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An Analysis of Compensation Patterns and Job Satisfaction Issues of Resort Recreation Professionals

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Cover Page Footnote

The authors would like to thank the professional members of RCRA for their participation in this study.

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Introduction

Attracting and retaining qualified staff is a major challenge for managers. The costs of employee turnover can be very high. They include separation costs, recruitment and placement costs, training costs, and lost knowledge (Curtis & Wright, 2001). The turnover rate in the hospitality industry is approximately 20 times the national average. While the rest of the U.S. experiences about a three percent rate in annual turnover, the hospitality industry hovers above 60 percent (Engel, 2012), with studies referring to a “turnover culture” in the hospitality industry (e.g., Iverson & Deery, 1997; Tiyce, Hing, & Cairncross, 2013; Yang, 2010).

An understanding of the relationship between perceived job characteristics and job satisfaction is essential to human resource management. According to the job characteristics theory, enrichment and the resultant motivating potential of jobs is determined by core job dimensions (Parks & Holdnak, 2002). When these core dimensions are highly evident in jobs they trigger three critical psychological states in individuals: experienced meaningfulness, sense of responsibility, and knowledge of actual work results (Nogradi, Yardley, & Kanters, 1993). Moreover, a better understanding of the factors other than wages and hours that affect job and career satisfaction for this group could assist in attracting and retaining employees in other areas of the recreation and hospitality industries (Parks & Holdnak, 2002).

Literature survey

Effective human resource management relies on predicting organizational behavior, including attitudes of individuals and groups in the organization, including their satisfaction, commitment and performance (Doherty, 1998). With widespread skill shortages, both the public and private sectors face a growing imperative to attract and retain staff (Dainty, 2008). Workforce trends include increasing illiteracy problems, decreasing numbers of entry level workers, and increasing span of control for managers (Robinson, 1989). Research shows that the extent to which a job is interesting can serve both as a push factor for employee turnover and a pull factor for employee retention (Dainty, 2008). Moreover, there is an implied relationship between compensation satisfaction and job characteristics (Yen & McKinney, 1992).

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is not an absolute measure but merely an indicator for a range of job characteristics. Job satisfaction, defined as the degree to which an individual likes their job (Iverson & Deery, 1997), usually involves the comparison of what the person expects to what the person gets (Nogradi, Yardley & Kanters, 1993) and is among the most studied of all work-related attitudes (Bartlett & McKinney, 2004). Studies of turnover have found a consistent negative relationship between organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Bartlett & McKinney, 2004). On the positive note, Dormann and Zapf (2001) found that the level of employee reported job satisfaction can be changed by organizational measures. However, most organizations continue to struggle in their efforts to measure and improve employee work

attitudes (Rust, Stewart, Miller, & Pielack, 1996). Bartlett and McKinnery (2004) specifically studied turnover rates in the hospitality industry. They found that job satisfaction had a low impact on an individual's intention to change jobs (behind turnover culture, job search, job opportunity, organizational commitment and union loyalty variables).

The relationship between gender and job satisfaction has been inconsistent across studies (Spector, 1997). Several studies found higher levels of job satisfaction for women (Sloane & Williams 2000; Clark, 1997). Sell and Cleal (2001) surveyed private and public sector employees in Denmark. They found that for private-sector employees, social support shows both a significant gender effect and a general effect on job satisfaction. For public-sector employees job security indicates a significant gender effect and a general effect. In both cases being a woman increases the impact on the level of job satisfaction. They also posit that this gender satisfaction differential disappears when examining younger workers.

A search of peer-reviewed literature found few empirical job satisfaction or compensation satisfaction studies of private sector recreation practitioners since Parks and Holdnak surveyed 106 RCRA professional members (2002). In an earlier study of 56 full-time employees of a commercial recreation facility, Novatorov (1997) found "receiving good wages and benefits" ranked 9 out of 16 job-related variables in mean importance rating. Wagenheim and Rood (2010) studied front-line commercial recreation employees and found low levels of job satisfaction among those primarily seasonal workers.

