

# Flow and Business Success

FLOW

Flow Research Collective | Deloitte's Center for the Edge

## ABSTRACT

While a 2013 study by McKinsey conveyed the results of a decade's worth of data from senior executives claiming a 500% performance improvement while in flow, little work has been done since on combining the concept of flow with industry standard measures of worker engagement. To fill this gap, Flow Research Collective and Deloitte's Center for the Edge teamed up to compare flow experienced on the job to Deloitte's standard metrics for engagement. 26 companies participated resulting in survey data collected from 115 employees. Results demonstrated a statistically significant positive correlation between flow and happiness at work, motivation to have impact, and actively seeking challenges. Items such as being proud to work for one's company were not significant, showing the perceived value of the work itself as more valuable than work for a specific company. These findings show a clear relationship between flow research (including the autotelic personality) and metrics from one of the world's premiere consulting firms.

## STUDY DESIGN

1. Survey distributed to employees of participating companies
2. Questions combined Susan Jackson's Flow Short Scale (FSS) with Deloitte's standard metrics for workplace success. Demographic questions and questions pertaining to flow in the workplace were also asked
3. Regression analysis was performed looking at the relationship between FSS response and Deloitte's metrics for workplace success

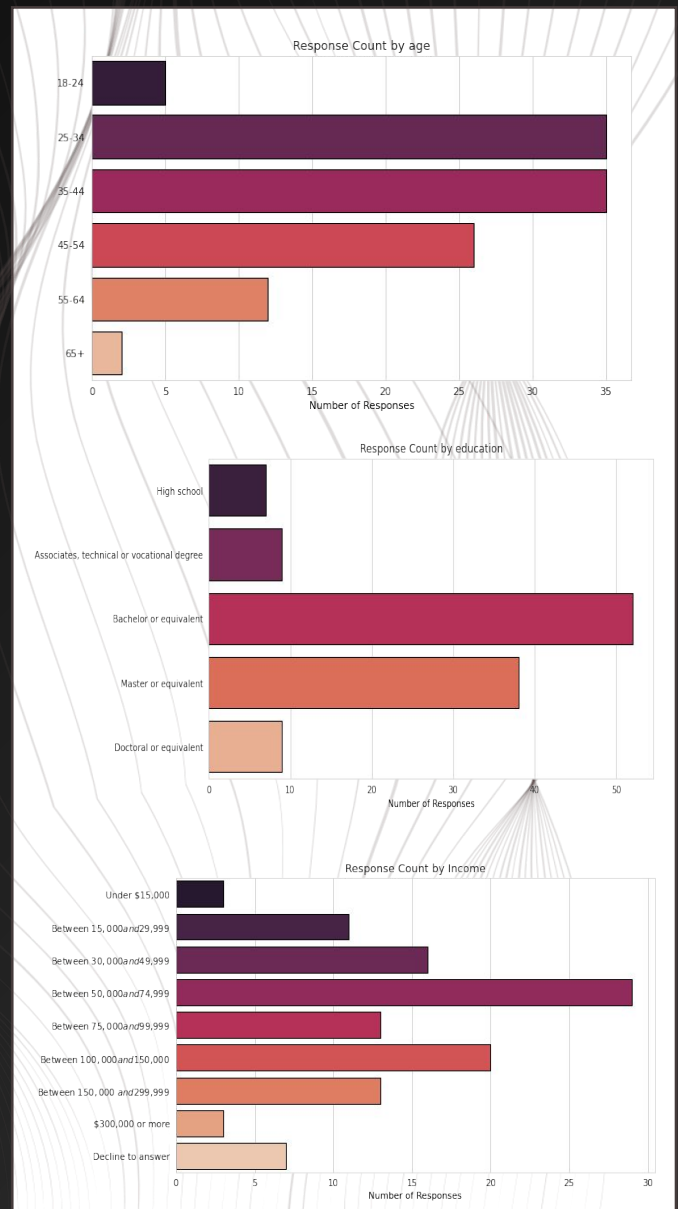
## KEY FINDINGS

- 115 responses received (approximately even male/female) on the 39 question survey from 26 total companies
- FSS response mean of 3.76, SD .54
- Regression analysis using a .05 alpha rate for rejection of the null hypothesis showed:
  - Happiness at work, motivation to have impact in their work, and actively seeking out new workplace challenges to be correlated to flow
  - Many variables did not have statistical significance including pride to work for one's company
- Among the characteristics of flow in the work context:
  - Challenge/Skill balance, immediate feedback and clear goals scored highest
  - Time transformation and loss of self-consciousness scored lowest

## SOURCES

1. Jackson, S. A., & Eklund, R. C. (2004). *The Flow Scales Manual*. Morgantown, WV: Publishers Graphics.
2. Cranston, S., & Keller, S. (2013). Increasing the 'meaning quotient' of work. *McKinsey Quarterly*. Retrieved from <https://www.mckinsey.com/>

