

Get a behind-the-scenes look at the making of MRA's Compensation Trends Survey. We asked the important questions to give you the answers you need. We'll talk about changing compensation, talent shortage, inflation, and give you a sneak peek at this year's Compensation Trends Survey!

### Listen to Discover:

- What makes this compensation survey most useful for business leaders—learn about aged data
- How to use data for merit increases with or without zeros
- What changes are being made to accommodate today's talent shortage

### Resources:

#### [Are you an MRA member that participated in this year's Compensation Trends Survey?](#)

The report can be viewed on the MRA Website through the user dashboard. If you participated in the report, simply log in to the website, head over to your user dashboard, and locate surveys on the grey bar! From there you will see your report under "View Survey Reports".

#### [Are you an MRA member but did not have a chance to participate in this year's Compensation Trends Survey?](#)

The full report can be purchased for \$545, with applicable sales tax. To do so, login to the website, head on over to your dashboard and locate surveys on the grey bar. Click on it and it will take you to the survey page, scroll down to Purchase Survey Results and follow the steps on screen for the report you wish to purchase.

#### [Not an MRA member yet?](#)

Access our executive summary. This is a small portion of the survey that includes key information from MRA's Compensation Trends Survey.

### Transcript:

INTRO | 00:00:00:02 - 00:00:23:04

Hello, hello everybody, and welcome to 30 minute THRIVE. Your go-to podcast for anything and everything HR. Powered by MRA, The Management Association. Looking to stay on top of the ever-changing world of HR? MRA has got you covered. We'll be the first to tell you what's hot and what's not. I'm your host, Sophie Boler, and we are so glad you're here. Now it's time to thrive.

Sophie Boler | 00:00;23;16 - 00:00;55;17

Hello, everybody. And welcome back to 30 minute THRIVE. Our episode today is part of our three-part compensation trends mini-series as companies are attempting to find the perfect formula for recruiting and retention, compensation is the key. MRA's Compensation Trends Survey is designed to guide organizations on topics such as economic and business outlook, pay increases, pay structures and pay transparency.

Sophie Boler | 00:00;56;06 - 00:01;25;08

Today, I'm sitting down with Brittany Rittershaus to get a behind-the-scenes look at the making of this year's Compensation Trends survey. Brittany is the services and graphics specialist at MRA. She writes, produces and designs the final survey reports and is one of the leads on MRA's hot topics surveys. Brittany helps by producing the questionnaire, writing and designing the reports to ensure they are timely and relevant.

Sophie Boler | 00:01;27;02 - 00:01;30;19

Hello and welcome to 30 minute THRIVE Brittany, it's great to have you on.

Brittany Rittershaus | 00:01;30;22 - 00:01;32;26

It's great to be here. Thanks for having me.

Sophie Boler | 00:01;33;03 - 00:01;55;26

Sure. I'm excited to hear the inside scoop on the latest Compensation Trends Survey for MRA. So MRA surveys are really here to provide insights to help companies compete and stay informed on business trends and the Compensation Trends Survey is one of the most popular ones we do. So, what makes the Compensation Trend Survey so popular?

Brittany Rittershaus | 00:01;56;16 - 00:02;26;25

I think what drives this survey and makes it so popular for organizations is what we ask in the survey. We are constantly making sure we have the correct trends that occur within compensation and any changes that might occur. We really want to help organizations remain competitive, and the survey really does help them remain competitive because it has information that they need for their compensation strategies.

Sophie Boler | 00:02;27;03 - 00:02;30;11

So can you dive in a bit deeper on what this report looks like?

Brittany Rittershaus | 00:02;30;29 - 00:02;58;29

Yes. So we do have over 40 questions that we asked in this survey, all focused on various compensation trends, questions. We also had 749 organizations participate and they reported on over 2000 divisions or locations across the US. We also break out the data into various sections. We have an overall which includes all the data no matter what state that they reported their data for.

Brittany Rittershaus | 00:02:59:13 - 00:03:07:26

We also break it out in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. And then there are also data cuts for industry and profits status.