Conversely, there are many studies examining satisfaction among public sector managers. Nogradi, Yardley and Kanters (1993) surveyed 186 full-time recreation practitioners and found they were moderately satisfied with their jobs ($\mu = 6.20$ out of a possible score of 7). Several researchers found that public and private managers differ in their perceptions of job and compensation satisfaction (Buelens & Van den Broeck, 2007; Yen & McKinney, 1992). Thus the present paper makes only cursory mention of public sector wage and job satisfaction.

Compensation satisfaction

Compensation satisfaction has been the focus of many previous studies, including the development of models of just pay satisfaction (e.g., Balkin & Gomez-Mejia, 1983; Dyer & Theriault, 1976; Lawler, 1971) and research showing pay satisfaction is multidimensional (e.g., Williams, Brower, Ford, Williams & Carraher, 2008; Heneman III & Schwab, 1985). Pay satisfaction is of fundamental importance when considering intentions to stay (Brown, Yoshioka & Munoz, 2004; Yen & McKinney, 2001). One study specifically examined the relationship between compensation satisfaction and job characteristics by comparing public and private leisure service professionals (Yen & McKinnery, 1992). In that study they found that private managers were more satisfied with their pay raises, structure and administration than public managers. They further found positive relationships between perceived job characteristics and compensation satisfaction. Compensation systems have undergone extensive changes with benefits representing a larger proportion of total pay than 20 years ago (Williams, et al., 2008). However, a literature review does not reveal any recent study that specifically examined compensation satisfaction and job characteristics in the commercial leisure profession.

Purpose of the Study

The Resort and Commercial Recreation Association (RCRA) consists of students, vendors, educators and professional (recreation managers and supervisors) members. Since the early 1990's the Association has sponsored a number of wage and salary surveys. Initial surveys focused almost exclusively on wages and demographic factors. Beginning in 2000 surveys also included topics like employee benefits and factors affecting job and career satisfaction. The 2000 study mailed 444 members, with 160 responses resulting in a 36% response rate. In 2006 an on-line survey was sent to 240 members with a 40% response rate (n=96). The purpose of the present study is fourfold:

- Q1. To describe what RCRA member operations look like.
- Q2. To determine the compensation levels and benefits provided to resort and commercial recreation professionals.
- Q3. To examine levels of satisfaction with a variety of job and career related issues.
- Q4. To compare empirical data from 2000 and 2006 with the present 2012 survey.

Methodology

The original RCRA questionnaire was modeled on previous studies sponsored by the Association and the NRPA (National Recreation and Park Association) Wages and Compensation surveys conducted by Dr. Cheryl Beeler at Florida State University. The construct measurements used in the present 2012 study were previously administered to RCRA members in 2000 (Parks & Holdnak, 2002) and repeated in 2006 (Price & Holdnak, 2007). The 2012 study was a replication of the 2006 survey, administered on-line to 149 professional members with a 49% response rate (n=73). Before administering, the 2012 survey instrument was reviewed and approved by a university internal review board. There were no incentives provided to survey participants. Data were collected using an online survey targeted toward RCRA professional members during the fall of 2012. The response rate is lower than previous years but is proportional to the number of RCRA professional members.

Descriptive statistics are provided in Table 1. More than half of the respondents work in the southeastern portion of the United States. The most commonly identified job titles are "Director" and "Manager" (each at 34%), followed by "Coordinator" (10%), "Supervisor" (6%), "VP" (3%), and "Other" (14%). Males comprised 25% of the respondents in 2012, as compared to 33% in 2006 and 2002. The percent of respondents under the age of 30 has fluctuated: 40 % in 2012, 59% in 2006, and 30% in 2000. About 84% of respondent's reported having a bachelor or master graduate degree, with little difference across the three separate surveys. With respect to years in the present job, in 2012 the mean was 6.35 years, compared to 2 years in 2006 and 4.4 years in 2000. The current survey identified a slightly more work experienced sample in 2012 with the mean number of full-time years worked at 11.7, compared to 4.5 in 2006 and 8.6 in 2000.

