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Aspiring Higher: The Role of Objective Manager-Employee Work Value Fit in Employee Brand Movement Intentions

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Abstract

Multinational corporations attend to the unique challenge of managing employee mobility across various brands. While high tenure and high organizational commitment have been shown to increase retention attitudes, the organizational behavior literature has been notably silent regarding the factors contributing to employees’ aspirations to work in ‘bigger and better’ brands. Brand movement intentions of employees of a large, international professional services corporation were studied. Findings support the introduction of an objective measure of manager-employee work value fit and suggest employee brand movement is propelled in part by need for prestige.

Hypothesis 1: Higher organizational commitment will be associated with lower odds of brand change intentions, accounting for brand, personal characteristics, and value context.

Hypothesis 2: Higher employee prestige will be associated with higher odds of brand change intentions, controlling for brand, personal characteristics, and value context.

Hypothesis 3: Higher objective manager-employee prestige work value fit will be associated with higher odds of brand change intentions, controlling for brand and personal characteristics.

Methodology

A large, international professional services company participated in a multilevel survey assessing brand movement intentions, organizational commitment, and work values. Participants were informed that their responses would be held in confidence and that results would be reported only in the aggregate. At each property surveyed, general managers/executive committee members (GM/ECM) and line managers (LM) completed items assessing Workplace Values (Edwards & Cable, 2004), Organizational Commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990), and Intent to Move to another Brand (Maxham, 2001), as well as questions regarding demographics and brand affiliation. Surveys between groups were identical, except that GM/ECM respondents were instructed to respond to work value items in terms of the property, whereas LM respondents completed these items in terms of themselves.

After data was collected, general manager–line manager dyads (hereafter referred to as manager-employee dyads) were assembled according to property. Properties that reported only GM/ECM or LM respondents did not produce any eligible dyads. In all, 527 properties and 24,006 dyads were valid for analysis.

Adapting a technique forwarded by Edwards and Cable (2009), I assess objective manager-employee prestige workplace value fit between line managers (employees) and general managers/executive committee members (managers). The ordered logistic regression model includes the composite measures of prestige workplace values for employee and managers, respectively, along with squared terms and cross-products. After the model was estimated, a block variable for manager-employee prestige fit was computed by the summation of these five fit terms weighted by their respective regression coefficients. When the block variable is included in the regression model in place of the five fit terms, the exponentiation of the associated coefficient serves as an odds ratio of manager-employee fit; the odds ratios for the other independent variables are unchanged.

Given the skewed distribution of tenure at the company, logged tenure was used in the model.

Findings and Conclusion

Ordered logistic regression was performed using Stata. To account for the interdependence of the data, standard errors were adjusted to account for clustering by property. After estimating a baseline model containing brand and gender dummy variables, models including organizational commitment and prestige work value fit components were estimated. Table 1 reports the exponentiated coefficients (odds ratios) and corresponding robust standard errors for each model.

Model 3 provides the test of our hypotheses of interest. In support of Hypothesis 1, each one-unit increase in organizational commitment scale is associated with a 17.6% decrease in the odds of employees intending to leave their current brand for another one, controlling for the other effects in the model. This effect is statistically significant at the p<0.001 level of significance.

Within the components of prestige work value fit, we find support for hypothesis 2: each one-unit increase in employee prestige is associated with a 172% increase in the odds of employees intending to leave their current brand, accounting for the other variables in the model. This effect is also statistically significant at the p<0.001 level.

Hypothesis 3 was also supported; the odds ratio associated with the block variable for manager-employee prestige work value fit is greater than one. However, due to the nonlinear composition of this variable, standard errors associated with this coefficient are suspect; subsequent analysis will attempt to estimate standard errors using bootstrapping methods.

In all, prestige was found to be a salient contributor to intentions to move to another brand. Interestingly, being female reduced the odds of intending to move to another brand considerably: it was associated with a 34.5% decrease in the odds, controlling for the other variables in the model. Subsequent research may consider why this finding would be produced.

Dr. John Bingham of the Marriott School of Management at Brigham Young University and Dr. Abbie Shipp of the Mays Business School at Texas A&M were gracious in granting access to the dataset for this study.

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