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A Recruitment-Based Explanation of Person-Job Fit for Employee Satisfaction

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Abstract

Job satisfaction and the resulting intention to leave due to dissatisfaction have been usually linked to the idea of lack of motivation by the employees. This paper is an attempt to emphasize the importance of recruitment process on the employee satisfaction, referring to the person-job fit aspect of the recruitment process. Accordingly, it is hypothesized that not well designed recruitment processes lead to employee dissatisfaction, once the employees realize that the job was not fit to them after starting to work for a while. The results of the survey study revealed that although the employees may perceive that they fit to the job criteria, they may simply have misunderstood the criteria. This leads to the intended conclusion, that the companies should pay more attention to the recruitment process, when explaining the job requirements and descriptions to the candidates

Keywords:

Introduction

The issue of job satisfaction has generally been studied for the working period of the employees, focusing on the working conditions of the employees, the relations with the supervisors or colleagues or the career opportunities. These researches have a tendency to analyze the periods once the employees are recruited. However, in this way, the period before the recruitment is not taken into consideration. In this paper, it is aimed to focus on the recruitment processes applied by the companies and the perceptions of the employees with regard to their fit to the job and finding the relation to the job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction and the resulting intention to leave due to dissatisfaction have been usually linked to the idea of lack of motivation by the employees. This paper is an attempt to emphasize the importance of recruitment process on the employee satisfaction, referring to the person-job fit aspect of the recruitment process. Accordingly, it is hypothesized that not well designed recruitment processes lead to employee dissatisfaction, once the employees realize that the job was not fit to them after starting to work for a while. Once companies realize the importance of recruitment for further employee satisfaction, they would pay more attention to the selection and recruitment processes. In fact, companies are not far from this understanding and use several job analysis tools before the recruitment. However, it is important to emphasize that the analysis results should also be properly communicated to applicants, once they apply for a specific job. The reason is, that employees may have various motives when applying to the job and may not pay attention to what exactly the job requires. After these employees start working, they realize that the job characteristics actually do not match with their own qualifications and this contributes to the idea of leaving the job. Such a result is a quite costly one for the companies, having invested in both recruitment and the employment of the employee. For this reason, this paper aims to pay attention to focus on employee satisfaction from the very beginning, when it is possible to control the future person-job fit of employees.

Literature Review

Recruitment

The idea that it is the responsibility of the companies to have a control on the recruitment stage was largely supported within the literature. First of all, that the companies or recruitment staff should have a clarified and well defined process is emphasized in several studies. "The majority of hiring mistakes made could be prevented if the people responsible for the hiring simply did a more effective job of determining exactly what they were looking for before they started to look for the candidate." (Palazzo and Kleiner, 2002) Similarly, Anderson and Shackleton (1986) in Heraty and Morley (1998) argued that "the quality of new recruits depends upon an organization's recruitment practices, and that the relative effectiveness of the selection phase is inherently dependent

upon the calibre of candidates attracted." According to Heratey and Morley (1998), after job analysis is conducted, the company has a clear indication of the particular requirements of the job, so that job fits into the overall organization structure. In this way the company can then begin the process of recruitment to attract suitable candidates for the specific position.

There are various suggestions with regard to the recruitment processes within the literature. Breaugh and Starke (2000) claim "that the first stage of the recruitment process should be the establishment of objectives. If clear objectives have not been established, it is difficult to develop a sound recruitment strategy (Rynes & Barber, 1990)." Some practical recommendation was also provided by (How to effectively) as:

- Start by listing the specific functions and responsibilities of the job.
- Specify the skills and attributes necessary to carry out these responsibilities successfully.
- Develop a needs profile for candidates by creating a list of performance expectations. Performance expectations are the specific results you expect someone in the position to achieve.
- Using a performance expectation list, develop a list of success patterns and personal characteristics. A personal characteristic could be written or oral communication skills. These need to be specific, measurable and verifiable accomplishments and traits.