Sophie Boler | 00:03:07:27 - 00:03:14:27

Well, I know the survey goes through a lot of steps from start to finish, but what is the process of producing the survey?

Brittany Rittershaus | 00:03:15:21 - 00:03:35:02

So when we start out, we kind of get together with a bunch of individuals from our organization and just kind of ask "What is going on in the compensation world?" We take a look and see if there's any questions that need updating or anything that needs to be added to the survey so that it's relevant. From there, we go ahead and launch the survey.

Brittany Rittershaus | 00:03:35:03 - 00:03:59:27

We have people, you know, answer any questions that need to be answered, fill out. If there's required questions, we make sure they answer those, get them submitted. From there, once we're able to close down the survey, we do have our data analyst go ahead and look through the survey, clean it up, kind of produce the report. And from there, I take it and look at it from a holistic view and say, hey, this is really interesting.

Brittany Rittershaus | 00:03:59:27 - 00:04:10:29

Let's talk about this. This is really interesting. We need to talk about this. So from there, kind of the report is put together and produced into what you're going to see coming up at the event.

Sophie Boler | 00:04:11:02 - 00:04:18:23

That's awesome. So there were 45 survey questions in this survey. How do you determine the questions that should be asked?

Brittany Rittershaus | 00:04:20:05 - 00:04:47:14

It is a lengthy process to determine what questions to ask in each survey. Since Compensation Trends Survey, we've been doing this one for over 20 years. As we've mentioned, most of these have base questions that we've already figured out, ones that we know organizations need to know. However, when it comes to adding new questions, we do discuss with other lines of businesses that we have at MRA to kind of help and guide us.

Brittany Rittershaus | 00:04:48:02 - 00:05:15:23

One of the main departments that we do discuss with is our HR Hotline advisors. They're constantly talking to our members and helping them out with any needs they may have related to HR. And due to that, they're really the first to know if and what organizations are struggling with and what answers they need. And due to that, we can kind of incorporate that and fill the gaps with our surveys.

Brittany Rittershaus | 00:05:15:23 - 00:05:49:07

So we're constantly tweaking and working on new questions with the advice that we get from them, with anything that they're hearing from our members this year. An added component that we did was, since the talent market has been so difficult and making it challenging for employers to obtain the employees that they need, we did work with our recruiting services team to see what they were hearing and experiencing, to see if we could add any questions surrounding that.

Brittany Rittershaus | 00:05:50:26 - 00:06:08:26

All that to say is that we just really want to get a holistic view of what's happening to organizations by listening to them, hearing what they're struggling with, and incorporating that into our survey so that we have the best answers that we can.

Sophie Boler | 00:06:10:05 - 00:06:14:14

Interesting, and does that play a role in how MRA's surveys are so robust?

Brittany Rittershaus | 00:06:14:14 - 00:07:01:12

What makes MRA surveys so robust is that we do have a large membership of over 3000 organizations who do value our data and look at it. Across all of our surveys offers, we have well over 2000 organizations participating in our surveys, and most of these organizations hail from the Midwest, which gives us a strong local presence. However, we do have membership who have branches or locations in other states, which is why we take the time to collect data not just from local areas but also across the nation, just so that we have any data for those organizations who do have locations in various areas.

Brittany Rittershaus | 00:07:02:13 - 00:07:30:14

This is true throughout all of our compensation business insight trends and policy surveys that we offer. We just want to make sure that we're giving the best we can. And by offering our data across all the United States, it does help give us a true picture of what organization's needs are. One thing to remember about our surveys is that the more people who participate, the more robust it will be.

Sophie Boler | 00:07:31:14 - 00:07:35:19

You talk about employer reported data. How does that impact the data?

Brittany Rittershaus | 00:07:36:05 - 00:08:04:22

Another way the data and compensation trends can help is to be used to age data. Oftentimes, you might find yourself having older data that you've obtained, like say, even if it was released in March. By then the data has changed. There have been shifts, especially this last year, data has been going very quickly and just changing rapidly and aging.