Table 1: Descriptive Characteristics of the Participants

2012 vs. 2000				
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Gender				
Male	18	(25.0)	105	(66.9)
Female	54	(75.0)	54	(33.1)
Age				
< 21	0	(0.0)	2	(1.3)
21 – 25	12	(16.7)	22	(13.8)
26 – 30	17	(23.6)	48	(30.2)
31 – 35	9	(12.5)	33	(20.8)
36 – 40	6	(8.3)	16	(10.0)
41 – 45	17	(23.6)	14	(8.8)
46 – 50	4	(5.6)	13	(8.2)
51 +	7	(9.7)	11	(6.7)
Education				
High School	3	(4.2)	0	(0.0)
Associates	3	(4.2)	10	(6.0)
Bachelors	57	(79.2)	111	(69.0)
Masters	5	(6.9)	24	(15.0)
Doctorate	1	(1.4)	1	(0.6)
Pro Training	2	(2.4)	0	(0.0)
No Training	1	(1.4)	0	(0.0)
Responsibility				
Administrator	38	(56.0)	118	(73.8)
Supervisor	21	(31.0)	30	(18.8)
Line Staff	1	(2.0)	3	(1.9)
Other	8	(12.0)	9	(5.6)

N=73

Table 2 indicates survey participants are representative of multiple sectors of resort typologies, with hotel resort (34%) and other (28.8%) being the largest categories. There is considerable variance in the number of units reported. The participants represent a very pluralistic sample.

Table 2. Primary Type of Operation and Number of Units

Primary type of operation	N	(%)
Hotel Resort	25	(34.2)
Condo Resort	4	(5.5)
Time Share Resort	5	(6.8)
Residential Development	8	(11.0)
HOA/POA	6	(8.2)
Special Events Company	4	(5.5)
Other	21	(28.8)
Total	73	(100.0)
Number of units		
0 - 250	20	(36.4)
251-500	6	(10.9)
501-1000	13	(23.6)
1001-1500	5	(9.1)
1501-2000	2	(3.6)
2001 and up	9	(16.4)
Total	55	(100.0)

Consistent with the sample pluralism, Table 3 reflects a variety of different sized organizations. The largest number of staff reported by the survey participants are full time (35%), followed by seasonal (26%), part time (21%), and interns (18%).

Table 3. Number of Staff in respondent's organization

	Full time		Part Time		Seasonals		Interns	
	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)
1 – 2	42	(29.6)	25	(28.7)	18	(17.1)	27	(39.0)
3 – 5	44	(31.0)	17	(19.5)	11	(10.5)	20	(28.0)
6 – 10	22	(15.5)	20	(23.0)	17	(16.2)	16	(23.0)
11 – 25	18	(12.7)	16	(18.4)	22	(21.0)	6	(9.0)
26 – 50	9	(6.3)	6	(6.9)	21	(20.0)	1	(1.0)
51 – 100	1	(0.7)	1	(1.1)	8	(7.6)	0	(0.0)
101 +	6	(4.2)	2	(2.3)	8	(7.6)	1	(1.0)
Total	142		87		105		71	

Mean compensation, as reported in Table 4, has increased from \$33,069 (2002) to \$41,100 (2006) to \$48,270 (2012). With a certain “grain of salt” this can be compared to a website report of recreation manager’s median pay of \$46,111 (www.payscale.com, 2013), and in another recent study of \$64,800 (Tipping, 2012).

Table 4. Reported total compensation (in dollars)

	2012		2000	
	N	(%)	N	(%)
Under 24,000	8	(11.6)	29	(18.1)
24,000 – 29,999	3	(4.3)	30	(18.8)
30,000 – 35,999	7	(10.1)	41	(25.6)
36,000 – 41,999	14	(20.3)	24	(15.0)
42,000 – 47,999	2	(2.9)	9	(5.6)
48,000 – 53,999	11	(15.9)	11	(6.9)
54,000 – 59,999	7	(10.1)	4	(2.5)
60,000 – 65,999	4	(5.8)	2	(1.2)
66,000 – 71,999	2	(2.9)	2	(1.2)
72,000 – 77,999	0	(0.0)	1	(0.6)
78,000 – 83,999	1	(1.4)	1	(0.6)
84,000 +	10	(14.5)	6	(3.7)

Table 4 appears to report good news regarding overall changes in recreation manager’s compensation. When adjusted for inflation, however, the changes appear in a slightly different

light. As seen in Table 5, the income changes for the 25th percentile was seen to grow about 1.2% while the median income (50th percentile) grew about 9.5%. The reported income for the top respondents (75th percentile) actually dropped almost 11%. The inflation factors were determined from the US Consumer Price Index (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). The inflation factor for 2000 – 2012 was 1.333 while the inflation factor for 2006 - 2012 was 1.139.

