

**THE PROCEEDINGS OF
4th INTERNATIONAL
STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT
CONFERENCE**

*Exploring for International Competition and Cooperation
Strategies
to Foster Regional Development*

June 19-21, 2008 **Hollywood Hotel, Sarajevo,
Bosnia-Herzegovina**

**4th. INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIC
MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE**

*“Exploring for International Competition and Cooperation Strategies
to Foster Regional Development”*

*June 19-21, 2008
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CAREER-MANAGEMENT PROCESS AND EMPLOYEE ATTITUDES

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the results of a study investigating psycho-social aspects of career-management process (CMP) in Russia. The purpose of this study is to examine how it influences employee attitudes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Participants were employees of a medium-sized organization in service-related industries (n= 167). The key findings of the study based on the regression models that showed that subjective assessment of each dimension of CMP was most strongly associated with a different dimension of employee attitudes. The results provide a useful first insight into CMP and support the notion that it has important implications for the employee attitudes. The significance of these results and areas of future research are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Strategic human resource management (SHRM) is a general approach to strategic management of human resources in accordance with the intentions of the organization on the future direction it wants to take. It is concerned with the contributions human resource strategies make to organizational effectiveness, and the ways in which these contributions are achieved. In spite of the increasing volume of research and scholarship, the precise meaning of strategic HRM and HR strategy remains problematic.

Bamberger and Meshoulam (2000, p. 6) describe SHRM as ‘the process by which organizations seek to link the human, social, and intellectual capital of their members to the strategic needs of the firm’. Compared with technical HRM, SHRM is considered a relatively ‘new’ concept. By combining the traditional HRM practices (recruitment, selection, performance appraisal, training and development) with business strategy, SHRM reflects a more flexible arrangement and utilization of human resources to achieve the organizational goals (Wei, 2006).

Strategic human resource management with the focus on human resource as a source of firm competitive advantage is receiving increased attention. A large number of studies supports the notion that there is a positive relationship between “human capital enhancing” practices and firm performance or employee productivity (Becker & Gerhart, 1996; Huselid, 1995).

As there is no standard set of HRM practices studied in the HRM literature, Fey et al. (2007) examined the frequency of various HRM practices included in previous studies that have focused on the HRM-performance relationship over the last decade. As analysis of 18 articles has shown, the most often studied HR practices in organization were employee training, performance-based compensation, internal communication and competence/performance appraisal. So, while the impact of some HR practices such as training (13 studies from 18) or compensation programs (8 studies) have been extensively studied, little is known about the effect of career-management process (only 3 studies). Despite their limited number, these studies can help to better understand the conditions necessary for the successful implementation of organizational practices of career development whose goal is to improve employees’ attitudes.

Further, little empirical attention has been paid to exploring the processes or so-called “black-box” through which this impact take place (Fey et al., 2007; Gardner et al., 2001; Park et al., 2003). Never less industrial psychologists have examined a wide variety of individual and organizational variables that influence organizational performance. For instance, Park’s et al. (2003) partial mediating model illustrates the impact of HR system on firm performance mediated by employee skills, attitudes and motivation (Appendix 1).

So, during the last 10 years there is an increasing recognition that HRM practices are important levers through which firms can increase employee attitudes that contribute to the achievement of a firm’s goals. Therefore, taken together, these findings suggest that it is reasonable to expect that career-management practices should also improve employees’ reported levels of work attitudes. What is required is more up-to-

date research that examines the specific nature of this relationship. Thus the purpose of this study is to examine how CMP influence employee attitudes in the context of medium-sized enterprises of service-related industry in Russia.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Career-Management Practice in Russia

In SHRM literature we can find several studies the results of which give HR professionals an indication of how employees feel about their careers. In David Guest's and Neil Conway's (2004) survey three distinct groups of employees in terms of their attitude towards their career were identified: (1) employees wanting the traditional career with long-term tenure in one organization and upward mobility, they working longer hours than most, displaying high commitment and motivation; (2) others seeking a more independent and self-managed career with minimal commitment to the employing organization, a poorer psychological contract and a higher intention to quit; and (3) 'disengaged' - the employees not really interested in a career at all, displaying low levels of motivation and a reluctance to do anything extra.

In Russia industrial psychologists also identified these three groups. Indeed, it is widely acknowledged that in Russian labor market, many people expect to be employed by quite a few different firms over the course of their careers and thus while they are keen to have internal promotion opportunities, since they can always find employment opportunities in other firms (Fey et al., 2007; 16). But only since the mid-2000s some employers firstly promoted the notion that traditional corporate careers were a thing of the past. And, moreover, the number of employees, particularly 'able' employees, who prefer independent model of career development, is constantly increasing during the last 10 years.

