Effects of Tasks, Salaries, and Shocks on Job Satisfaction Among MIS Professionals

Fred Niederman, Saint Louis University, USA
Mary Sumner, Southern Illinois University, USA

ABSTRACT

This paper contrasts attitudes and attributes of current and former positions of IT professionals who have changed jobs within the IT field. It also examines relationships among key variables of tasks performed, salary, job satisfaction, and external influences or "shocks" that may have precipitated turnover. Survey data were collected from 169 MIS professionals. Results showed significant changes in task, salary, and job satisfaction between former and current jobs. Detailed examination shows significant increases in project management and business analysis and decrease in 3GL and maintenance programming as well as differences in the amount of change for different elements of job satisfaction. A number of significant relationships among variables between some tasks and salary, some tasks and job satisfaction, and low former job satisfaction and response to particular "shocks" relative to turnover emerged from the data.

Keywords: compensation; IT personnel; job design; turnover

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, investigators have studied IT professionals and job satisfaction largely in relation to workforce shortages as well as to employee turnover. Much evidence has been collected in recent years regarding the existence of an IT worker shortage (West and Bogumil, 2001), although not without some dissenting views also being voiced (Matloff, 2000). Much of the discussion regarding IT workforce shortages focuses on the ability of universities to produce enough computer science and MIS graduates; but another stream of discussion focuses on issues such as attrition from the field and job stress (Moore, 2000), difficulties for older workers (e.g., Cowley, 2001), and unequal gender presence in the field, particularly in the most technical and highest wage areas (ITAA, 2000). Goman (2000) in her discussion of high tech personnel based on wide ranging interviews with leading HR staff at high tech firms repeatedly mentions the goal of recruiting younger employees. Fraser (2001) is even more explicit in describing incidents of alleged age discrimi-

nation among white-collar workers particularly in high-tech firms.

Information technology (IT) employee turnover has been a problem since the 1970s (Bartol, 1983) and has been studied regularly ever since. More recently, Jiang and Klein (1999) report a 25-35% turnover rate for IS employees in Fortune 500 firms, and Shellenbarger (1996) provides a conservative estimate of 15-20% turnover for IT workers. However, research on employee turnover has largely focused on individual attitudes that lead to organizational commitment and job satisfaction, which in turn are viewed as leading to intention to remain on the job. In light of the many issues pertaining to the nature of IT work and the composition of the IT workforce overall, it may be time to broaden the discussion of employee turnover.

Employee turnover is an important issue both to high tech firms and to traditional firms that also need IT personnel for development of new systems and maintenance of their information infrastructure. Turnover is generally expensive and disruptive to employers. As noted by Reichheld (1996), even changes in one or two percent of turnover can make a significant difference in firm profitability. This is due to the accumulation of direct costs of hiring new personnel with the indirect costs of lost productivity if there is a gap between an employee leaving and finding a replacement as well as time for the new employee to descend the learning curve for technical and organizational knowledge. In spite of the common view that turnover is expensive and to be avoided, some information technology firms are comfortable with and even encourage high levels of turnover (Agarwal and Ferratt, 2001; Fraser, 2001).

Studies of IT personnel typically take a snapshot of employees of a number of firms or of members of an MIS/computer science society at a point in time (e.g., Baroudi and Igbaria, 1994-1995; Guimaraes and Igbaria, 1992). These types of studies generally test a set of attitudinal variables aimed at showing the relationships among job satisfaction and its precursors, organizational commitment, and intent to leave. Alternatively, they show differences between demographic groups by gender, age, or race for these different attitudinal positions. From the perspective of the IT personnel employer, these traditional studies do not resolve the issue of how to influence the "intent to leave" or even more simply how to know the current state of intention to leave for a given employee at a given time.

In the management literature, Lee, Mitchell, Holtom, McDaniel, and Hill (1999) have suggested the importance of taking a different approach. They argue that the traditional approach to turnover studies, while providing some predictive power, are not adequate to explain "why and how people leave." They suggest adding variables from the external environment to the psychological attitudes commonly studied in the turnover literature for a fuller picture of the precursors and steps leading to turnover. Given the extraordinary external environment that MIS professionals have faced in recent years with the enormous growth, then collapse of the dot.com companies, these employees should be among those most likely to show the influence of environmental as well as attitudinal factors in their job-leaving decision.

The current study focuses on concrete variables, salary, tasks, and shocks in addition to the job satisfaction attitudes considered at two points in time contrasting former job position with current job position. It is acknowledged that more recent experiences may color judgments regarding pre-

Related Content

Web-Enabling for Competitive Advantage: A Case Study of Himalayan Adventures

Luvai Motiwallaand Azim Hashimi (2003). *Annals of Cases on Information Technology: Volume 5 (pp. 274-289).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/web-enabling-competitive-advantage/44547

Decision-Tree Models for Predicting Time Performance in Software-Intensive Projects

Nermin Sökmenand Ferhan Çebi (2017). *International Journal of Information Technology Project Management (pp. 64-86).*

www.irma-international.org/article/decision-tree-models-for-predicting-time-performance-in-software-intensive-projects/177292

Final Remarks for the Investigation in Ontology in IS and Possible Future Directions

Ahlam F. Sawsaaand Joan Lu (2017). *Ontologies and Big Data Considerations for Effective Intelligence (pp. 585-589).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/final-remarks-for-the-investigation-in-ontology-in-is-and-possible-future-directions/177404

Cyberspace Security Threats and Attacks on E-Records Management at Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya

Carolyne Nyaboke Musembeand Stephen M. Mutula (2021). *Handbook of Research on Records and Information Management Strategies for Enhanced Knowledge Coordination (pp. 333-353).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/cyberspace-security-threats-and-attacks-on-e-records-management-at-moi-university-eldoret-kenya/267097

Utility Based Frequent Pattern Extraction from Mobile Web Services Sequence

Krishna Kumar Mohbey (2018). *Journal of Information Technology Research (pp. 31-52).*

www.irma-international.org/article/utility-based-frequent-pattern-extraction-from-mobile-web-services-sequence/203007