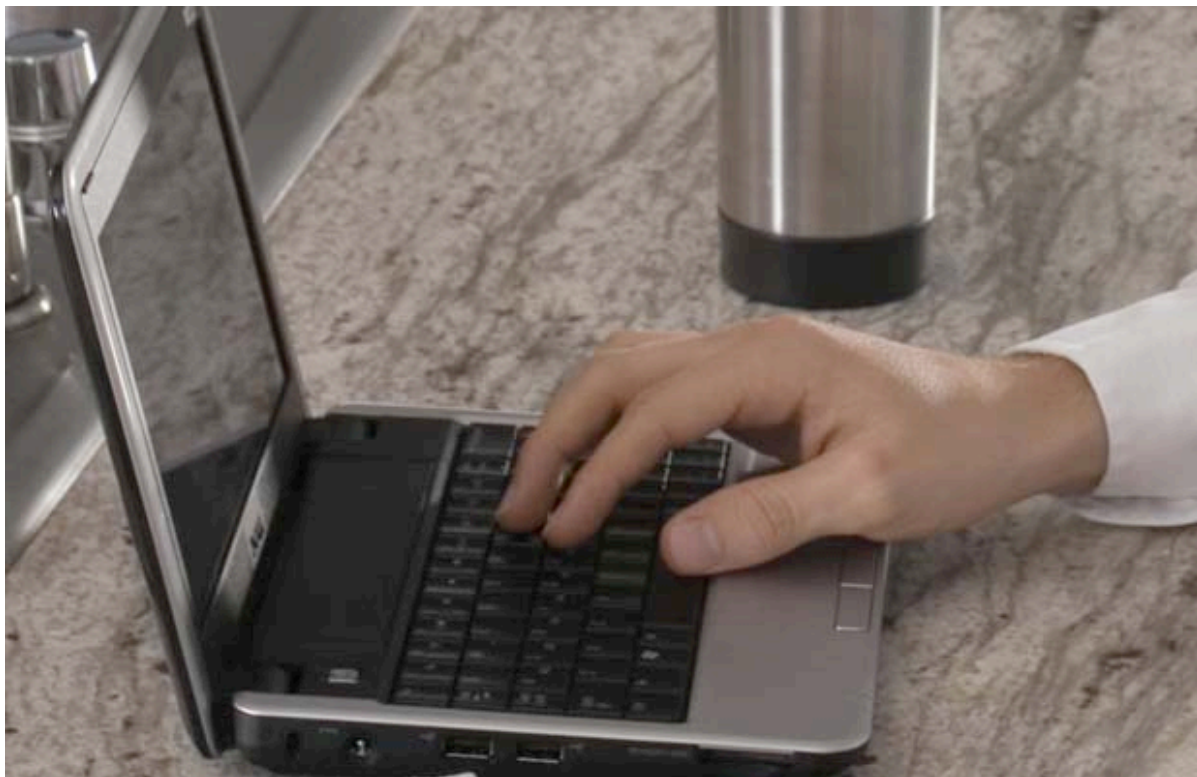




## Rising workplace disloyalty 'no big surprise': Expert

BY BECKY RYNOR, CANWEST NEWS SERVICE JULY 14, 2009



In a recent study, Ipsos Reid found that 22 per cent of Canadian employees are expressing decreased loyalty to their employer. In organizations where salaries have been frozen, that figure rises to 31 per cent. Where staff has been cut, it goes up again to 36 per cent.

**Photograph by:** Handout, Canwest News Service

OTTAWA — Canadian workers are feeling less loyal to their employers, a new poll by Ipsos Reid revealed Tuesday.

"No big surprise," said Lorraine Weygman, a consultant who specializes in change, innovation and problem solving in the workplace. "When you consider downsizing and people losing their jobs, in an office where there were 30 or 40 people working and now there's 10 or 15, the morale drops and people don't know when the axe is going to fall next for them."

Ipsos Reid's study found 22 per cent of Canadian employees expressing decreased loyalty to their employer.

In organizations where salaries have been frozen, that figure rises to 31 per cent. Where staff has been cut, it goes up again to 36 per cent.

Weygman said there is a lot of fear in the workplace on the part of employers and the employees.

"The employers' fear is real. . . . I just spoke to someone who's business is down 50 per cent, someone else who is down 90 per cent, some who are going out of business."

But she said bosses aren't necessarily making prudent decisions to weather tough economic times.

"They're letting their talent go, people they're going to need as soon as things turn around. So when you take a look at who is leaving, it kind of scares those who are left. Where there is fear, there is not a lot of trust."

The study also shows growing disloyalty is occurring right across the board, from workers on the ground to executives and managers who said their loyalty is decreasing on a par with production workers and operators.

"Loyalty to one's employer is very dependent on recognition," the author of the study, Jean-Baptiste Aloy, said Tuesday. "Staff who feel their involvement is not acknowledged are more likely to become disloyal."

Weygman said "employee engagement" is one of the buzz phrases "being thrown around now. How do we make sure we engage our employees? Well, if there's fear and a lack of trust and people don't feel like they're appreciated, it's pretty hard to be very engaged and committed to their workplace."

Weygman said the companies that "survive and thrive" will be the ones that involve employees in decision making, changes to the workplace, and innovation, which she said in this economic climate "is critical."

"It's not negotiable. You have to involve people in the decision making because if they are part of solving the problem, they will have a commitment to the solution and a commitment to implementing the solution."

The survey's figures were consistent across the country, with the exception of Quebec, where only 10 per cent of the workforce expressed declining workplace loyalty.

Aloy said that's because workers experience less security anxiety compared to the rest of Canada and the job market there has suffered less.

"Employment in Quebec has fallen by 0.8 per cent since last October versus the national average of 2.2 per cent," he said, adding workers in Quebec are impacted to a lesser degree than the rest of Canada by hiring and salary freezes.

Quebecers also expressed greater job satisfaction than the other provinces.

"Loyalty to one's employer is often correlated to satisfaction with one's professional situation," Aloy said.

Ipsos Reid conducted the online poll of 1,128 employees in Canada between May 22 and May 29. The results are considered accurate within plus or minus 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

© Copyright (c) Canwest News Service