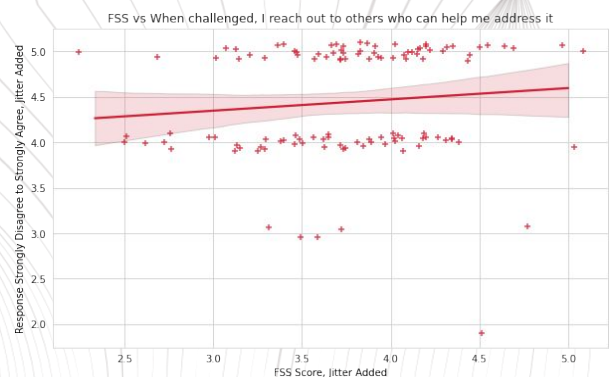
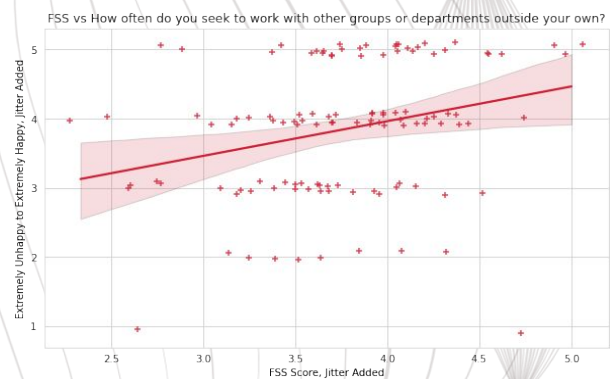
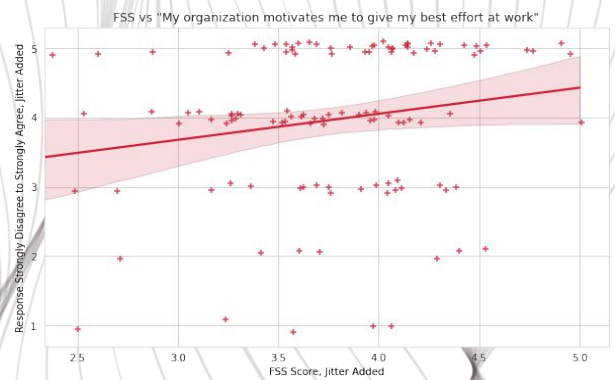
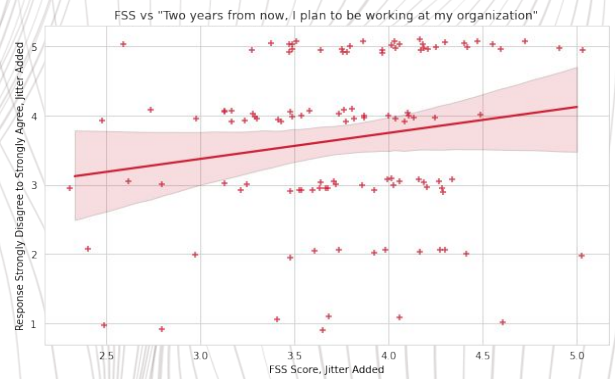
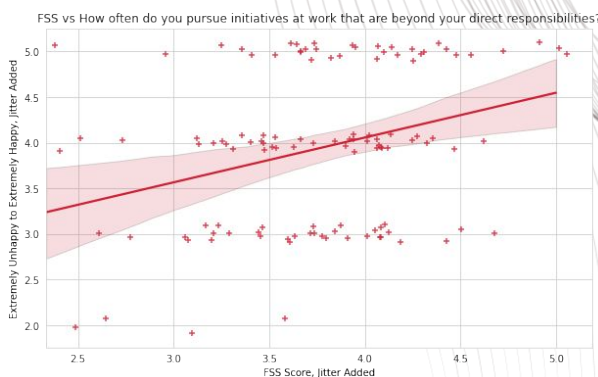
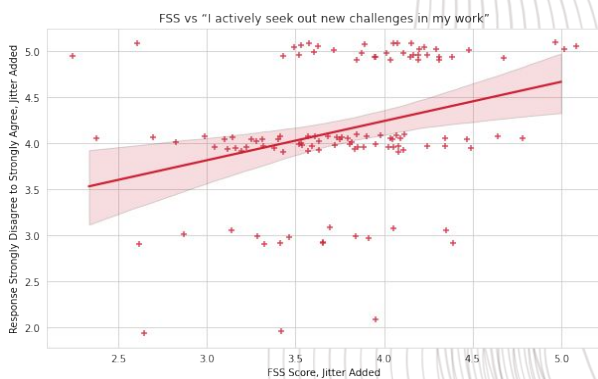
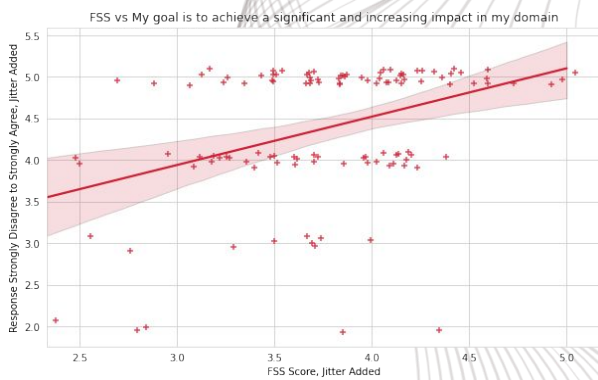
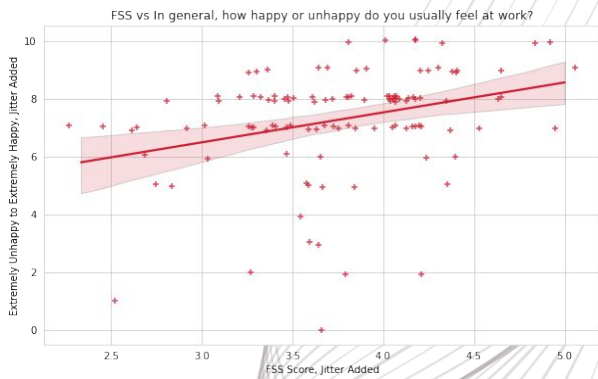
## DEMOGRAPHICS



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## DELOITTE'S QUESTIONS VS FLOW SCORES



With 95% confidence interval.

Note: not all correlations are statistically significant  
Images are in decreasing order of significance