Table 5. Compensation Changes (adjusted for inflation)

	<u>2000</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>% change from 2000 to 2012</u>
25 th Percentile	\$34,935	\$34,280	\$35,352	+1.2%
50 th Percentile	\$44,091	\$46,807	\$48,270	+9.5%
75 th Percentile	\$66,664	\$53,526	\$59,600	-10.9%

Nearly everyone (96%) reported being compensated via salary. A small number reported receiving commission (8%). Slightly more than a quarter (27%) reported receiving a bonus as part of their total compensation. Table 6 indicates a variety of compensation benefits. Most managers receive paid vacation along with health and dental insurance.

Table 6. Detail of reported compensation benefits

<u>Benefit</u>	<u>Percent Reporting "yes"</u>
Paid Vacation	90%
Health Insurance	84%
Dental Insurance	68%
Life Insurance	59%
Facility Usage	49%
Purchasing Discounts	46%
Meals	26%
Travel Discounts	26%
Liability Insurance	19%
Auto Reimbursement	10%
Company Vehicle	9%
Housing	3%

Departmental operating budgets are reported in Table 7. In addition to the information provided in the table, fees and charges comprise the largest amount of operating income (N=25, 47.2%), followed by membership fees (N=17, 27.8%), general property overhead (N=15, 23.8%), retail sales (N=15, 18.2%), and other (N=12, 18.2%). Not surprisingly, as commercial recreation providers about two-thirds of respondents indicated their departments are profit centers, with one-third indicating that they are subsidized operations.

Table 7. Departmental Operating Budgets

Revenue	N	%	(% Cumulative)
\$0 - \$49,999	9	16.7	(16.7)
\$50,000 - \$99,999	5	9.3	(25.9)
\$100,000 - \$199,999	4	7.4	(33.3)
\$200,000 - \$299,999	8	14.8	(48.1)
\$300,000 - \$399,999	6	11.1	(59.3)
\$400,000 - \$499,999	1	1.9	(61.1)
\$500,000 - \$749,000	5	9.3	(70.4)
\$750,000 - \$999,999	3	5.6	(75.9)
\$1,000,000 +	13	24.1	(100.0)
Expenditures			
\$0 - \$49,999	9	17.3	(16.7)
\$50,000 - \$99,999	6	11.1	(28.8)
\$100,000 - \$199,999	1	1.9	(30.8)
\$200,000 - \$299,999	7	13.5	(44.2)
\$300,000 - \$399,999	5	9.6	(53.8)
\$400,000 - \$499,999	2	3.8	(57.7)
\$500,000 - \$749,000	8	15.4	(73.1)
\$750,000 - \$999,999	4	7.7	(80.8)
\$1,000,000 +	10	19.2	(100.0)

N=54

Job satisfaction scores are typically reported in terms of means analysis. In 2002, Parks and Holdnak sought to determine what factors determine a recreation professional's job satisfaction. In their study respondent's seemed to be most satisfied with the type of work they do ($\mu = 1.54$), the community they live in ($\mu = 1.74$) and their housing situation ($\mu = 1.84$). They were least satisfied with their current salary ($\mu = 2.85$), free time ($\mu = 2.82$) and the hours per week they worked ($\mu = 2.50$). In the present study respondent's seem to be most satisfied with the type of work they do ($\mu = 1.65$), their co-workers ($\mu = 1.90$) and communications ($\mu = 1.96$). They were least satisfied with free time ($\mu = 2.84$), current salary ($\mu = 2.53$) and hours worked ($\mu = 2.43$).