Brittany Rittershaus | 00:08:04:22 - 00:08:33:12

The data can definitely help to get you kind of where you need to be until you can get the newest, freshest data for any information on that. We do have several resources that can help. The best rule of thumb is to use the merit increases, whether that's with or without zeros. It really does depend upon your compensation philosophy and that's something you can determine in talk with your internal HR

Brittany Rittershaus | 00:08:33:12 - 00:08:47:02

or even other business leaders that might be involved in determining that. But using the data in the compensation trends to age other data can definitely help you get to where you need to be if you are in a pinch.

Sophie Boler | 00:08:48:05 - 00:08:55:23

And I mean, MRA has been doing surveys for a long, long time now. But specifically, how long has MRA been doing the Compensation Trends Survey?

Brittany Rittershaus | 00:08:56:04 - 00:09:16:27

So this survey is over 20 years old. We started this one way back, probably early 2000, I would say. Hard to believe. And back when it started, it was called adjustments and projections. So it was a very tiny survey back then. And over the years we've just progressed it into what you see today, Compensation Trends.

Sophie Boler | 00:09:16:27 - 00:09:28:10

That's awesome. Cool history. Well, there are a ton of other compensation surveys out there, but what makes MRA's Compensation Trends Surveys stand out?

Brittany Rittershaus | 00:09:29:25 - 00:09:55:12

Yeah, so I think this one really stands out because we do ask a wide variety of compensation questions. Well, merit increases are important and something that many organizations want to know to help budget, plan for the future, what have you. It isn't the only compensation topic that should get focused upon. We do take the time to focus on structure increases, economic growth, and business outlook.

Brittany Rittershaus | 00:09:56:04 - 00:10:14:20

Pay transparency, which has really been booming in the last couple of months, even I would say years. How organizations recognize high performers. That is something we touch upon and we also look at total rewards as a whole and what organizations do with their total rewards.

Sophie Boler | 00;10;15;06 - 00;10;34;14

Absolutely. And I think that's a great point to emphasize that there's so much more that goes into the survey than just merit increase. But since the survey does cover all of these areas of compensation, what changes to the survey have you specifically seen over the years to accommodate the changing business environment?

Brittany Rittershaus | 00;10;34;27 - 00;10;50;26

I would say the biggest changes we have made have happened the last couple years just because of the pandemic. We always need to make sure we're asking the right questions about trends or anything that's going on in the world. And the pandemic really progressed everything.

Sophie Boler | 00;10;51;04 - 00;10;56;19

Right, as a result of the pandemic, were there any new questions that you had asked?

Brittany Rittershaus | 00;10;56;19 - 00;11;32;20

So this year we added a couple surrounding around what we're calling the great resignation that was a result of the pandemic with so many employees leaving and employers needed to fill those spots quickly. So what they ended up doing was raising the starting rate and by doing that, they were basically boosting the pay, but not boosting the pay of the employees who were there, which was causing pay compression so that was a main focus this year, was to talk about the pay compression and what organizations are doing to mitigate that.

Brittany Rittershaus | 00;11;33;20 - 00;11;37;03

Just one of the many problems that have occurred from COVID.

Sophie Boler | 00;11;37;03 - 00;11;48;14

Right. And I mean, the pandemic hasn't been the only large factor in compensation changes. Are there any other changes made due to talent shortage, for example?

Brittany Rittershaus | 00;11;48;25 - 00;12;30;00

Yeah. So as I mentioned, they were raising base pay and they still needed to do that for their current employees as well. So that's why we have seen an increase in merit increases over the past year. But there were some companies that couldn't give higher base pay. They had to get creative with it. So a lot of them did start to focus on total rewards, which would mean variable pay and benefits they could, such as health and insurance, wellness choice and some even included various perks, which that would be flexible work schedules, gift cards, paid parking, employee lunches, just anything to make them stand out and give them something that says, I appreciate you.

Sophie Boler | 00;12;30;03 - 00;12;39;01

Absolutely. And another key factor is inflation when looking at compensation. So is there anything specific to address with inflation?



Brittany Rittershaus | 00;12;39;10 - 00;13;05;03

Yeah. So in our economic and business outlook, we did add some inflation questions. What those focus on was if employees are doing anything about the inflation, what they're doing to kind of help ease their employees' minds and how their employees are feeling about the inflation. Our data is employer reported and because of this, it can help make the data stronger.