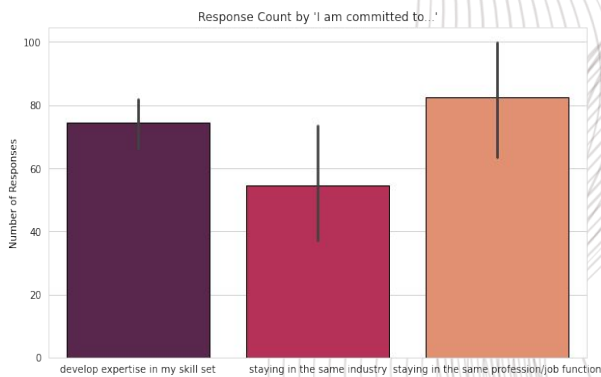
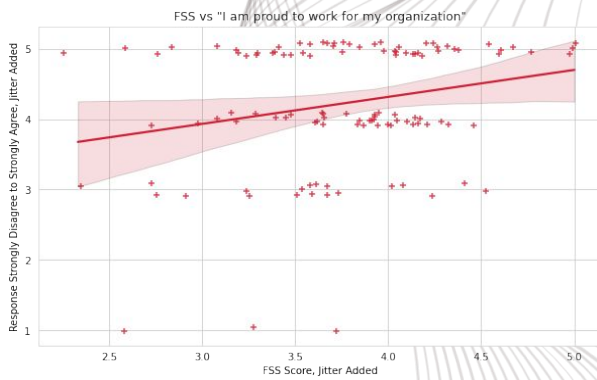
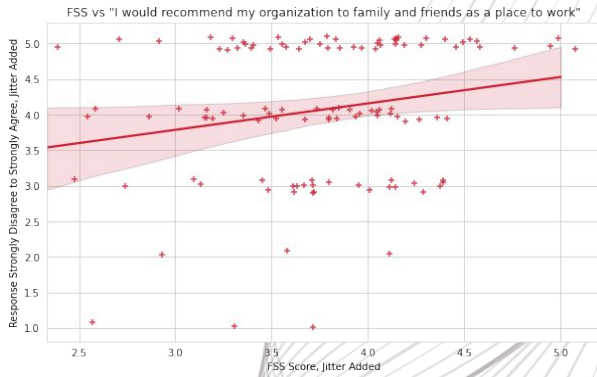
THE FLOW RESEARCH COLLECTIVE

DECODE FLOW | RECODE HUMANS

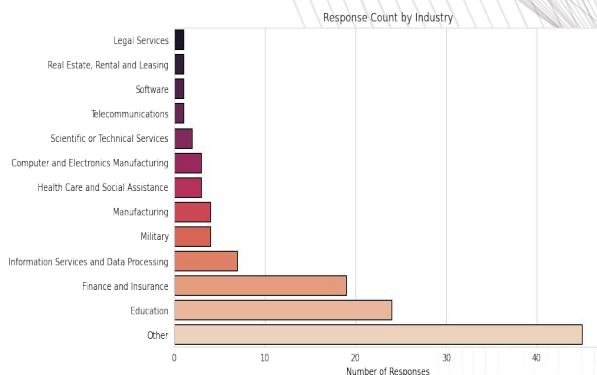
# Flow and Business Success

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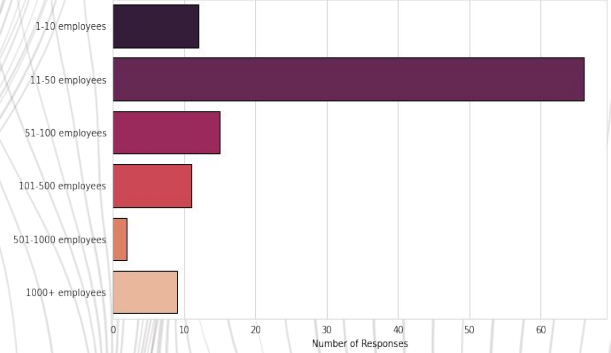
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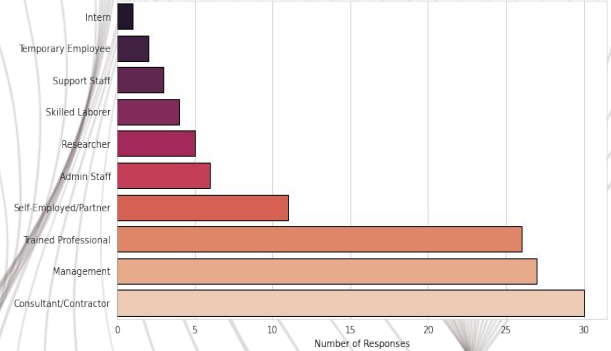
## COMPANY PROFILE



