INTERNATIONAL TRENDS IN EMPLOYEE OPINIONS

One of the most interesting aspects of working in this field is to see how different groups of people respond to surveys measuring their morale. Being able to rank them and see the differences is something which certainly has captivated our clients over the years, as they looked at data from their organization and compared the performance of different units. But if we step back from a single organization or even industry, and look at some of the differences between countries, that truly can be an eye-opening experience. Having access to large international databases is the key here, and so we draw for this section on the valuable work done by the international human resource consultant Mercer.*

Ranking countries by morale

Mercer takes an approach to employee engagement which is different from some of the other large consulting firms we have talked about here. The data we will look at is drawn from their 130-item questionnaire, unlike other firms which use a small number of questions to

* Data and illustrations appear with permission of Mercer, are from January 2008 and available on their website at: http://www.mercer.com/pressrelease/details.htm?idContent=1292085#Ex1, along with extensive linked free content.
measure this factor. While we might call this a “morale” survey, Mercer uses the term “engagement” to refer to the overall measurement they generate from this large-scale survey questionnaire.

Looking at engagement across cultures in the chart below (Chart 11), we see that Mercer’s current database of some large countries shows India well ahead of the pack. With a +25 percent score or 25 percentage points above average, India’s performance is impressive, well ahead of its “BRIC” cohort of fast-growing economies, of which two others also appear on this chart (China and Brazil), while one does not (Russia). As a very general rule, a difference of 10 percentage points (different from ten percent) is statistically significant in most comparisons of one group with another, in this field of work. Is India’s performance here to be expected? To a great extent, yes: when an economy emerges from a long period of relative stagnation, workers see boundless opportunity and have a strong emotional reaction to their new-found freedom to work, make money and reach the “middle class”. This was also true in the 1990s after the fall of communism: Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland and other newly liberated countries had huge leads on our international morale charts at that time.

![Chart 11](chart.png)

**Chart 11**  Mercer database of engagement by country, percent favorable