



Global HR Issue:

# *Employee Motivation in the Asian workplace*

## Survey Data

- Fieldwork period: July 16~21th, 2016
- Methodology: Online survey (AIP Panels / Rakuten Research Panel for JP)
- Survey countries and qualified sample sizes:  
China [CN] N=220 / Hong Kong [HK] N=220 / Japan [JP] N=215 / Taiwan [TW] N=221 /  
Thailand [TH] N=220 / Malaysia (EN) [MY] N=214 / India [IN] N=220 / Singapore [SG]  
N=220 / Vietnam [VN] N=215
- Fulltime workers: N=954 / Part-timers: 956
- Balanced samples on gender x age (18-24 / 25-29 / 30-34 / 35-44 / 45+)

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Many corporations see high opportunities in Asia to establish operational hubs in addition to tapping into the potentially huge markets that exist across the region. However, difficulties are often faced in the integration process of locally hired employees including making adjustments for cultural differences.










High turnover rates and low-motivation among local employees could affect a company's long-term strategy and human resource planning in the market. A key success factor is the ability to gain some insight into the values of local hires and prospects hopefully then being able to offer constructive and long-term, career opportunities.

We took a surveyed 200 workers (fulltime/part-time) in each country about their opinion toward work and their careers.

# Workers have lots to say about the culture, benefits and management.

The greatest concerns about workers, not surprisingly, are **“Salary amount”** (40.1% average) and **“Bonus”** (27.7%) across the countries. The 3rd highest concern was to do with **“Little opportunity to improve my skill or career”** (25.2%), followed by **“Evaluation / promotion process is not clear or fair”** (18.5%) and **“Too much pressure in my job (goal setting, requests from customers etc.)”** (16.9%).

## Most unsatisfying thing(s) about the current job

Unsatisfaction	Avr.	<span style="color: red;">■</span> First avr. <span style="color: orange;">■</span> Second avr. <span style="color: lightorange;">■</span> Third avr. <span style="float: right;">(Up to 5 MA/ Randomized list)</span>								
		 CN	 JP	 HK	 TW	 TH	 VN	 IN	 MY	 SG
Salary is low / not rising	40.1%	100	87	87	97	80	112	87	85	70
Bonus is little / nil	27.7%	72	59	48	71	69	94	43	60	40
Work hours is long / too much overtime	15.3%	35	22	44	43	26	23	41	40	33
Cannot take many paid leaves	13.0%	42	34	32	31	36	20	32	16	17
Hard to commute / too far from my home	10.7%	21	18	35	18	25	10	44	15	28
Poor workplace environment (safety, temperature, cleanliness etc.)	7.3%	9	19	20	19	17	21	22	14	5
Unmatching role with my skill / personality	11.4%	22	18	28	18	32	29	35	24	22
Pressure is high (responsibility, time sensitivity, too high goal to achieve, demanding customers etc.)	16.9%	32	23	49	34	30	41	35	51	44
Little or no opportunity for personal skill / career development	25.2%	46	34	39	42	64	92	56	63	70
Bad office atmosphere / team relationship / culture	15.0%	27	28	45	29	40	33	26	37	35
Does not feel my boss and coworkers acknowledge my work / effort	14.0%	25	14	43	30	31	38	28	32	39
Evaluation / promotion process is not clear or fair	18.5%	42	23	28	33	49	70	42	38	47
Internal manuals and workflow is not well developed	11.8%	18	23	14	12	21	66	24	35	24
I cannot feel passion about the company / organization's business or vision	15.2%	45	20	39	50	40	16	21	40	34
The company / organization's business is poor / unstable	9.6%	14	11	23	24	24	34	28	17	18
The company / organization is small / not famous	6.9%	7	11	15	22	11	25	21	17	10
Other (Please specify freely)	1.8%	2	5	3	2	3	3	3	8	8
Not in particular, I'm generally happy with my job	11.1%	27	48	11	20	25	23	23	22	24
Unique N size	2006	223	222	226	226	221	229	221	218	220

Looking for qualitatively and investigation of participant generated responses also revealed some discontent to bosses and management:

**“My boss calls me to deal with his personal matter, and ask me a lot about my private life.”** (Taiwan, Female, 20s, Manufacturing);

