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What's in a Name? Nearly Half of Workers are Dissatisfied with their Job Title

New Spherion Staffing Study Unveils Employees' Perceptions that their Professional Titles Misrepresent What They Do For a Living

ATLANTA – September 22, 2016 — While more creative job titles are a growing trend across the workplace, employees may not be as warm to the idea as their company's leaders believe. In fact, according to the latest WorkSphere survey from Spherion Staffing, earning the title of "Chief Happiness Officer" may actually prompt the opposite response - making workers far from happy with their professional positioning.

The Spherion survey, conducted online in September 2016 with market research data collection organization Research Now®, found that one-fourth (25 percent) of workers consider non-traditional job titles unprofessional and are against the idea of having one. A nearly equal number (23 percent) agreed that these more creative billings don't accurately capture what their job entails.

Although not every company may have a "Chief Happiness Officer" on the payroll, Spherion found that creatively-named roles are merely a small part of employees' overall professional title dissatisfaction. Nearly half (42 percent) of today's workers feel their job title does not accurately reflect their true roles and responsibilities. However, even employees in favor of more traditional titles believe they could use improvement, as 14 percent consider monikers such as "Project Manager" or "Specialist" too generic.

"Employees take great pride in their job titles, and in some cases, a title that is considered limiting or hard to describe can significantly impact their job satisfaction," said Sandy Mazur, Spherion Division President. "As businesses face greater pressure to retain and recruit top workers, reexamining how different titles are perceived and applied can make a big difference in building morale and positioning a company as a favorable place to work."

Despite general unhappiness with their job titles, employees feel confident in their ability to describe their job in a way others can easily understand. If put on the spot, 89 percent of workers say they would have no problem delivering an "elevator speech" that highlights their responsibilities. Additionally, employees believe that their family members have a better grasp on what they actually do for a living than their closest friends do.

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When workers do struggle to articulate their jobs, however, often it is because they consider their responsibilities too complex for those outside of their industry to comprehend. Nearly one-third (31 percent) of workers feel their job or industry is too specialized to easily convey, while an almost equal number (29 percent) say they avoid using work jargon in casual conversation.

The Spherion survey suggests employees actually may be making it harder on themselves to explain their jobs than need be. More than half (53 percent) of workers give different accounts to different audiences, while an additional 11 percent say they occasionally lie about what they do for a living. Although it's possible some workers enhance their job title or duties to improve others' perceptions of them, for others it's a must – one in four (25 percent) employees say they cannot fully disclose the full nature of their job due to security or confidentiality risks.

Additionally, Spherion uncovered several other noteworthy trends regarding employees' feelings towards their job titles and their ability to accurately and fully describe to others what they do:

Employees Shaping their Own Story...:

- More than one-fourth (27 percent) of workers feel their professional and personal networks would find their job boring if they accurately described it.
- Workers from older age demographics (45+) feel more comfortable outlining the full scope of their professional responsibilities to others, while younger workers (18-34) feel more pressure to "dumb down" their daily tasks to help others understand what they do.

...but Pop Culture Helps Too:

- Thirty-one percent of workers feel that pop culture significantly shapes others' perceptions of their job, as friends and family may equate them with someone they've seen in a mainstream medium.
- Younger workers tend to find greater merit in such comparisons than older workers, with 45 percent of workers ages 18-34 agreeing with this perception.

The Young Workers' Paradox:

- While veteran workers appear to be against implementing more creative job titles, younger workers (18-34) believe such titles showcase their company's creativity and culture.
- However, 45 percent of workers in this age range also feel that their job title does not accurately summarize what they do.

About Spherion

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