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News](#)[Outreach News](#)[Research News](#)[UK HealthCare News](#)[• Digestive Health Program](#)[• Gill Heart Institute](#)[• Kentucky Children's
Hospital/Pediatrics](#)[• Kentucky Neuroscience
Institute](#)[• Markey Cancer Center](#)[• Orthopaedic Surgery &
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Jobs that Work for Hourly Workers Benefit All

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LEXINGTON, Ky. (March 5, 2008) – Investment in quality jobs for hourly workers makes good business sense, finds a study conducted by researchers at the University of Kentucky and Boston College. The "[CitiSales Study](#)," released today by researcher [Jennifer Swanberg](#) at the [2008 Work Life Conference](#) in Atlanta, Ga., is one of the first major studies to focus on employee engagement among lower-wage hourly workers. The study finds that six workplace dimensions are essential components to employee engagement and customer satisfaction in the retail industry.

Funded by the [Ford Foundation](#), the "CitiSales Study" was conducted in collaboration with a Fortune 100 retail firm referred to by the pseudonym "CitiSales."

The results of the "CitiSales Study" found supervisor effectiveness to be the most powerful driver of employee engagement and customer satisfaction, along with five other workplace dimensions: opportunities for career development; climate of teamwork; job fit and adequate resources to get the job done; schedule satisfaction; and schedule flexibility.

"Particularly interesting is that five of the six workplace dimensions predict the sixth dimension, supervisor effectiveness, which in turn drives employee engagement and customer satisfaction," said lead researcher Swanberg, executive director of the [UK Institute for Workplace Innovation](#). "We hope that companies use these findings to promote excellence for their employees, customers and business."

The study also defines workplace flexibility for hourly workers in retail jobs. Flexible work practices for hourly workers at "CitiSales" primarily include strategies that give employees control over their schedule and provide accommodation/job security around work-life conflicts. Overall three-quarters of employees reported some control over their work schedule. Seventy-six percent of employees report having some to a lot of input into their weekly schedule, and 76 percent report that their schedule preferences are considered almost always or always. Over 90 percent of senior managers report that offering workplace flexibility to hourly workers makes good business sense. Findings also demonstrate that access to flexibility was predictive of both employee engagement and customer satisfaction.

The "CitiSales" company which was the subject of the study operates more than 6,000 stores throughout the United States. The "CitiSales Study" used a multi-method data collection strategy including employee surveys and interviews with 41 senior "CitiSales" managers. A total of 6,085 employees, both in hourly and salary positions, within 388 stores in the three geographical regions of the United States completed the survey. The findings released today focus on information gathered from 3,903 workers in hourly, front-line jobs.

"This study shows that investment in hourly workers is good for business and good for employees," said Helen Neuborne, senior program officer of the Ford Foundation. "It provides practical recommendations to help employers build quality job opportunities for their hourly employees while simultaneously increasing the company's bottom line."

The "CitiSales Study" research team has translated the primary research findings into an employer toolkit to help other businesses capitalize on these findings. The employer toolkit contains seven issue briefs that summarize key research findings and provide valuable tools and resources for supervisors, managers and business leaders. Action steps contained in the tool kit are designed to help managers recruit, retain and engage their hourly workforce.