships in the workplace, appreciating that they were hired and trained, some are receiving medical coverage which is more important for older employees than it is for younger staff. All but one of the people interviewed say that though they may not actively be seeking other employment they are keeping their eye out for something with better pay or something they believe they may find more fulfilling. Most of the control group said that they would consider themselves mostly satisfied with their current employment, though each had their own complaints.

The older participants who kept an eye out for other employment seemed to have a more focused view on what title they would be looking for at future employment. One woman (age group 40-49) said that if she were to leave her current employment she would like to go back to being a Care Aid at a seniors center. The younger group seems to be more concerned with financial benefits of changing employment and typically does not have a specific job category that they are pursuing.

One young (20-29) gentleman is working full-time at a local gym. He has completed some university but has taken time off of school while his wife goes to school because he is able to make a couple of dollars an hour more than she is without a degree. Once she graduates he will be going back to school. His wife is also working part-time on telephone customer support but only makes enough for their food each month. They live with his mother and brother and he contributes to his family's expenses as well as his own to help his family out. This is the one employee that I interviewed that is completely satisfied with his job currently and is not currently seeking other employment.

Only 4 of 10 of the people who participated in these interviews have been at their current place of employment for over a year. Only one has been at his current employment for over 5 years. He is a main provider for a family of four; his wife works part-time and takes care of their two children (both under the age of 5). This is the same gentleman mentioned earlier who has

obtained a business degree at SFU about 15 years ago. He has been with the same company for 14 years and has stayed because he enjoys the flexibility, working with people and he said that he would prefer a little less money in exchange for more family time. He has been offered a promotion that would require traveling at least half the time but he is not willing to consider all that travel at least until his children are older and he feels like he has established a relationship with them. His previous employer went banko and he applied for this job because he needed money and had preexisting knowledge base on technology. His employment was intended to be very temporary until he could find something else in the area he was educated in. Overall, he says that he finds his current employment 70-75% satisfying but it could definitely be better.

Interviewees believe that all of their current jobs are means to an end. This could include paying the bills, getting them through until they can go to school, paying down enough debt to retire, or a way to spend time with family for the next few years with promotion availability.

Employers Surveyed:

- 1 retail (12 employees)
- 1 fast food (120 employees)
- 1 office (25 employees)
- 1 restaurant (50 employees)

Retail:

3) Foster open communication will fight for them if there is nothing he can do in the store (ex. Helping worker renew work visa). Even things they should know but for any reason they don't. Very flexible scheduling – will even cover shifts himself in emergencies. Makes sure all employees are aware of incentives and expectations for sales each week.

4) Biggest benefit of providing a healthy work environment is employee moral – if employees are happy, they will be more productive. When people are unhappy or are unfairly treated nothing will get done.

5) The Source does promote from within whenever they can. This is especially prominent at the lower management level. They only search externally if they have to. If an employee can prove that they can do the job they will be promoted because they already know the company, there is no breaking in period. It is important that this internal candidate works their butt off, proves themselves and they will go as high as they want. They just need to fight for it but there aren't any restrictions.

6) Some of the training The Source provides employees includes:

- On-boarding: Very structured, introduction to company, sales technique, categorical training → 90 days long.
- E-learning: Online training going into further depth of different categories and big ticket products to prepare new employees for inevitable questions from customers.
- Live training: Typically for wireless, the carrier reps come in and give information to employees verbally.
- New policy and procedure training: Verbal with manager, whenever something changes, very informal.
- Assistant Manager training (Management Level 1) – only for employees that will be promoted to Assistant Manager.
- Manager can go to the training team if he or she feels that something is missing.
- Seasonal employees receive shorter training.