The importance of a well defined job explanation during the recruitment process is largely discussed in the human resource literature. "Once the job audit has been completed, the job description can be written to generally define the duties and responsibilities of the job. The length and detail of the job description will vary depending on the level of job responsibility. For example, a job description for an entry level clerk would be much less detailed than one for a sales manager or plant manager. The job description consists of the job title, job summary, major duties, minor duties, the person to whom the position reports, qualifications, and range of compensation." (Luszcz and Kleiner, 2000)

In discussing the recruitment process, Barber (1998) identified three phases as generating applicants, maintaining applicant status, and influencing job choice decisions. That is, (a) certain recruitment activities such as advertising on radio station may influence the number and type of individuals who apply for a position, (b) certain activities such as professional treatment during a site visit may affect whether job applicants withdraw during the recruitment process, and (c) certain recruitment actions. (Breaugh and Starke, 2000)

Person-Job Fit

One of the main focuses of this paper is on person-job fit and the resulting effect on employee satisfaction. "Person-job fit is the compatibility between

the individual and the tasks a person is expected to accomplish in exchange for employment, as well as the characteristics of those tasks. Person-job fit is measured with regard to the tasks performed, not the organization in which the job exists" (Chilton et. Al, 2005) From a different perspective, "Edwards (1991) mentions that PJ fit has both a demands-supplies relationship (i.e. demands of the job and the abilities of the person) and a needs-supplies relationship (i.e. needs of the person and supplies from the job). PO fit is defined as the compatibility between people and entire organizations." (Sekiguchi, 2007) Sekiguchi further argued that that "the common operationalizations of P-J fit include needs-supplies perspective and demands-abilities perspective (Edwards, 1991). Thus, P-J fit can be defined as the fit between the abilities of a person and the demands of a job or the desires of a person and the attributes of a job."

The importance of person-job fit derives from the later satisfaction of employees. "The review of the P-J fit literature by Edwards (1991) identified job satisfaction, low job stress, motivation, performance, attendance, and retention as outcomes that are positively affected by P-J fit. (Sekiguchi, 2007) Once employers make sure that employ the proper applicants, then a large part of motivation efforts are completed, as employees feeling fit to their position would not need to be motivated that much as compared to employees who feel problems with regard to their position.

While person-job fit is an important issue, it is more important how to measure such a fit. "Traditionally, P-J fit is assessed by determining the demand of the job through a job analysis, which identifies the essential job tasks that an incumbent performs, and the requisite skills, knowledge, and abilities to perform the job tasks. From its simple inception evolving out of scientific management (Taylor, 1911), the process of determining P-J fit increasingly gained sophistication with identification of both statistically reliable and valid processes that can be used to determine P-J fit." (Sekiguchi, 2007) According to Sekiguchi "researches show that applicants' knowledge, skills and abilities are used more frequently to assess P-J fit. Hsiao and Kleiner (2000) also suggested ways to ensure that the employers select the right candidates:

- When defining the ideal candidate, separate performance criteria into two categories: tangible functional skills, as described in the job specification, such as computer knowledge, and intangible attitudes and attributes, as described in the job context, such as ability to work under pressure or being detail-oriented (Smith, 1995).
- The task of choosing the right person for a new position can be made much easier if the company already has high performing individuals on staff. These high performers can be used as a measuring stick to screen potential applicants for similar positions.

- One type of measuring stick commonly used is the biographical test, which is composed of verifiable questions about an applicant ranging from education level to past hobbies. According to Mitchell, a biographical test can locate and select similar types of employees, the goal being to decrease turnover and improve productivity. The use of a biographical test in conjunction with a structured job interview can go a long way towards standardizing the selection process (Mitchell, 1994).

In addition, as stated in Human Resource Management International Digest (2007), the people responsible for recruitment should be professionals experienced on hiring processes. "One method of ensuring good recruitment practices is by involving the firm's HR (human resource) department in all aspects of recruitment. HR people are key professionals and should be utilized right from the development of employer branding through to interview and selection procedures."

Recruitment and Job Fit

The literature on recruitment has both support for the importance of recruitment for person-job fit and the ignorance of it. According to Sekiguchi (2007), "employee selection processes, especially in American organizations, have traditionally focused on achieving P-J fit. However, both practitioners (Montgomery, 1996) and academicians (Behling, 1998, Borman & Motiwidlo, 1993, Kristof, 1996) have suggested that P-J fit is becoming less important than other types of fit." However, there is a larger literature supporting the importance of recruitment process for person- job fit. "Some researchers (e.g., Williams, Labig, & Stone, 1993) have argued that in recruiting many employers are not overly concerned with post-hire outcomes. Rather, they are interested in pre-hire outcomes such as the number of individuals who apply for a position, the quality of these applicants, their diversity, and the number of individuals who accept job offers that are extended." (Breaugh and Starke, 2000) When the necessary recruitment process is conducted taking the person-job fit into consideration, then the further satisfaction of the employees is guaranteed. "P-J fit is used to improve selection decisions because it is correlated with higher job satisfaction and lower intentions to quit" (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Saks & Ashforth, 2002). (Levesque, 2005) As stated previously, a good recruitment process provides a less costly working period for employees with regard to the motivating efforts such as providing trainings and extra promotions. "Recruitment includes those practices and activities carried on by the organization with the primary purpose of identifying and attracting potential employees." (Barber, 1998, p.5). Recruitment accomplishes the essential role of bringing managerial human capital into the organization and has a direct impact on such post-hire activities as training and development (Barber, 1998, p. 1) (Johnson et. al., 2008).

