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Is your business people ready?

s . Not a fair trade



Not a fair trade

Date: 05-Nov-07

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People tend to be quite rude about accountants and lawyers, as you may have noticed. In fact, they're the standard target of most business jokes (if that's not a contradiction in terms). But it comes as a bit of a surprise to learn that even those plying their trade in these fine professions seem to have a bit of a downer on their own companies.

Nearly 40% of staff in professional services firms think their employer is unfair, according to a new Fairness Index compiled by GfK and GoodCorporation (which provides businesses with an independent assessment of their practices).

Their survey found that professional services scored the lowest fairness rating of any industry, coming bottom of the pile in almost half of the 25 categories on offer. Surprisingly, given some of the salaries on offer, almost 50% of their staff felt their pay was unfair, while the industry was also criticised for the way it treats its suppliers, looks after disabled customers and stamps out bullying. Painful reading if you're a CSR manager at one of these firms.

A slightly shamefaced Lord Sharman, the former global head of KPMG, said he was disappointed to see his old industry doing so badly. 'For an industry that spends much of its time advising others on how to run their businesses, this was a very poor performance indeed,' he said gloomily.

But these firms weren't the only ones to do badly. Overall, one in three of us thinks our employer is unfair in the way it treats staff, customers, suppliers or the community as a whole – which can't be good news for the performance of those companies. GoodCorporation director Leo Martin insists British businesses need to wake up to the 'clear link between responsible business behaviour and profitability'.

Believe it or not, the state school sector received the biggest thumbs-up from its employees, with over 70% describing their employer as fair. This is a remarkable stat, given that most state school teachers we know spend a significant proportion of their time complaining about how their schools are run. If it was us, we'd be demanding a steward's enquiry.

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