**“CEO's personality issue”** (Japan, Male, 30s, Legal / Accounting / Consulting);

**“Don't like my boss”** (Singapore, Female, 20s, Government/Public);

**“Inefficient management”** (Malaysia, Female, 50s, Education);

**“[Office] Politics”** (Singapore, Female, 30s, Mining Industry).

There are harsh opinions about compensation and benefits as well:

**“No insurance benefits, bonuses, or meals”** (Vietnam, Male, 20s, IT); 🌐

**“Medical [Insurance] and compensation not good.”** (Hong Kong, Female, 40s, Insurance);

**“Compensation is not fair among workers”** (Japan, Male, 40s, Restaurant);










**“Foreign e-commerce companies have failed to have a good [employee] welfare... such as community activity subsidy”** (Taiwan, Male, 30s, Wholesale / Retail);

On the other hand, as satisfying factors at their work, many people picked **“Easy commute”** (35.1%), **“Nice office atmosphere / team relationship / culture”** (24.9%) and **“Workplace environment (nice office, benefits etc.)”** (24.6%).

11% of the respondents answered “Nothing in particular (to get dissatisfied), I'm generally happy with my job” in the previous question / table.

## Most satisfying thing(s) about the current job

■ First avr. ■ Second avr. ■ Third avr. (Up to 5 MA/ Randomized list)

Satisfaction	Avr.	 CN	 JP	 HK	 TW	 TH	 VN	 IN	 MY	 SG
Salary amount is good	17.7%	26	20	34	36	69	25	51	42	52
Bonus amount is good	12.2%	18	14	21	17	37	30	31	36	40
Work hours is short / flexible	19.5%	41	29	41	37	36	58	50	51	49
Able to take plenty of paid leaves / easy to take ones	20.9%	50	50	44	40	56	77	28	39	35
Easy / convenient to commute	35.1%	101	73	84	94	97	50	66	68	72
Nice workplace environment (clean office, good benefits etc.)	24.6%	69	21	54	49	48	89	44	62	58
Good matching role with my skill / personality	21.9%	42	37	36	61	59	82	51	39	32
Challenging and rewarding role (responsibility, goal to achieve, responding customers requests etc.)	11.5%	22	30	17	21	30	27	37	21	25
Has good opportunity for personal skill / career development	12.5%	25	11	16	15	35	53	38	30	28
Nice office atmosphere / team relationship / culture	24.9%	55	44	53	44	59	76	57	60	52
Feel my boss and coworkers acknowledge my work / effort	16.9%	37	14	39	37	48	51	45	32	37
Evaluation / promotion process is clear or fair	7.3%	18	8	9	8	18	38	25	12	10
Internal manuals and workflow are well developed	8.5%	8	6	13	6	21	43	40	15	18
Feel passion about the company / organization's business or vision	8.1%	14	2	10	7	16	41	33	23	17
The company business is going good / stable	20.3%	38	20	40	28	76	72	54	45	32
The company is big / famous	17.8%	38	17	48	43	43	49	52	40	28
Other (Please specify freely)	1.3%	2	1	4	0	2	3	5	5	4
Nothing satisfies me in the current job	5.1%	8	38	16	14	3	2	2	11	9
Unique N size	2006	223	222	226	226	221	229	221	218	220

# "Good matching" Roles Keep Employees Motivated

(and experienced workers want to be acknowledged more).


Next, we asked the respondents to rank each of their Top 3 motivational factors at work, and took weighed sum per item with tripled points for the 1st ranked (3x), doubled the 2nd (2x), and single for 3rd (1x) ranked items.

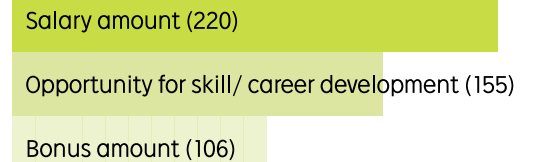
Not surprisingly, the common leading interest among workers was **"Salary amount"** across all countries. The overall second top motivation across was that they are assigned to a **"Good matching role with [their own] skill / personality"**, and the third top motivation is having a **"Nice office atmosphere / team relationship / culture."**