While traditional research on employee selection has focused on PJ fit or the match between individual knowledge, skills and abilities and the

requirements of the job as the major selection criteria; for a growing number of practitioners and researchers, this is not enough (Bowen et al., 1991; Kristof, 1996; Montgomery, 1996; Werbel and Gilliland, 1999). (Sekiguchi, 2007). "One recruitment practice organizations can use to gain an initial competitive edge is the position advertisement, the focus of this investigation and one of the most common recruitment tools used to generate an initial applicant pool for managerial job vacancies. Position advertisements can be either effective or ineffective in attracting potential job applicants depending on the precision and attractiveness of their content (Barber, 1998; Breaugh, 1992; Heneman et al., 2000; Rynes, 1991)" (Johnson et. al. 2008).

While it is the responsibility of companies to ensure job fit, it is also important to make sure that the candidates accurately understand the requirements of the job and evaluate their fit to the job requirements. At the end, it is the employees themselves who evaluate their fit and satisfaction with the job and decide to leave in case of dissatisfaction. "In attempting to understand the effects of recruitment activities, two key intervening variables are the accuracy of applicants' job expectations (Wanous, 1992) and their degree of self-insight (Breaugh, 1992)." (Breaugh and Starke, 2000) For this reason, it is important for the employers to follow the understanding of the candidates about the job and clarify the problematic points.

Hsiao and Kleiner (2002) explain the importance of a good job clarification for the employees as: "Defining a job can be broken down into three distinct components: the job description, the job specification, and the job context. The job description basically asks the question, what will the employee physically do? These are the duties and tasks that will be performed by the employee such as answering the phone or analyzing credit reports. The job specification is a description of the qualities desired in the person performing the job. An example of job specifications qualities would be skills, knowledge and education required to perform the job. Job context describes the environment in which the tasks will be performed such as inside or outside, hazardous or safe, supervised or unsupervised (Herman, 1994). The process of job analysis is the cornerstone for all other human resource functions including determining recruitment strategies, developing testing and selection criteria, performance appraisals, training requirements, and compensation determination. Unless an accurate job description can be developed, a good match between job and applicant will be difficult to achieve."

Job Fit and Job Satisfaction

The literature on employee satisfaction is highly engaged by the issues of person-job fit. Mainly, it is argued that an employee felling fit to his job and position is satisfied with his job. "Given that the labor market allows job candidates who do not perceive a good person-job fit to self-select out of job consideration, applicants who have an accurate perception of a job situation and have self-insight should, if hired, find their jobs satisfying (otherwise, they would be unlikely to accept job offers)." (Breaugh and Starke, 2000) "When you select the right individuals for the right jobs, your new hires carry out their

work more smoothly and experience fewer performance problems. The result? Greater enjoyment of—and engagement in—the job." (Vance, 2006) A study by Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) revealed that person –job fit has strong correlations with job satisfaction (0.56), organizational commitment (0.47) and intention to quit (20.46), and moderate correlations with overall performance (0.20). (Sekiguchi, 2007) The relation to job satisfaction is mainly understood from increased employee performance and decreased employee intentions to quit the job. Satisfied employees contribute more to the job and this returns also benefits to the employer. "Farnham and Pimlott (1995) suggest that one result of effective recruitment and selection is reduced labour turnover and good employee morale. Recruiting ineffectively is costly, since poor recruits may perform badly and/or leave their employment, thus requiring further recruitment" (Heraty and Morley, 1998)

Hypotheses

Based on the literature review conducted so far, there are three hypotheses. These hypotheses were tested with specifically designed survey questions and determined variables as successful recruitment processes, job descriptions provided by the companies, employee perceptions with regard to the job criteria and employee intentions to leave the company. Accordingly, the results with regard to the hypotheses are provided below.