7) Yes, life conditions are considered during the hiring process. There are certain things that an employer must be careful not to ask but if something is offered, it will be considered but never in a negative way. Many people that need money strive in a commission atmosphere; they may also want to move up the company. He makes an effort to be honest about position availability especially when life conditions are discussed, for example, if only one part-time position it will not be ideal for a single mother, she will need full-time. Will make exception for single mothers or stay at home moms trying to get back into the workforce. If there were two applicants with the same skills, but the money might make a bigger difference in one of their lives the job will be offered to the applicant who just needs a break. "Sometimes people just need a break!" Sometimes the workplace is just incredibly tight or they don't know people. Worst-case scenario, after 3 months which probation period is done this person can be let go if they turn out to be a poor employee. Jail is more serious; he will make a judgment in the interview and take into consideration why they were in jail (violence vs. possession of pot). Also, full disclosure is important, they need to be honest on their application and admit that they have a record before background check is done.

8) The Source creates a positive work environment by positive reinforcement. Manager might pick up a Monster energy drink or lunch for an employee going above and beyond. Thank you and letting it be known that the effort is appreciated and they value the commitment to their job and their contribution to the company.

9) During an interview at The Source it is important that the candidate is clean cut, but jeans are fine. This individual should care about himself or herself or they won't care about the store. Personal hygiene is also important. The company has a mandatory uniform so clothes aren't too important and the company understands if it takes a couple of paycheques to buy the proper shoes. Teeth and hair problems don't matter as much if the candidate is gung-hoe and seems ready to work. Attitude is the most important thing. Manager believes that everyone can clean up – don't have to be gorgeous to do the job.

10) The main thing that employees would like to change about The Source is the pay, they are paid \$8 and commission, other than Christmas time, a hard worker can make \$10/hr with the way commission works out.

11) Manager has heard of the Living Wage but believes it was called something else.

12) There is nothing in particular that manager believes the company offers out of the ordinary for their employees. They do want their employees to have fun at work.

13) If The Source were to be recognized as a Vibrant Employer it would be ideal to receive a mark of approval, so a prominent agency would say, "I like the way they do things." (Ex. Better Business Bureau, or the Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce), something they could put on their website.

Upon further conversation:

*** The Source raises money for one of their four causes per quarter. These causes include:

- Children's Miracle Network (money donated in a province stays in that province.)
- The United Way
- Habitat for Humanity (sometimes they will send employees to go and build houses as well)
- "Source of our hearts" – banding together to help one employee each year who really needs the extra help. (Ex. Last year, a employee's son had cancer and The Source gave him time off to be with his son, paid many of their bills and paid employee his wage. Unfortunately, his son did pass away but he got to spend that time with his son and he had one less thing to worry about)

Managers also have the option to donate a product for good projects, to serve as a door prize, etc and the company will eat the cost of that product.

It is not particularly difficult to hire, it is difficult to hire people to his standard (self-motivated, willing to work for \$8). Some employees that start out amazing wash out, and slow down.

Fast Food:

3) To keep their employees, they provide flexible scheduling for staff and they make sure that they can get to work and provide an opportunity to grow.

4) A healthy work environment will create an atmosphere that will create dedication. It is very important that employees never feel "screwed over." They also do not want people to leave their current branch, there are people who have been at the Aldergrove location for 20 years. It is important to the company that they create a great team atmosphere, where employees can make friends and work. It is important that they enjoy their job.

5) There are in-house opportunities for advancement. As long as position needs to be filled. Once positions get up to salary level (higher store management), positions get much more competitive. Before this level there is Crew Member, Crew Trainer, Team Leader, and Swing Manager. He would say that McDonalds is one of the best employers for giving employees room to grow.

6) During the first two days of employment a new employee always has someone shadowing them while they are first learning the new equipment. When someone is new there will never be a time when a manager will not be on duty. When you have a team atmosphere like this you're going to get help. If you're new, managers are sure to pair you up with people who know the job inside out. NEVER give up on someone, always give the full three months probation and complete support. The most important thing is that the staff is dependable. If not dependable they will not work well in a team and will not make it past the 3 month probation. This does not happen a lot, it depends on the person. Some people cannot handle high stress, do not have common sense or people skills. Some just do not show up for their shifts. If they don't care or don't put in the effort it is a deal breaker. They must be able to handle high stress and be a people person.