Outside of Salary as the top reason, leading items vary among different countries; people in China, India and Malaysia highly desires **"good opportunity for personal skill / career development"** (2nd), while **"Nice workplace environment"** matters a lot to Taiwanese (2nd). Japanese hopes to have **"Challenging and rewarding roles"** (2nd). The desire to take **"plenty of paid leaves"** is higher among Japanese and Hong Kong than other counties on average. **"Bonuses"** are a big thing in Singapore (2nd) as it is generally expected as a part of salary system and tax benefits in the country. **"Short / flexible work hours"** are also highly valued in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia (higher than average). People also want to **"Feel my boss and coworkers acknowledge my work / effort"** (2nd in HK, 3rd in Singapore). Thai and Vietnamese people would see if **"company business is going good / stable"** (3rd), while working in a **"big / famous company"** would be a privilege to many Indians (higher than average). Chinese people hope to **"Feel passion about the company / organization's business or vision"** (higher than average). Vietnamese seems most tolerate among all to a long / hard **"Commute"** (lower than average).

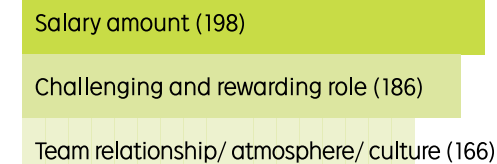
## What motivates you the most in terms of working


(Top 3 Rating, Weighed Total  
- 1st [3x], 2nd [2x], 3rd [1x])

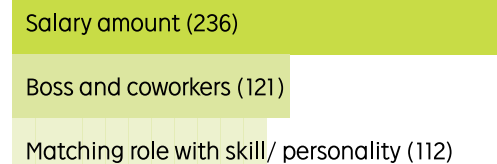
 **China** (N=220 / 1314 scores)




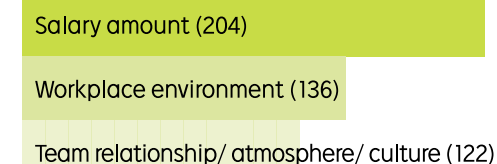
 **Japan** (N=215 / 1284 scores)




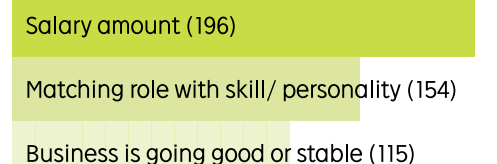
 **Hong Kong** (N=220 / 1314 scores)




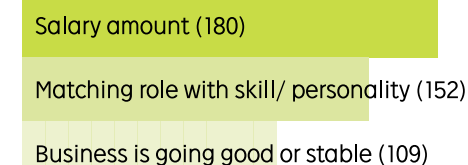
 **Taiwan** (N=221 / 1320 scores)




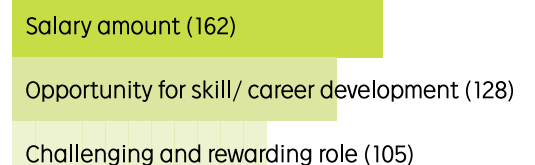
 **Thailand** (N=220 / 1309 scores)




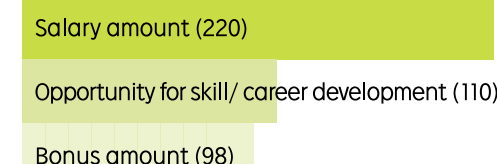
 **Vietnam** (N=215 / 1284 scores)




 **India** (N=220 / 1308 scores)



 **Malaysia** (N=214 / 1272 scores)



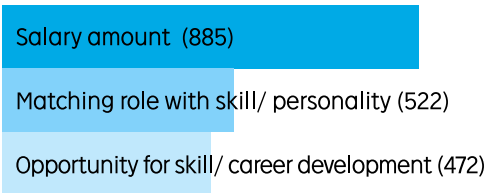
 **Singapore** (N=220 / 1308 scores)