As illustrated in Table 8, satisfaction levels are nearly consistent across the variables, from 2000 to 2012. Of note, respondents are slightly more satisfied with work and co-workers, but also slightly more dissatisfied with the other 11 common variables.

Table 8. "Please rate your level of satisfaction with each of these items"

Satisfaction Variables					2012		2000	
	Very <u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Unsatisfied</u>	Very <u>Unsatisfied</u>	Mean: <u>1=high</u>	Mean: <u>1=high</u>	
Type of Work	47	44	6	3	0	1.65	1.54	
Coworkers	36	48	9	6	2	1.9	1.85	
Communications	40	39	12	3	6	1.96	N/A	
Hours	37	37	15	9	3	2.04	2.5	
Organizational Goals	31	42	16	6	5	2.1	2.17	
Amount of control	27	46	18	8	2	2.1	2.24	
Respect at work	32	39	17	8	5	2.14	2.3	
Management	30	43	15	5	8	2.16	2.25	
Work Life	25	47	18	7	3	2.16	2.24	
Working Conditions	31	43	9	13	4	2.18	1.88	
Benefits	27	39	17	9	8	2.3	2.14	
Hours	15	46	24	15	2	2.43	2.5	
Salary	15	44	19	18	4	2.53	2.85	
Free Time	10	33	25	25	6	2.84	2.82	
Current Job	28	42	19	2	3	2.3	NA	
Career	40	40	7	5	7	1.98	NA	

N=73

Over two-thirds of the managers reporting being satisfied with their current job. It is worthwhile to note that expressing one's intention to stay has consistently been recognized as a reliable precursor to actual turnover and is reflective of employee commitment to the organization (Maertz & Campion, 1998; Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Hom & Griffeth, 1995; Hom & Kinicki, 2001).

Additional Analysis and Discussion

Job Satisfaction

As discussed earlier, the relationship between gender and job satisfaction has been inconsistent across studies (Spector, 1997; Sloane & Williams, 2000; Clark, 1997)). In the present study independent samples t tests were used to examine satisfaction by gender. Only two variables were found to be significant, type of work ($M= 1.69$, $F=1.63$, $p=0.37$) and current job ($M=2.69$, $F=2.06$, $p=0.32$). A series of ANOVAs were run to investigate variations in overall employee satisfaction levels both in the respondent's current job and in their career. There were no significant differences in satisfaction with the current jobs based on gender, age, years of full time employment or years in the current job. There was also no significant difference in career satisfaction based on gender, years of full time employment or years in current job. Several

significant variations in satisfaction levels were found that were attributable to compensation level and type of operation.

Variation in satisfaction scores by compensation level

There were significant differences in satisfaction with respondents work life depending upon compensation level ($F = 3.603$, $df = 10/50$, $p = .019$, $\eta^2 = .159$). Satisfaction scores were lower for respondents earning \$35,000 or less (M: 2.79 SD 1.051), and respondents earning \$40,000 - \$47, 999 (M: 2.0 SD 1.109). Satisfaction scores were higher for respondents earning \$48,000 - \$59,000 (M: 1.82, SD .809) and higher still for respondents earning \$60,000 and over (M: 1.87 SD .619).

Career satisfaction also varied depending upon compensation level ($F = 3.489$, $df = 310/50$, $p = .023$, $\eta^2 = .185$). Career satisfaction scores were lower for respondents earning \$35,000 or less (M: 2.62 SD 1.387), and respondents earning \$40,000 - \$47, 999 (M: 1.5 SD 1.269). Interestingly, respondents earning \$48,000 - \$59,000 reported slightly higher satisfaction scores (M: 1.42, SD .515) than those earning more than \$60,000 (M: 1.80, SD .775).

Variation in satisfaction scores by type of operation

A one-way ANOVA indicated significant differences in satisfaction with hours across the seven types of operations ($F = 2.752$, $df = 6/54$, $p < .021$, $\eta^2 = .234$). Respondents were more satisfied with their hours in residential developments (M=1.43, SD=.535) and Condo resorts (M=1.50, SD=.707) than working in other operations (M=2.24, SD=.752), time share resorts (M=2.50, SD=1.0), hotel resorts (M=2.62, SD=.921), special events companies (M=2.75, SD=.957) and HOA/POA operations (M=2.83, SD=.753).