7) They try to consider someone's circumstance in the hiring decision. How much are they willing to put forward? How do they present themselves? They will always try to help someone but it depends if they want to work, if they want to help themselves.

8) they offer regular follow-up. How they're doing at their job, people need feedback to improve and feel recognized. An employer cannot let staff feel invisible, for best output they need to feel appreciated.

9) The main barrier for employment at McDonalds is whether or not a person speaks English. If you can't speak English, you can't communicate with your team your get feedback. If you can communicate effectively and you work hard, fine. If you can't understand "availability" on the application you will probably struggle. If you don't fill out the whole application, or write "see resume" it is a sign of laziness. When you come in do you smile a lot? McDonalds employees are known for their social skills, they even have a joke on menu board that says "Smiles are free."

10) What someone might want to change depends on the employee. Some people think they would never work in fast food but then they do and they love it! Many people who complain do so because they do not understand the business side of things. For example, not enough people are scheduled. All management can do is guess (what's happening in town, how many people came a year ago, etc) Employees really need to know about that side of the business.

11) Is familiar with the Living Wage. Guesses that it is about \$10/ hr in Abbotsford.

12) Not necessarily proud of something that is uncommon for other businesses. He believes that McDonalds does the same things as other fast food places, only better. They do have crew events and make an effort to make employees happy.

13) He thinks that a Vibrant employer should be recognized on our website – the internet is where everyone is these days.

Office:

3) Three warnings are given to an employee before they are fired. She will go up to bat for her employees if she thinks they should get a 4th chance. Will consider salary increase if it looks like they may lose an exceptional employee, not offered to everyone.

4) Offers employees potlucks and luncheons. Currently has on a Christmas basket draw and casual Friday, has recently relaxed dress code. Doing these kinds of things increases moral and gets results as well as encouraging relationships to develop among employees so they work together better.

5) There have been in-house opportunities for advancement. She started as a CSR and was promoted to the Head of the CSR department and then to the manager of the “legacy team” – handling concerns of established customers. With most job postings they will look internally before externally, it is available for employees even if they would like to make a lateral move into a different department. Generally, in her experience people like to stay in their spot.

6) One-on-one training with their manager. Most of the employees sit in the office with their manager for the first 2 or 3 months as the job is difficult and one is not really completely confident until at least one year into employment. Training is ongoing with managers. Managers are available to assist with decision-making regarding clients.

7) Has sometimes considered life conditions during the hiring process. She gets a feeling about people in interviews. It is harder to employ a stay at home mom unless she recently completed a computer course. Will hire people that would like to break into office work if you can tell they are a hard worker and have life skills. People with young children have been a chronic issue in the past, cannot rely on them to be at work consistently. Life skills are key!

8) To work on keeping employees, it is important that management is approachable. She tries to be as approachable as possible. Believes they offer competitive wage/salary. Note: Said it was a tough question.

9) Clothing and teeth problems are not barriers for employment. Exceptions can be made if HR or management gets a good feeling about a person in an interview. The largest barrier is someone with young children, in her experience they have been the least reliable employees as they often have to leave if there are any behavioral problems or sickness with their children. The main concern is whether or not they have experience, if they do not, it is a no go.

10) Employees would say that it is a fun atmosphere. If they were to change anything they would want wage increases after 6 months or a year, even if by a little bit.

11) She is not familiar with the Living Wage. Her guess is that the Living Wage in Abbotsford is around \$12/hr.

12) The company is proud to offer employees bonuses if they hit their individual targets, there are contests for paid days off on top of vacation. Easter Monday and Boxing Day are paid holidays and they close early on long weekends, which employees also get paid for the full time.

13) If they were to be recognized by Vibrant Abbotsford, they would like a story in our newsletter.

