

Research to support the evaluation of Investors in People: Employer survey

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Background

Since the UK Commission took over strategic ownership of the Investors in People Standard (IiP), a programme of evaluation has been developed to assess the impact of IiP and identify areas for improvement. This report is based on the findings of the first of a two-wave quantitative employer survey as part of this ongoing evaluation.

Telephone interviews were conducted in August to October 2011 with 1,000 employers who had either been recognised with IiP for the first time or renewed their recognition in the 12 months prior to the fieldwork.

The core objectives of the survey were to explore employers' views and experiences of working towards IiP accreditation and the changes made to meet IiP Standard, as well as the support needed and received throughout the process. The study also measured the prominence and role of IiP within employers' Human Resource (HR) and business strategies, the impact on these employers of working towards and gaining IiP accreditation and their overall satisfaction with IiP. The majority of employers interviewed were accredited before the new delivery arrangements (i.e. the regional IiP Centres introduced in April 2011) were put in place, therefore the survey can be seen as a baseline for future monitoring and evaluation. In the second wave of the survey the new recognitions from 2011-2012 will be compared against the new recognitions from this wave of the study to assess any changes which may have been brought about through the new delivery arrangements.

Profile of employers

New recognitions are much more likely to be smaller organisations than those renewing (43 per cent have fewer than 25 employees, compared to 25 per cent of renewals). This perhaps reflects the focus of IiP changing from getting as much of the workforce as possible working for IiP-recognised organisations, to a focus on smaller employers in order to help more businesses realise their objectives and achieve economic growth.

Motivations for engaging with liP

The motivations for engaging with liP can be categorised into two fairly distinct categories: benefits by association and benefits by practice. liP's reputation as a recognised, well-respected standard (a benefit by association: 99 per cent of employers indicated this was part of their reason for getting involved with liP) and the need to drive internal change (a benefit by practice: 97 per cent) were highlighted as the central reasons for engaging with liP. In the private sector, a high proportion (86 per cent) first engaged with liP to gain a competitive advantage.

Distance travelled to achieve liP

The vast majority of newly-recognised employers (89 per cent) felt they were already close to meeting the liP Standard before they began their initial accreditation process and were therefore presumably motivated, in part, to gain credit for existing practices. Changes to practices and policies start to be made when the employer is preparing for their first accreditation. Many businesses already had a lot of the policies in place before committing to liP, with half of new recognitions (51 per cent) saying they had to make minimal changes to meet liP requirements. However, when asked about individual policies and practices associated with liP most newly-recognised employers (82 per cent) have developed or introduced at least one policy in order to achieve liP and 69 per cent said that at least one policy change was a direct result of liP intervention.

liP had the greatest impact in either helping businesses introduce policies to their organisations or further developing their existing practices in the following areas:

- Processes for assessing management effectiveness (37 per cent of newly-recognised businesses with these in place at the time of interview reported either introducing or developing these as a direct result of working towards liP).
- Training plans (35 per cent).
- Processes for consulting staff about change (34 per cent).

The impact of liP

One key aim of this survey was to assess the extent to which liP accreditation leads to performance improvements for participating organisations, sites or departments.

Table 1 groups improvements into internal and external benefits, and shows the percentage of employers experiencing each benefit since accreditation (the first column of data in each pair) and the proportion of all employers saying liP contributed at least in part to this improvement (the second column of each pair). It is worth noting that businesses were not necessarily expecting to achieve each of these improvements as a consequence of liP accreditation. Indeed, 71 per cent of businesses reported achieving the business benefits expected, and 23% reported higher than anticipated benefits, with this proportion increasing in organisations which achieved a higher level of award or who needed to make more changes to their policies and practices. Just 2 per cent reported lower than expected benefits and the remainder were unable to say.

Table 1: Improvements occurring following liP accreditation and whether attributed (at least in part) to liP (prompted)

	Internal benefits		External benefits	
	% seeing impact	% attributing to IIP	% seeing impact	% attributing to IIP
Ability of staff to do jobs	57	47	Product/service quality	54 41
Productivity of workforce	53	42	Customer satisfaction	45 34
Staff commitment	41	35	Volume of sales	31 17
Reduced absenteeism	21	10	Quantity of applicants	30 8
Staff turnover	13	8	Profit	29 20
Disciplinary action	11	6	Quality of applicants	16 7
Lower recruitment costs	7	2		

Base: All employers (1,000), except Volume of sales and Profit, which are based on private sector employees only (614)

Contact and satisfaction with liP specialists and the liP website

Most employers reported having an initial meeting with an liP specialist before they began their recognition or renewal process (83 per cent). These meetings were found to be very helpful, with a mean satisfaction score of 8.6 on a scale of 1 to 10. There was a wide variety in the frequency of contact with the liP specialist although three-fifths of those with dealings had contact with their liP specialist at least monthly. Satisfaction with the specialists and the advice received was generally very high.

The most common source of information used to help employers achieve liP recognition or renewal, other than the liP specialist was the liP website, used by a quarter of all employers for further information (24 per cent). Moreover three-quarters of all employers (74 per cent) had accessed the liP website at some point in the last 12 months for more practical reasons, such as arranging meetings with liP specialists, contacting the local liP centre and looking for resources. The website is rated reasonably well for containing all the information employers require (a mean of 7.9 on a scale of 1 to 10).


Overall satisfaction and areas of improvement

Overall, satisfaction with IIP is high: 79 per cent of employers were very satisfied (a rating of eight or higher on a 1 to 10 scale) and was particularly high among new recognitions (84 per cent). There was some indication that middle-sized employers (25 to 99 staff: 82 per cent) were more satisfied, and more likely to see benefits from liP recognition, than smaller or larger employers. Employers who needed to make more changes than average to achieve accreditation were more satisfied than average, having experienced more benefits from liP than expected. This suggests that the further employers have to go on their liP journey the greater their return.

Reducing the cost of liP specialists and having more direct contact and support from liP were noted as the principal areas for improvement by employers (10 per cent and eight per cent respectively). Another area highlighted for improvement was the desire for better explanation by the liP specialist of the benefits of liP.

Value for money

Half of all employers surveyed felt that liP provides good value for money. Poor value for money was cited by just three per cent of recognised organisations. Newly-recognised employers were more likely to rate the Standard as providing good value for money (mean score of 7.7) compared to renewing organisations (mean score 7.2), which highlights the importance of encouraging the use of liP as a continuous improvement tool to derive maximum value from the Standard and higher level awards.



Executive Summaries present the key findings of the research produced by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills. More detailed analytical results are presented in Evidence Reports and all outputs are accessible on the UK Commission's website www.ukces.org.uk

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