There were significant differences in satisfaction with the type of work across the seven types of operations ($F = 2.690$, $df = 6/52$, $p < .024$, $\eta^2 = .237$) as indicated with a one-way ANOVA. Respondents were more satisfied with the type of work in residential developments (M=1.00, SD=.000), special events companies (M=1.33, SD=.577), other operations (M=1.59, SD=.618), hotel resorts (M=1.65, SD=.587), and time share resorts (M=1.75, SD=.957). Comparatively speaking, respondents were less satisfied with the type of work in Condo resorts (M=2.0, SD=1.414) and in HOA/POA operations (M=2.50, SD=1.225).

A one-way ANOVA shows the impact of type of operation on satisfaction with the respondents career ($F = 2367$, $df = 6/46$, $p < .046$, $\eta^2 = .248$). Variation across the seven types of operations indicated respondents were more satisfied with their hours in residential developments (M=1.33, SD=.577), hotel resorts (M=1.42, SD=.507), Condo resorts (M=1.50, SD=.707), HOA/POA operations (M=1.50, SD=.577), and time share resorts (M=1.80, SD=.447). Respondents were less satisfied with their career in special events companies (M=.225, SD=1.893) and other operations (M=2.69, SD=1.494).

Compensation satisfaction

A linear regression was run to investigate variables expected to impact compensation (Years in Present job, Years of Full time employment, Level of Education, Gender, Age, Type of Operation and Level of Responsibility). The overall model showed an R of .691 and a total R Square of .477. Of all the variables tested only Years in Present Job ($p=.004$, $Beta -.218$), Years of Full time Employment ($p=.003$, $Beta 2.57$) and Level of responsibility ($p=.027$, $Beta-.822$) were seen to significantly impact compensation. All other variables: gender, age, and type of operation had no significant impacts of compensation satisfaction.

Conclusion

This paper arose from a project supported by the Resort and Commercial Recreation Association to determine the compensation level and benefits provided to resort and commercial recreation managers. This is the third time this survey has been conducted with this population. The levels of satisfaction with a variety of job and career related issues were also determined. Overall satisfaction is clearly the most significant predictor of expressed intentions to stay and managers should consider multiple strategies to address related factors (Brown, Yoshioka & Munoz, 2004).

Of particular interest in this paper is a comparison of the 2012 findings to the previous studies. Overall, the organization (and industry) saw a great deal of consolidation between the 2006 and 2012 studies. Where the early studies showed a high proportion of respondents in the early to 26-30 age group and declining numbers in older groups, this study found the respondents had “aged” and the median salary increases substantially from \$33,000 in 2000 to \$48,000 in 2012. Compensation included salary, commission and bonuses. Respondents most often reported benefits such as paid vacations, health and dental insurance. Considering the national debate on mandatory health insurance, it is noteworthy that 84% of the respondents report having health insurance as a benefit. The factors that affect rate of compensation seemed to involve experience (years in the field, years in present job and level or responsibility) over other factors such as age and gender.

Additionally, job and career satisfaction issues were evaluated. As previously mentioned, satisfaction levels are generally similar when comparing studies. In both studies, respondents were happiest with the work they were doing and least satisfied with things like hours, pay and free time. The type of operation and level of compensation were shown to significantly impact respondent’s work life and career satisfaction. Interestingly, respondents were somewhat more satisfied with their overall career ($\mu = 1.98$) than their current job ($\mu = 2.30$). This could be because 47% of the respondents reported being in the field for ten or more years, while 45% were at their particular job for three or fewer years. This reflects how the years 2009-2012 were tough on the economy and the industry.

Overall, the survey reflects a somewhat stable respondent base with findings generally similar over time. This gives support to the reliability of the studies. What changes exist may be due to maturing of the industry. Further analysis, particularly using comparative statistics is appropriate to further detail the factors that affect compensation and satisfaction.

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