Brittany Rittershaus | 00;13;05;03 - 00;13;29;05

When organizations are using the data, oftentimes our data is used by organizations to benchmark where they fall and if they need to be doing more to help their recruiting and retention of employees. A good rule of thumb when looking at our data or any market data for that matter, is to make sure you have a good understanding of your job market.

Brittany Rittershaus | 00;13;30;24 - 00;14;04;03

One thing we have organizations do when they're looking at the data is to consider the size of the sample, but also don't lose other elements of the data. These other elements could include company size, revenue, industry, or even profit status. Using this information can help you have a strong picture of where your organization might stand and any changes you might need to do to get you to where you need to be.

Brittany Rittershaus | 00;14;04;03 - 00;14;27;18

Knowing the data can teach you a lot, but that alone might not be enough to help. The data first can initially be used to help formulate tangible goals, but later those goals can be used to help formulate a plan with other key employees in the organization. And that way you can determine the level of success you've achieved.

Brittany Rittershaus | 00;14;27;18 - 00;14;54;00

Where do you plan to go with this data and just ensure that you're meeting your employees needs with anything regarding compensation, any trends that are going on or anything really that you need to look at within your organization to just make sure you're on top of it and giving it everything you can so you can be successful.

Sophie Boler | 00;14;55;18 - 00;15;00;06

Right. And could you talk a little bit more about the key focus areas of this survey?

Brittany Rittershaus | 00;15;00;16 - 00;15;26;05

Sure. With compensation being a key driver this year to help recruit and retain employees, it was very important that we wanted to focus on merit increases. However, on that, we also wanted to focus on inflation. Since employees have been focusing on pay and demanding higher wages, there's only gotten more complicated with inflation being on the rise. The big question is what will next year bring?

Brittany Rittershaus | 00;15;26;11 - 00;15;31;26

What is the next ripple effect that's going to come out of all this?

Sophie Boler | 00;15;31;26 - 00;15;46;02

Absolutely. I mean, well, the survey really covers it all. As we wrap up the episode, are there any sneak peeks that you can offer our viewers of what's going to be revealed next week when we start taking a closer look at the results of the survey?

Brittany Rittershaus | 00;15;46;26 - 00;16;11;05

The biggest teaser that I can offer without giving too much away of this report is that if you were to go back in time, say, just five years ago, no one would believe the shift in compensation that's happening right now or even the workplace environment that has happened, especially with not how quickly it's taken place. It's really been happening much faster than we've ever seen before.

Brittany Rittershaus | 00;16;11;05 - 00;16;44;25

To piggyback on this, the number of months between pay increases has shortened from 12 months or more to less than 12 months. This could be due to pay compression, given that 69% of employers strongly agree or agree that it has affected their compensation strategy. Or another factor that could be affecting it could be that over half of employees for office technical service, production and maintenance feel that compensation is not keeping up with inflation.

Brittany Rittershaus | 00;16;45;08 - 00;17;00;08

It's just been all over the place and employees really want more and employers are trying to give that while still maintaining their business. It's been really rough on them and there's so much in this survey that gives that away for sure.

Sophie Boler | 00;17;00;08 - 00;17;21;28

And this is definitely an area to stay on top of and know what's happening around you and what other businesses are doing. But the good thing is we will be continuing the conversation next week when we dive deeper into the survey results. So you don't want to miss that. But Brittany, thank you so much for all of the great info on this year's Compensation Trends Survey.

Sophie Boler | 00;17;22;07 - 00;17;46;15

I think this information benefited a lot of people and it's a great lead into our Compensation Trends event happening tomorrow. But this was so fun and thank you again and we will see you next week.

OUTRO | 00;17;46;29 - 00;18;01;04

And that wraps up our content for this episode. Be sure to reference the show notes where you can sign up to connect for more podcast updates. Check out other MRA episodes on your favorite podcast platform and as always, make sure to follow MRA's 30 minute THRIVE so you don't miss out. Thanks for tuning in and we'll see you next Wednesday to carry on the conversation.