

1 in 3 Canadian Job Seekers Have Paused Starting a Family Due to Lack of Work/Life Balance

Offering Flexibility Can Help With Recruitment and Retention

TORONTO, April 24, 2024 — A new survey released today is shedding light on one of the reasons Canada's fertility rate has hit its lowest level in recorded history. According to a newly released Express Employment Professionals-Harris Poll survey, one-third of employed job seekers (33%) say they have put starting a family on hold due to a lack of work/life balance. This includes 42% of Gen Z and 39% of Millennial job seekers.

Companies looking to hire top talent should take heed to the survey finding that two-thirds of employed job seekers (66%) say it's essential that a company prioritizes work/life balance as they look to start a family (including 77% of Gen Z and 72% of Millennials).



“We definitely hear more and more that candidates are looking for flexibility, and I think employers understand family/work balance is important to employees,” said Jessica Culo, an Express franchise owner in Edmonton, Alberta. “The most common thing I hear from candidates who are putting off starting a family is that the cost of living is too high.”

In Vancouver, British Columbia, fellow Express franchise owner Brent Pollington agrees the high cost of living plays a large role in any decision to delay starting a family.

“I think, especially post-pandemic, most employers have been fairly accommodating,” said Pollington. “Work/life balance is important, and I think organizations are offering flexibility, providing time-off benefits and generally doing what they need to do to support their employees.”

But Pollington mentions work/life balance is a two-way street.

“Employees continue to impose increased demands on employers — some realistic, some not — but companies can only offer so much before it impacts productivity and profitability,” said Pollington. “Employees and job seekers have high expectations, but increased demands need to be earned by being a contributor at your workplace and demonstrating an ability to get your job done within regular business hours.”

A Little Goes a Long Way

“What is offered doesn’t need to be drastic; a ‘little improvement’ can go a long way and be recognized by potential candidates,” said Culo. “For example, when it comes to remote work, many employers are not offering 100% remote but compromising and doing hybrid schedules. In addition, offering a bit more PTO is also something that can go a long way.”

“There is an opportunity for employers to be creative, and in my experience, customization goes a long way,” added Culo. “A lot of the increased demands we have seen in recent years are becoming less of a request and more of an expectation at this point.”

According to Culo and Pollington, some examples of ways employers are responding to requests for better work/life balance are more traditional:

- Hybrid work schedules
- Flexible start times
- More paid time-off (PTO)
- Childcare subsidies

Some recent offerings are more innovative:

“Gradual return-to-work programs after maternity leave are a relatively new option we are seeing where, after maternity leave, employees do not return full-time immediately, but

instead over a set amount of time,” said Culo.

Impact on Recruiting and Retention

Failing to offer flexible arrangements or other means of achieving work/life balance can harm a company’s ability to recruit and retain candidates, ultimately affecting the bottom line.

“The organizations that can offer something that is different than the standard will have a competitive edge when it comes to recruiting and attracting talent,” said Culo.

“Organizations continually adjust their offerings to ensure they can hire and retain top talent,” said Pollington. “But increased flexibility and benefits need to be done in a holistic and profitable way that allows the company to stay competitive and continue winning in the market.”

As with any other segment of the workforce, embracing working parents is crucial for businesses, according to Express Employment International CEO Bill Stoller.

“It’s evident from this survey that job seekers are feeling forced to choose between their careers and home lives,” he said. “A little bit of creative flexibility can help attract and retain top talent for skills that are desperately needed.”

Survey Methodology

The Job Seeker survey was conducted online within Canada by the Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from November 9 to 26, 2023, among 509 Canadian adults ages 18 and older.

For full survey methodology, please contact Ana@MapleLeafStrategies.com.

If you would like to arrange for an interview to discuss this topic, please contact Ana Curic at (613) 858-2622 or email Ana@MapleLeafStrategies.com.

About Bill Stoller

William H. "Bill" Stoller is chairman and chief executive officer of Express Employment International. Founded in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, the international staffing franchisor supports the Express Employment Professionals franchise and related brands. The Express franchise brand is an industry-leading, international staffing company with franchise locations in the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

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