

Chapter 6.4

Innovative Work and Citizenship Behaviors from Information Technology Professionals: Effects of Their Psychological Contract

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ABSTRACT

Little is known about the effects of the level of fulfillment of the IT professional's psychological contract on their innovative work and organizational citizenship behaviors. Using psychological contract and social information processing theories, this article proposes to answer the research question: How does the level of fulfillment of the IT professionals' psychological contract affect their organizational citizenship and innovative work behaviors? Survey data were collected from 209 IT professionals using group-administered paper and online surveys. Results show positive relationships with the level of fulfillment of the IT professional's psychological contract and their

innovative work behavior, as well as four of their organizational citizenship behaviors, specifically loyalty, advocacy participation, obedience, and functional participation. Extending the body of knowledge, the dimensional approach of the psychological contract was used resulting in the scope, focus, and tangibility dimensions being the most significant predictors of the organizational behaviors.

INTRODUCTION

Management continues to view information technology (IT) professionals as human capital, a resource used to maximize organizational ef-

fectiveness, which might include looking for ways to cut IT costs, enhancing performance, and/or maximizing organizational goals (Josefek & Kauffman, 2003). In coordination with these goals, IT departments today are expected to be leaner, yet multi-talented and innovative (Koch, 2006). Pring (2003) emphasizes that organizations still need innovation and value delivered from their IT professionals, even when organizations focus on cost management with respect to IT service providers. And while organizational effectiveness is affected by the productivity and performance of employees, there are other work behaviors beyond the dependable role performance that are also sought after by management. Two such extra-role behaviors are innovative work and organizational citizenship.

Research and practitioner literature stresses the importance of innovation and organizational citizenship in IT professionals. While an IT professional's job may have an implicit degree of creative and innovative requirements to it, organizations may have difficulty objectively monitoring creativity and innovation. Koch (2006) states that IT departments continue to need IT professionals who have in-depth technology knowledge and who can also create new products and capabilities. Innovative work may also be an accepted element to the job, as evidenced by one IT professional who was quoted saying, "...it's all about solving problems of the business...and there's always something new to learn" (Murphy, 2005). According to *CIO Magazine*, even when organizations are faced with mandates to cut costs while creating competitive advantage, chief information officers (CIO) are also charged with emphasizing innovation (Varon, 2005). In fact, 65% of the CIOs surveyed believe that "bringing ideas for IT-enabled business innovation to the table is a significant or dominant aspect of their roles" (Varon, 2005).

Organizational citizenship is also a vital component to organizational effectiveness, as well as a vital component of the IT professionals'

performance as evidenced by continued research investigating predictors of the behavior (Ang & Slaughter, 2001; Moore & Love, 2005). Ang and Slaughter's investigation finds contract workers exhibit lower extra-role (citizenship) behaviors than permanent systems developers, and they also find that the supervisors rate contract workers lower than permanent systems developers with respect to their loyalty and obedience. Finding differences by job category, Moore and Love find that levels of organizational citizenship behaviors are lower in the IT employees than the employees from work areas other than IT.

The current IT job market complicates this situation, in that organizations must also consider management strategies to keep their IT professionals engaged, productive, appreciated, and on the job, or lose them to another company (McGee, 2005; Motti, 2006). The psychological contract, the employee-employer relationship with respect to obligations to each, has been theorized to unite the employee with their organization and regulate their behaviors (Robinson, Kraatz, & Rousseau, 1994). An online poll indicated that 69% of the IT professionals surveyed were looking for a new employment position, and their number one reason was that they did not like the current employers' management or culture (McGee, 2005). Research shows that when the psychological contract is breached or violated, results can be lower job satisfaction (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994), organizational commitment (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2002; Suazo, Turnley, & Mai-Dalton, 2005), and organizational citizenship behaviors (Coyle-Shapiro, 2002; Robinson, 1996; Robinson & Morrison, 1995).

Psychological contract research has been conducted with professions from a wide variety of industries, for example, government employees (Coyle-Shapiro, 2002), professional workers from the banking and hospital industries (Van Dyne & Ang, 1998), and professional employees from aerospace, electronics, and accounting firms (Porter, Pearce, Tripoli, & Lewis, 1998), improv-

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