

CAREERS

CORPORATE TRENDS

Executive Pay Hikes Checked by Worker Review

By WILLIAM BOLE

When John Walter resigned under pressure as AT&T's second in command, the \$25 million he netted for nine months of work was seized on by critics as an example of incorrigible excess in corporate America's highest ranks.

But as compensation of top executives soared to record levels last year, the pay awarded one corporate chief, George Fisher of Eastman Kodak, fell by nearly \$4 million in what most analysts considered a good year for Kodak.

His pay cut was the product of a new system of compensation at Kodak in which employees rate the corporate brass on how well they're doing.

Under the executive pay plan, a portion of Fisher's salary and bonus is linked not only to what the workers think of him, but also to his performance on key indicators of "public responsibility" including the environment.

It's definitely not sweeping corporate America," said Scott Clinger, a research analyst with the United States Trust Company of Boston, which manages assets of "socially respon-

sible" investors. "But more companies are looking at it. And people are struggling with the issues."

At Sears, Roebuck and Co., all 300,000 employees are filling out questionnaires in a new process of determining executive bonus pay. The so-called "at risk" compensation accounts for about one-third of the pay for upper-level managers.

The worker feedback, aimed at bolstering accountability in the company's upper tier, is part of a larger quest by Sears. "Our vision is to be a compelling place to shop, work and invest," said Tony Rucci, executive vice president of administration at corporate headquarters in Hoffman Estates, Ill.

In setting bonus pay, Sears assigns a given weight to each of three measures: employee satisfaction (25 percent); customer satisfaction (25 percent); and financial performance (50 percent).

With results of the new measures still being tabulated, it's too early to tell what effect they will have on executive compensation at Sears.

Workplace Diversity Programs Work Best When They Expand Beyond Race

By PAMELA SCHAEFFER

An important part of the diversity story at Allstate is evaluating leaders in terms of their skill in building a supportive work environment. Diversity skills are assessed through an extensive quarterly survey that asks employees for anonymous feedback on how the company fares with both its customers and its employees.

Crockett said that up to 25 percent of an Allstate manager's bonus is linked to performance on a "diversity index," determined from survey

results, and to achieving diversity goals in "succession planning" targeting and nurturing employees to fill key positions nationwide.

As a follow-up to diversity training workshops, Bank of America in 1995 began creating "diversity business councils" whose makeup is intended to be a microcosm of the company itself, mirroring the diversity of the bank's 93,000 employees. The councils are charged with devising practical ways to achieve the ultimate goal of an all-

inclusive workplace.

The diversity councils have implemented a variety of approaches for their particular business areas, ranging from mentoring programs, to performance reviews for managers based on diversity objectives, to temporary work assignments designed specifically to allow employees to broaden their skills. The company also posts all open positions, including those for senior vice presidents, a sign that the "old boys' network" has lost its edge.

Businesses Need Strategies to Avoid "Beeper Burnout"

The demands placed on the country's limited number of information technology workers is resulting in overwhelming workloads and beeper burnout, say the authors of a new book.

Thomas Ferratt and Ritu Agarwal studied the practices of 32 companies for their book "Coping With Labor Scarcity in Information Technology."

The authors say while companies need to do the obvious to recruit and retain information technology professionals, like stepping up recruiting

efforts and offering competitive compensation packages, they also need to balance their concern for productivity with a concern for employees satisfaction and career development.

Companies with the highest retention rates, Ferratt said, were those that were able to develop a sense of community, give consistent feedback, offer recognition and tangible rewards and recognize employee's personal as well as professional identity.

The key is to have a mix of interesting, challenging work that pays

well, an overall concern for the individual, recognition of stress and ways to relieve it, and a long-term career-planning strategy for the employees.

Ferratt acknowledges that there are costs associated with making a company an attractive place to work, and managers need to be trained in this shared vision, which may cut into productivity. However, Ferratt points out, those companies interested only in productivity will suffer losses as well in a greater turnover and a higher stress level.

By WILLIAM BOLE

"Family friendliness" has become a catch phrase in corporate America. But while most big companies have family policies on paper, fewer seem friendly to employees who make use of them, said Bailyn, who helped Xerox make the changes.

Indeed, the offering of work-time options has become a "double-edged sword," often giving employees greater flexibility but also jeopardizing their career prospects, says a new study funded by the Ford Foundation in New York.

Adjusting their "work-family lens," MIT researchers looked at how rigid schedules and workers' maneuvering around them affected employees and business performance. It wasn't a pretty sight, managers conceded.

The primarily female workforce of 400 tapped personal days and sick time to handle family matters. Unplanned absences ran high, phone stations were left unattended, and resentment led to faster turnover, all of which proved costly, said Xerox's Collier.

Examining their unspoken assumptions — namely that when employees win, the company loses — managers came to recognize their "culture of control," said a working paper released in April by MIT.

They came up with a radical idea: take decisions about work schedules out of the hands of managers and supervisors.

It is now the employees, through their work teams, who set the schedules. They can have time off when they want. They also have real options such as extended family leave,

a "compressed week" (usually 40 hours in four days), job sharing and reduced summer hours.

"Now, you just leave a voice mail with your work group. They all know what you're doing, and they step up to the task of covering for you when you're not there, and you do the same for them," said Arronte, a customer service trainer whose father took ill in 1992, around when the changes began. He died a year later.

Aside from better morale and improved customer service, the most striking result is that the rate of absenteeism there has plunged by at least 30 percent, according to the MIT paper.

Collier said she could not think of a

single employee at the customer service unit who puts in a "normal" work week. According to Xerox, the study pro-

duced similar results among sales and technical workers in Dallas and at its engineering unit in Webster, N.Y.

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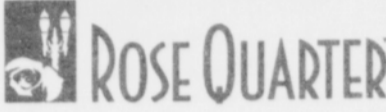
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