

## Wake-up call for employers

Survey pinpoints the fears and desires of South African workforce, writes **Geanor Vaida**

**THE** average South African employee wants further training on the job, wants to earn a competitive salary and would consider moving countries to get work experience.

Flexible working hours count for a lot, but of less importance is the need for a mentor, or to work for a well-known company.

These findings form part of the Work Trends survey, conducted by international employment services company Manpower and covering 15 countries across Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

The survey, conducted between June and August this year, forms part of the larger "The Great Employer" project.

The three most important things an employer can offer South Africans are a competitive benefit and salary package (53%), paid courses and education (62%) and a pension package (49%).

Popular "softer" benefits are the opportunity to progress in one's career (45%), while 60% said they would work longer hours in a week if the hours were flexible.

A massive 83% of South Africans - the highest percentage among the countries surveyed - said they would work past retirement if they could have job flexibility.

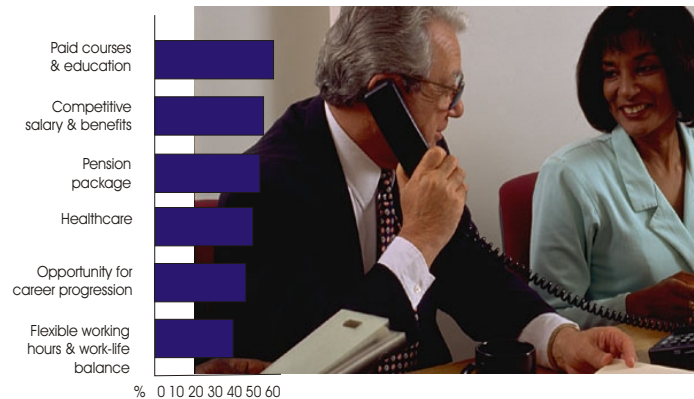
This, perhaps, reflects the fact that only one-third of respondents believed they would be financially secure enough to retire at the normal retirement age.

The popularity of flexible working arrangements is further reflected by nearly half of respondents (47%) saying they believe it is possible to work from home and be more productive.

Tim Hackney, MD of Manpower in South Africa, says the financial inability to retire is one reason why people want job flexibility.

Another reason is the "poor, or lack of, public transport facilities in SA's major cities [which] are contributing towards vast amounts of traffic" and increasing the amount of time it takes

### WHAT MAKES A GREAT EMPLOYER?



to get to and from work, Hackney says.

"The concept of flexible working hours would allow people to start work earlier and leave earlier and vice versa and, in turn, this would have a big impact on their productivity levels."

The common comment is "I get so much done in the hour from 7am to 8am when there are no phones or people interrupting me."

South Africans were also the most prepared to move to another country for a job, with 57% prepared to do so.

Hackney says this interest in overseas experience is

**A lot of South Africans are not looking to leave for good, but see working overseas as a means to gain international experience to stand them in good stead when they return.**

positive for South Africa as most return with new knowledge and skills.

"A lot of South Africans are in general not looking to leave the country for good but see work opportunities in Europe, the US, Australia and New Zealand as a means to gain international experience to stand them in good stead when they return to the SA job market... Most, if not all, of these employees return to SA."

Less than a third of South Africans want employment security and stability - the lowest percentage among the countries surveyed.

Hackney says that, despite the country's high unemployment rate, there are still many opportunities for job seekers, particularly for historically disadvantaged individuals and in growing industries like call centres.

Hackney said the lack of interest in a mentor - only 11% of respondents thought it important - was surprising.

However Jenny Senneck, director: people development at The People Business Group says: "In our experience and after running many mentorship programmes and hearing what various clients have had to say, there is an incorrect perception of what mentorship is and being a mentor and protégé is all about.

"It is obvious from the fact that 62% of employees want education and courses and development, that there is a very real need and desire among the workforce to learn.

"Becoming a mentor requires commitment, dedication and the willingness to share some practical tools and techniques.

"Being a mentor is not easy and in cases where they have not been trained properly, the programmes have often fallen flat, leaving the protégés feeling disregarded and unimportant."