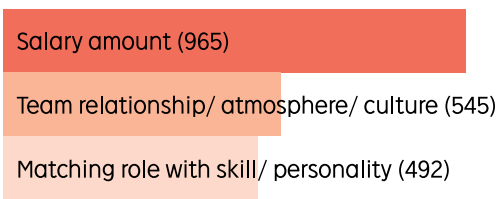
A difference in answers is clear when comparing responses by gender. Males want to have a **“skill / personality matching”** job (2nd), while females care about **“team relationship / atmosphere / culture”** (2nd / 100 scores difference). Women also care a lot about **“commute”** than men as they may seem to have other priority in life. Men tend to dream big and lean toward **“opportunity for personal skill / career development”** (3rd), **“challenging and rewarding role”** and **“company business growth / stability”** and **“passion about the business or vision”**, while women focus more on realistic matters such as **“Salary amount”**, **“many paid leaves”** and **“Workplace environment (nice office, benefits etc.)”**



**Male** (N=1,114 / 5868 scores)



**Female** (N=1,093 / 5862 scores)



## Motivation Top 3

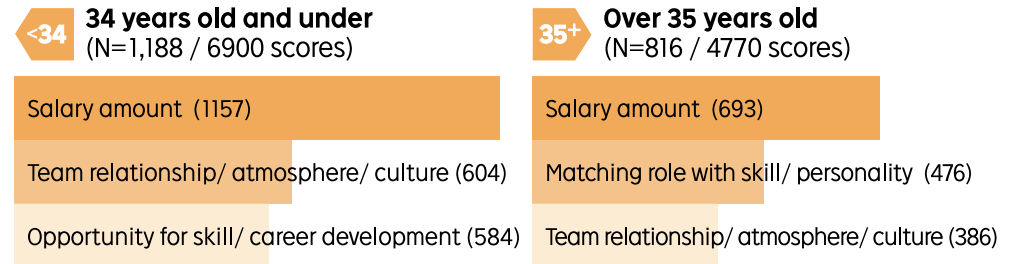
■ First avr. ■ Second avr. ■ Third avr.

	Male	Female	+/-
Salary amount is good	885	965	-80
Bonus amount is good	433	354	79
Work hours is short / flexible	295	317	-22
Able to take plenty of paid leaves / easy to take ones	250	302	-52
Easy / convenient to commute	299	456	-157
Nice workplace environment (clean office, good benefits etc.)	366	439	-73
Good matching role with my skill / personality	522	492	30
Challenging and rewarding role (responsibility, goal to achieve, responding customers requests etc.)	424	324	100
Has good opportunity for personal skill / career development	472	408	64
Nice office atmosphere / team relationship / culture	445	545	-100
Feel my boss and coworkers acknowledge my work / effort	397	391	6
Evaluation / promotion process is clear or fair	186	162	24
Internal manuals and workflow are well developed	129	108	21
Feel passion about the company / organization's business or vision	246	184	62
The company business is going good / stable	321	250	71
The company is big / famous	184	150	34
Other (Please specify freely)	14	15	-1

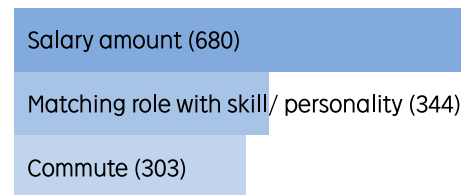


For Millennials (18-34 year olds), the 3rd factor for motivation is their workplace **“Has good office/ team relationship / atmosphere / culture”** (2nd) as if representing their highly interactive lifestyle. After 35yo or older, their craving for higher salaries is less (scored lower per respondent than Millennials or average), but the importance for them that **“Job role is matching with my skill / personality”** (2nd) is high as they should be clearer on their strengths/weakness, as well as that they hope more to **“Feel my boss and coworkers acknowledge my work / effort”** (5th).

Among frequent job changers, or those who changed their jobs more than 3 times, **“Easy commute”** comes the 3rd factor they get motivated.



**3+** Job change 3+ (N=643 / 3858 scores)



Despite any cultural differences, **happiness at work is one of the most critical factors for quality of human life in the contemporary world.** As employees may as well often phrased as internal customers\*, HR and global managers should be aware of and respect their need and serve for them not only for the company’s better performance and long-term efficiency, but also to ultimately contribute to enhance the society’s overall happiness in which the company can grow their business.

\*Moble, N. “Focusing on the Internal Customer.” INC.com. May 2009.  
[http://www.inc.com/nancy-moble/2009/05/focusing\\_on\\_the\\_internal\\_custo.html](http://www.inc.com/nancy-moble/2009/05/focusing_on_the_internal_custo.html)