

Press release
8 February 2024

Cost of living pressures are why workers are less confident than employers on company growth this year

- 89% of Australian business leaders are more confident in their company's growth prospects in 2024 compared to 2023, while only 72% of workers feel the same
- The reduced optimism among workers is influenced by concerns for a worse economic situation (74%), reduced business opportunities (40%) and lack of financial resources/budget (33%)
- Millennials (82%) and Gen Z (80%) workers are more optimistic of growth this year than their Gen X (76%) and Baby Boomer (65%) counterparts
- Expanding business opportunities (44%), increased demand for products/services (42%) and the prospect of an improved economic situation (38%) are the top reasons influencing employers' increased level of confidence

Sydney, 8 February 2024 – New independent research by specialised recruiter [Robert Half](#) finds workers are feeling less confident about their company's growth prospects than their employers due to cost of living pressures.

The research reveals 89% of employers feel business conditions will improve this year compared to 2023. Meanwhile, only 72% of workers feel the same this year compared to 2023.

The influences driving employee pessimism and employer optimism levels

There are several factors dampening workers' optimism compared to their employers. The top reasons cited by workers for having less confidence than their employer about growth this year are:

- Worse economic situation (74%)
- Reduced business opportunities (40%)
- Lack of financial resources/budget (33%)
- Restructuring/transformation uncertainty (26%)

Meanwhile, employers believe business activity will pick up in 2024 in a number of ways, which will drive opportunity for business growth. The top reasons cited by employers to feel more confident about this year are:

- Expanding business opportunities (44%)
- Increased product/service demand (42%)
- An improved economic situation (38%)
- Increased financial resources/budget (36%)

“Continued financial stresses placed upon household budgets, caused by recent mortgage interest rate rises and the rising cost of living may be behind why workers overwhelmingly see a different economic situation than their employers and therefore hold less growth confidence than them,” says **Nicole Gorton, Director at Robert Half**

“Despite this, there is still an overall boost in employee confidence regarding company growth that has been observed compared to the preceding 12 months, primarily attributed to increasing demand for products and services, increased financial resources and a slight softening in the volatile economic situation.”

“From a business leader’s perspective, increasingly positive sentiment and encouraging employment numbers are early indicators that 2024 is going to be a year of recovery and growth, which explains their increased confidence in their company’s growth. Companies are transitioning from survival mode to proactive mode.”

Optimism differs between generations

The research also found that among workers there is a generational divide, with younger staff more optimistic about 2024’s growth prospects. Millennials have the highest confidence (82%) along with Gen Z (80%), and although the majority of Gen X (76%) and Baby Boomer (65%) hold optimism for increased growth in 2024, their confidence levels are not as buoyant.

“While the quarterly average number of redundancies that occurred was lower in 2023 compared to pre-Covid, the continued squeeze on company profit margins may be unnerving older workers, particularly as they have experienced more economically challenging times during their working lifetimes than younger workers. However, as the national unemployment rate flatlines and interest rate rises are put on hold, Gen Z and Millennial employees may be more confident that better times lie ahead,” concluded **Gorton**.

Robert Half’s tips to employers for building a growth strategy that energises their company:

1. Strategy and growth is not ‘one-size-fits-all’

The ability to define and execute an effective business growth strategy can determine whether your company diminishes or grows. There must be a common understanding of what the term ‘growth’ means within the business. Is it to increase revenue, grow headcount or expand to different geographies? Once defined, a business can then work towards the goal, ensuring everyone understands the main growth objective(s).

2. Goals must be measurable and achievable

When planning how to build a business growth strategy, you need to start at your endpoint. Visualise professional and financial objectives for your business and then plot out actions that will help you achieve those goals. These goals need to be credible, achievable, measurable and realistic. Once the goals have been set, specific targets must be put in place to ensure success can be measured. Adding specific deadlines to your objectives will also make it more likely of reaching your goals.

3. Buy in from all stakeholders is critical

All stakeholders need to buy into the strategy. The leadership team can benefit from external facilitation to bring in all relevant parties and challenge some of the assumptions. Otherwise, the internal group can continue to live within their own assumptions and knowledge, which may be deeply embedded within the company’s culture.

4. Empower the company to live the business growth strategy

People want to work in a company that has a clearly defined vision and strategy that it is driving toward. However, one of the key challenges in implementing a business growth strategy is getting engagement from staff. All staff need to agree that it’s a credible belief and a sufficiently ambitious goal. Secondly, it needs to translate into actions and operational plans.

##

Notes to editors

About the research

The study is developed by Robert Half and was conducted online in November 2023 by an independent research company, surveying 500 hiring managers (including 100 CFOs and 100 CIOs) and 1,000 office workers from companies across Australia. This survey is part of the international workplace survey, a questionnaire about job trends, talent management and trends in the workplace.

About Robert Half

Robert Half is the global, specialised talent solutions provider that helps employers find their next great hire and jobseekers uncover their next opportunity. Robert Half offers both contract and permanent placement services, and is the parent company of Protiviti, a global consulting firm. Robert Half Australia has offices in Brisbane, Melbourne, Mount Waverley, Perth, and Sydney. More information on roberthalf.com.au.

Follow Robert Half Australia



Read related articles on our [Robert Half's worklife blog](#).

For more information

Courtney Fletcher

PR Manager Asia Pacific - Robert Half

Courtney.Fletcher@roberthalf.com.au

+61 421 209 304