

GALA's wage and human resources survey of language service providers reveals differences among regions.

How do you compare?

In February 2009, the Globalization and Localization Association (GALA) conducted a major survey of its members to determine differences and similarities in wages, benefits and human resources across geographical regions. GALA, which has 272 member companies, also asked members how they are faring during the current economic downturn. The survey revealed that, in general, wages are higher in North America than Europe, Middle East, South America and Asia, but workers in Europe receive the best benefits.

GALA conducted the comparative survey to give members a snapshot of the wage, benefit and human resource issues within the industry. The association began conducting quarterly surveys of its members last year in an attempt to increase the overall industry knowledge base.

In this survey, respondents were asked to give salary ranges for a number of positions typical in the language services and technology industry. All answers were provided in US Dollars to remain consistent. In general, the salary ranges of positions in North America were 10,000 to 20,000 USD higher than similar positions in other markets. For example, 75 percent of European project manager salaries were less than 40,000 USD, whereas 100 percent of the same positions in North America were higher than 40,000 USD. There were similar differences with software engineers, software developers and marketing managers.

As expected, some positions, such as sales manager and business development manager had very wide salary ranges in all regions, reflecting differences in employee experience.

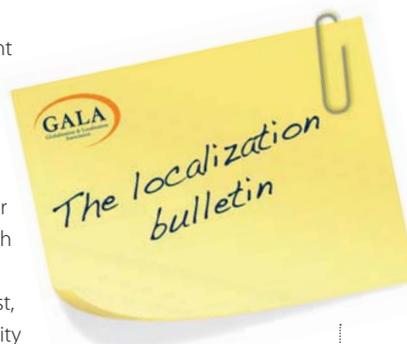
Meanwhile, European employees in the language service and technology industry appear to have the best benefits worldwide. This is particularly true in the area of paid time off. Fifty-five percent of employees in the European region receive three to four weeks of paid time off, and 32 percent receive five to six weeks off. In Asia, 62 percent receive one to two weeks of paid time off, and

only 31 percent had three to four weeks of time off; no one reported more than four weeks. In South America and the Middle East, the vast majority received three to four weeks, and in North America, sixty percent received three to four weeks, while 30 percent were at one to two weeks.

Interestingly, most regions offer similar full-time employee benefits, but member companies in the European region also offer attractive benefits to part-time employees. For example, more than 28 percent of European and Middle East respondents offer health benefits to part-time employees, but only ten percent do in North America and only 18 percent in Asia. Europe was the only region where some members offer part-time employees investment contributions and paid or unpaid maternity and paternity leave. Members in that region also were the only respondents to offer part-time employees annual bonuses, with 20 percent doing so. Not surprisingly the survey did show some language service providers and tool providers feeling an impact from the economic crisis, but for the most part, member companies are optimistic about continued growth in the sector. For all regions, 57 percent of respondents said they have felt a direct impact from the current global financial crisis, with 28 percent reporting no impact and 15 percent unsure.

Other findings include:

- A majority of Asian members indicated they have a staff development/training budget, while most members in all other regions do not. For those who do have a budget, the average amount is just over 30,000 USD for 2009.



- Among all regions, 70 percent of respondents said their employees need training in project management; 67 percent in software and tools.
- Telecommuting is universally popular across all regions with 68 percent of respondents offering it as an option to employees. As one respondent commented: "100 percent of our work is online. It is not logical to prevent employees from telecommuting."
- "Flex time" is also widely offered in all regions.

Seventy-two percent offer some kind of flex time, although most indicated that they have a 'core time' when they expect employees to be working.

- Employee manuals or handbooks are the norm in Asia, with all respondents from that region reporting that they have one; 81 percent of North American respondents do as well. Fewer European respondents reported a handbook – only 58 percent have one – and they are uncommon in the Middle East and South America.

• Sixty-nine percent of member respondents anticipate a somewhat reduced demand for services over the next three to six months resulting from the economic downturn. All Asian, North American, South American and Middle East members who responded expect some downturn, though a small percentage of European respondents (six percent) have seen no effect, while another six percent anticipate increased demand.

• Only 20 percent of member respondents are reallocating resources as a strategy to be more successful during the downturn. Of those who are doing so, more than 86 percent of resources are being reallocated to marketing and sales.

• Twenty-nine percent of respondents said they are continuing to invest and expand despite the downturn. As one member commented: "We realize that companies optimizing their resources and investing in development will emerge as winners from the current economic downturn."

• More than half of the respondents have not had projects or contracts canceled due to the current economic situation. There does appear to be some postponement or delay of projects, and several members commented on the need to renegotiate contracts and respond to requests for discounts.

The survey was conducted over 20 days during February 2009. 109 member companies answered the survey, a strong 40 percent of the membership. The survey results are available to members on the GALA website www.gala-global.org.