Response Count by Company Size



Response Count by Job Role



## FLOW SHORT SCALE RESPONSES

### FSS Responses

	mean	sd
Challenge/Skill Balance	4.45	0.60
Action and Awareness Merging	3.61	1.00
Clear Goals	4.03	0.75
Immediate Feedback	4.12	0.72
Complete Concentration	3.76	0.86
Sense of Control	3.56	0.99
Loss of Self-Consciousness	3.33	1.14
Time Transformation	3.32	0.97
Autotelic Experience	3.69	0.89
<b>Total score</b>	<b>3.76</b>	<b>0.54</b>



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## REGRESSION ANALYSIS

	coef	P> t
Intercept	3.7614	0.0
In general, how happy or unhappy do you usually feel at work? (Select the number corresponding to the one statement below that best describes your average mood at work.)	0.2245	0.001
"My goal is to achieve a significant and increasing impact in my domain (industry, profession, job function or expertise/skillset)"	0.161	0.001
"I actively seek out new challenges in my work"	0.1051	0.038
"In the next 5-10 years, which of the following best describes your objectives for your career path?: "I am committed to continuing to develop expertise in my skill set (e.g., automotive repair, data analytics, community development)"	-0.0424	0.077
"In the next 5-10 years, which of the following best describes your objectives for your career path?: "I am committed to staying in the same profession or job function (e.g., sales, accounting)"	0.0519	0.123
How often do you pursue initiatives at work that are beyond your direct responsibilities, even if your job does not require it?	0.0768	0.157
"Two years from now, I plan to be working at my organization"	-0.0768	0.221
"My organization motivates me to give my best effort at work"	-0.082	0.272
How often do you seek to work with other groups or departments outside your own in order to complete a task, solve a challenge and / or see the task to completion, even if your job does not require it?	0.0557	0.298
"When confronted with a new challenge at work that i cannot solve on my own, i reach out to others who can help me address that challenge"	0.027	0.569
"I would recommend my organization to family and friends as a place to work"	0.0312	0.699
"In the next 5-10 years, which of the following best describes your objectives for your career path?: "I am committed to staying in the same industry"	0.0035	0.92
"I am proud to work for my organization"	0.0028	0.969

Regression analysis on flow scores versus Deloitte's questions

Note: P Values below .05 represent statistical significance and positive coefficients represent a positive correlation

## INTERPRETATION AND NEXT STEPS

Due to a relatively small sample size, much of this data should be considered preliminary. Additional data collection is necessary to better understand the relationship between flow and business success.

### Interpretation

- The lack of statistical significance in some of the questions could be due to a smaller data size
- Flow is correlated to happiness in the workplace, motivation to impact one's respective industry, and actively seeking out challenges
- Pride to work for the organization is interestingly not correlated to flow in this data, apparently supporting the autotelic personality hypothesis. It would seem as though high flow workers associate themselves more with personal motivation and challenge over organizational allegiance
- Challenge/Skill balance, immediate feedback, and clear goals all scored highly, indicating that these are common flow triggers in the workplace
- Transformation of time and loss of self-consciousness scored relatively low, indicating that there could be factors in the workplace such as normalized work hours, evaluations, competition, and a perceived necessity of working that affect access to flow

**Next Steps** The following issues could be examined, focusing on our best approach for the key indicators of high flow work

- Environmental factors such as open office plans, flexibility determining work hours, 20% time for personal projects, and other distraction proxies like number of meetings/day
- Workplace culture such as expectations of availability, evaluation cycles, psychological safety through acceptance of failure and fear of losing job, bonus/compensation structure
- Daily personal habits such as uninterrupted work time and exercise
- Correlation with the Autotelic Personality Questionnaire
- Additional demographics such as marital status and years of industry experience