Hypothesis 1: Employees who have not undergone a successfully managed recruitment process suffer from job dissatisfaction.
Hypothesis 2: When employees, who had been aware of the criteria of the job when applying, suffer from job dissatisfaction, this is due of the company to properly determine the job description and criteria.
Hypothesis 3: Companies realizing problems of person-job fit do not reflect this on their employees, as the problem derives from their unsuccessfully managed recruitment processes.

Survey Results

The results of the survey partially supported the hypotheses. Below are the results of the survey with respect to each hypothesis.

For *Hypothesis 1*, 60% of participants agreed that they have undergone a careful and professional recruitment process, while for a 25%, the recruitment process was not a successful and professional one. In addition, 50% of the participants agreed that the recruitment process of the company played an important role for them to evaluate their fit to the job. However, also 70% of the total participants claimed that they thought about leaving that same job. This means, that while only 25% of the participants were not satisfied with the

recruitment, the percentage of the participants dissatisfied with the job was 75. For this reason, it cannot be claimed that an unsuccessful recruitment process leads to the leaving decision alone. Not all employees who have undergone through a successful recruitment process are satisfied with their job, according to the survey result of leaving decision.

For *Hypothesis 2*, 80 % of the participants agreed that they were aware of the criteria necessary for the job, once they were doing their applications and again, 80 % of the participants claimed that this position was proper for them. However, 70 % of the participants indeed claimed that they thought about leaving the job. Accordingly, this implies, that it is the company who did not provide a well determined job description that details the proper criteria for the specific job.

For *Hypothesis 3*, the survey questions regarding the perceptions of the participations with respect to their companies' attitude revealed the significance. 60% of the participants claimed that their companies did not make them feel that they did not meet the criteria that the job requires. This implies, that the company knows that in case of a problematic person-job mismatch, it is due to a not well designed recruitment process applied by the company.

In addition to the hypotheses, in line with the expectations derived from the literature review, while 70% of the participants claim that they thought of leaving that job, 55% of the participants did not agree with the statement of not applying to a similar job for the next time. This implies that their decision to leave is not rooted in the job itself, but it is specific to the company they are working for. Although 70% of the participants claimed that the company had provided properly the required criteria during the application and recruitment and 70% of the participants again claimed that they had an intention to leave that job, 55% of the participants agreed that they may apply for a similar job. Accordingly, those participants are satisfied with the job, but not with the company. This is also supported by the statement, to which 55 % did not agree, that in case of a resignation, the feeling of not fitting the job would play a significant role.

On the other hand, contrary to the companies, it was the participants themselves who felt the necessity of the required criteria at the application through their work period. 70% of the participants agreed with that statement, implying that the properly perceived recruitment processes were successful in stating the intended recruitment criteria. Based on one variable, the survey also revealed that 80% of the participants were thinking that they were fit to the job they applied when they were being recruited and also had the idea that they had the required criteria. These results suggest that the participants did not successfully understand the required criteria, although 70% agreed that the company had successfully detailed the required criteria at the beginning of the recruitment process. This implies the importance of successfully communicating the job criteria and descriptions to the candidates. "recruitment communications need to be understandable and viewed as credible by the individuals whom the organization is interested in recruiting (Breaugh & Billings, 1988). In terms of a message being

understood, such mundane factors as using an appropriate level of expression and choosing the correct language (e.g., Spanish) are clearly necessary (Jablin, Putnam, Roberts, & Porter, 1987). The medium used to deliver a message can also influence comprehension" (Breaugh and Starke, 2007) This is a major focus of this paper to make companies pay attention.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to focus on the importance of recruitment processes for both the employers and employees, and reveal the relevance of the recruitment to employee satisfaction. Accordingly, the results of the survey study revealed that although the employees may perceive that they fit to the job criteria, they may simply have misunderstood the criteria. This leads to the intended conclusion, that the companies should pay more attention to the recruitment process, when explaining the job requirements and descriptions to the candidates. "A long-standing rule of personnel management states that you cannot effectively manage employees unless you have good job descriptions. If employees do not know what to expect, how can they be expected to perform to the standards of the company. Also if you cannot tell a candidate what the responsibilities of the job will be, the candidate will not be able to evaluate whether the job is what they want either." (Marshall, 1999) It should be ensured that the criteria and the job are properly understood by the applicants. This can have several implications for recruiters; however most importantly, it needs to be clarified during the interviews, when having the opportunity of talking to the applicants, what that job requires and what qualifications demands. For this, naturally, the companies and recruitment staff themselves should have clarified the job specifications previously.

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