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Employee satisfaction key to sales

## Study finds customers return to happier shops.

Business owners wanting customers to buy from their stores again might want to make sure their employees are happy.

Not only do happy employees make for happy customers, but a University of Missouri researcher also has found that satisfied workers increase the chances of customers coming back and buying again.

“You can’t just make customers’ shopping experience good without taking into account employees,” said Christopher Groening, assistant professor of marketing in MU’s Trulaske College of Business. “How they’re satisfied affects customer satisfaction and also affects repurchase.”

Groening and fellow researchers from Aston Business School in the United Kingdom, Rice University and T-Mobile International studied a European retail franchise system with roughly 300 outlets, 933 employees and more than 20,700 customers. Customers and workers were surveyed about their satisfaction.

The study found that if customers gave a store high marks but employees did not, the chances of the customer coming back and buying again were half of what it would be if workers were happier.

“The link between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty is almost twice as strong when you have high employee satisfaction compared to when they are not satisfied with their jobs,” Groening said. “This double-positive finding stands in contrast to the idea that a firm can neglect to satisfy their employees as long as they pursue customer satisfaction.”

Although the company they studied was large, researchers concluded the findings would apply to businesses of any size.

So how can employers make sure their employees are happy enough? It takes more than a pay raise, the researchers said.

“Having supervisors who are open-minded, helpful to employees and who value the work that employees do is critical,” said co-author Vikas Mittal, a marketing professor from Rice University.

Supervisors also need to listen to employees and consider their opinions, he said.

Groening recommends training employees so they're empowered to make decisions regarding customers on behalf of the company. Restaurants typically do this, he noted, allowing servers to have the authority to offer customers free items or discounts when necessary.

Having a sense of teamwork and a smooth workflow also equates to happier employees, Mittal said. "In other words, while pay is important, pay is not the sole determinant of employee's satisfaction with the job," he said. "How the supervisors and colleagues behave toward each other, the attitude they have toward each other is important. Most important is making the employee feel valued."

The advice might seem obvious, "but it is surprising how many businesses ignore the softer side of employee management," Mittal said. "Work environments, like family environments, rely on the softer, emotional elements to create satisfaction."

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# ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

## NEWS-LEADER

### Study: Most Missouri lawmakers have college degrees

Roughly 87 percent of Missouri's state legislators attended college, with 69.4 percent receiving a Bachelor's degree or higher, according to a new study released Sunday by The Chronicle of Higher Education. Those figures are higher than Missouri's population as a whole, where nearly half of all residents have no college experience whatsoever.

Nationally, 74.7 percent of state legislators have a Bachelor's degree or higher.

**The study also shows that the University of Missouri at Columbia is the most popular alma mater for lawmakers. The school boasts 41 current lawmakers as alumni. The next most popular school is Missouri State University with 14 legislative graduates.**

Only 13 percent of Missouri lawmakers did not attend college at all, compared to 9 percent nationwide, the study found. Around 15 percent attended college but did not graduate. Another 3 percent attained a two-year degree.

A little more than 14 percent of lawmakers have a law degree, slightly less than the 17.2 percent of legislators nationally.

The study was largely based on self-reported data from public officials via Project Vote Smart. A closer look at biographical information on lawmakers' legislative homepages show 20 members of the Missouri House did not attend college or did not list educational background. Only two members of the Missouri Senate – Brian Nieves of Washington and Chuck Purgason of Caufield – did not attend college.

Peveerill Squire, a professor of political science at the University of Missouri at Columbia, told The Chronicle of Higher Education that state lawmakers are confronted by complex policy problems that defy simple solutions. College education can help with those difficult problems.

"Certainly there are no guarantees that college graduates make better lawmakers," he said. "They are, however, better equipped, on average, for the tasks they face."

The state with the most college-educated lawmakers was California, where 90 percent of legislators have at least a bachelor's degree. The next highest educated legislatures are Virginia (89 percent), Nebraska (87 percent), New York (87 percent) and Texas (86 percent). Arkansas

has the least formally educated legislature, with 25 percent of lawmakers without any college experience at all. Next up are Montana (20 percent), Kansas (16 percent), South Dakota (16 percent) and Arizona (16 percent).

## COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

# MU Extension creates Facebook page for flood information

By Anthony Schick

June 13, 2011 | 6:33 p.m. CDT

**COLUMBIA — MU Extension has created a Facebook page to aggregate information about the Missouri River flooding.**

The Army Corps of Engineers is predicting that the river will continue to flood throughout Missouri for most of the summer. Unusually high rain and snowmelt in the upper river basin prompted record releases from reservoirs upstream of Missouri.

The Missouri Flood Info Facebook page launched June 6.

“Social media is an effective communications tool during a disaster. This was demonstrated in Joplin and has been successfully used during other flood events,” MU Extension Web Team Editor Eileen Yager said in a news release Monday.

Collaborators on the Facebook page include the United Way of Greater St. Joseph, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Kansas City, the Missouri National Guard, Atchison County 911/Emergency Management and Holt County.



## **MU senior looks for Miss USA votes**

Fans can help Miss Missouri USA Hope Driskill make it to the semifinal round of Sunday's Miss USA competition.

For the first time, the pageant is allowing the public to vote online for contestants. The winner will secure a spot in the top 15 when the pageant is aired live at 8 p.m. Sunday on NBC.

Vote by visiting [www.missusa.com](http://www.missusa.com) and selecting the "Vote Now" link.

Driskill is a University of Missouri senior from Jefferson City who was crowned Miss Missouri USA in November.