Restaurant:

3) To keep employees they recognize that have lives outside of the workplace. They have a regular schedules to count on but there is also a component of flexibility. It is important that employees can count on their schedule and not come in to see when they work every two weeks. Management is also willing to work around their lives as long as employees can find a replacement for their shift by someone who is trained in their job.

5) There are in-house opportunities for advancement. The most effective managers understand the company at its most basic foundation. When an employee starts at the bottom they understand the business. These people already know where everything is, how the coffee machine works, and responsibilities and knowledge will be added a little bit at a time. All they have to do is demonstrate their knowledge and ability. People who have been a server before just need to know where everything is.

7) Life conditions are considered during the hiring process. Single mothers especially need the flexible schedules that they offer. It is really important to hire people who are not students as well; otherwise, he would not have anyone at work during mid-terms or finals. One of his current managers was a stay at home mom. Lack of recent experience is not an issue because they have training. On the bright side there may be less poor habits to unteach. Some people just need to make ends meet.

8) Employees feel valued because management supports them with their personal endeavors, if he feels like he knows and trusts an employee he will give them chances and the benefit of the doubt.

9) Barriers for employment is particularly presentation. Presentation is most important for the floor, not so much for people who would be working in the kitchen. No matter where they work, it

is important that they come in looking like they've put effort into their appearance. Haircut and dental issues isn't an issue, as long as no bad breath and their hair is neat it is fine. If appearance is not what might be best for a server, they may be better suited for the kitchen. This is a family restaurant; he doesn't want people who are dressing like they want to work at Sammy J's or Duke with low cut tops or short skirts. It is important that a potential employee shows that he/she is:

- Confident
- Clean
- Presentation - Fashion doesn't matter
- Has taken time
- Fairly conservative looking
- EFFORT

10) Employees would change that they do not have mandatory tips for large parties. It is usually the grandparents that pay in large groups and many times they will only tip 5%. The decision is head office's but even if it were not, management would not have it that way, the whole point of gratuity that they choose how much they would like to spend over and above based on service, the quality of the food and what want to give, it is not meant to be obligatory. The Old Spaghetti Factory prides itself on its extended family type atmosphere. The feeling of family is the reason for loyalty. As the General Manager, he is sure to provide feedback on what they're doing right, what they're doing wrong and he works to resolve issues as effectively as possible. It is important that management keeps at arms length; he does not have them on facebook and does not go out with staff for drinks.

11) Not familiar with the Living Wage, he said that he thinks it is about \$20,000/year according to Stats Can in 2006 (referring to LICO).

12) The schedule is what the OSF is most proud of. They work to develop the work environment where staff can count on their hours. This is a major draw for employment. Only 3 people on the OSF staff get 5 shifts a week but this does not make them full-time because they only really have start time not really a finish time, if it is slow people will be sent home early and if people come in 5 minutes before closing, they need to be served for as long as it takes.

13) Does not know how they would like to be recognized if they were a Vibrant employer.

Key Findings – Employees:

Only one employee found their current employment completely unsatisfying, the others are fairly satisfied with their job. All but one employee is currently keeping an eye out for other employment. Younger employees are likely to change jobs purely based on a wage increase; the older employees are more likely to want to move into a different field if they were to change employment. Some employees making less than the Living Wage have other income that we may not see when we see them working. Others getting less than the minimum wage may have more financial responsibilities than what we may see at a glance.

Key Findings – Employers:

Employers believe that a flexible work schedule is one of the best things that they can offer their employees. Three out of four of our employers were not familiar with the Living Wage (when called the Living Wage). None of the employers interviewed came within \$4 of guessing the actual Abbotsford Living Wage. An effort in presentation and eagerness to learn are the two most common things employers look for when hiring and there are very few barriers to employment. All employers will consider a person's life conditions if they are mentioned and they are almost never of detriment to the potential employee but an employer cannot ask so this information must be offered. All of the employers believe that creation of a close-knit group and an emphasis on team building fosters loyalty to the company because employees feel comfortable and appreciated. Food industry feels particularly strongly about providing ongoing feedback to their employees, more so than the office or retail employers.