New problems call for renewed vision. The war for talent in Russia was born and businesses used to partner with employees to carry out employees' career planning and development. Therefore some firms have been putting talent management high on their agenda. Recently career development is one of the primary responsibilities of HR managers in organizations. They are doing everything possible to win back the commitment of their able staff, recognizing that highly engaged employees will not only be a resource that is retained but at the same time will be a resource that beats the competition in serving and satisfying customers. The HR strategy has become the business strategy.

Indeed, to remain competitive, and to retain the best staff, companies must introduce a career development program that will clearly indicate to each employee their value to the organization. Facing the risk of losing employees many organizations try to implement various procedures contributing to the people development and company growth at the same time. Thus they establish a formal career-management process, including the definition of technical and behavioral competencies by function, clarity around roles and responsibilities, mapping of experiences and career moves, and agreement on promotion and progression criteria. Firms also encourage their employees to wide their competencies and raise the lever of responsibilities with support of professional courses and training.

In the context of a long-term approach towards working for a firm internal promotion is considered as a strong motivator for employees. But now Russian companies tend to focus more on the short-term priorities than on developing employee capabilities for the future. For example, according to a survey conducted by the Company Begin Group (2005), 48% of organizations are planning employee career only for one year. HR managers usually include the discussion about employees' career in the performance appraisal interview. During career planning process they evaluate employees' interests, strengths and potential career direction. Typically, the possibilities for the next career step for the employee within a system of a firm internal promotion can be as follows: to broaden the scope of the job by adding new responsibilities/accountabilities, to transfer employee horizontally to the new functional area, to promote person to the managerial/supervisory position.

However, this survey has also shown that some HR managers (approximately about 20 per cent) considered career development to be their least important function. In their firms the responsibility for the development of career paths has been downloaded to the individual employees. This correlates with recent trends of disappearing corporate career paths and job security.

While many best practices of a career-management infrastructure have yet to be implemented by the organizations surveyed, approximately 85% of all respondents indicate that career-related objectives have

been incorporated into the performance-management system. But as Park et al. (2003; 1399) note, "when managers implement new HR practices without consequent changes in employee skills, attitudes, or motivation, no positive outcomes on firm performance can be expected".

Employee Attitudes

The idea that employee attitudes are important determinants of human performance is not new. It has received considerable conceptual attention from industrial and organizational psychologists, management scientists, and sociologists in recent years. A generally accepted point of view is that they will determine if and to what extent employees will use their capabilities within organization. If the employees have good attitudes they are more likely to work for the benefit of the organization, thereby positively affecting firm performance. In our study we took into account such attitudes as job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

In general, organizational commitment is considered as a useful measure of organizational effectiveness. In particular, commitment is a "multidimensional construct that has the potential to predict organizational outcomes such as performance, turnover, absenteeism, tenure, and organizational goals" (Meyer & Allen, 1997, p. 12). It is important because committed employees are less likely to leave for another job and are more likely to perform at higher levels.

Three components of commitment have been identified, each of which ties the employee to their organization but the nature of the "psychological-bonding" is different. Affective commitment ties people through their emotional attachment, involvement, and identification with the organization. Continuance commitment depends on employees' awareness of the costs of leaving the organization are greater than the costs of staying. Normative commitment refers to employees' feelings of obligation to the organization, coworkers or management (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Commitment also can be measured by following factors: (a) identification with goals and values of the organization; (b) the desire to belong to the organization; (c) the willingness to display effort on behalf of the organization.

Job satisfaction has been defined as a pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job; an affective reaction to one's job; and an attitude towards one's job. Job satisfaction can be considered in the framework of different models: disposition theory (Straw & Ross); affect theory (Locke); job characteristics model (Hackman & Oldham); two factor or motivator hygiene theory (Herzberg). It can be an important indicator of how employees feel about their jobs and a predictor of work behaviors such as organizational citizenship, absenteeism, and turnover.

Organization may influence employee attitudes. So we suggest that CMP can be considered as an important lever through which organization can increase employee attitudes that contribute to the achievement of firm's goals. And we aimed to enhance our understanding of the nature of this relationship. Therefore we propose the following hypothesis: CMP will have a positive main effect on the levels of employee-reported job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

METHOD

Sample and Data Collection

The study was conducted during 2006-2007 in Saint-Petersburg. This study was carried out in three phases. Firstly, in-depth interviews were carried out with a pilot sample of HR managers (n=28). Secondly, a career-management inventory was formulated and then piloted on a sample of employees (n=32). Thirdly, a finalized set of instruments was distributed and employees of a medium-sized organization in service-related industries were surveyed to explore the effect of CMP to employee attitudes. One hundred and sixty seven employees participated in this study. Among employees 67% were women and 33% were male. Participants reported an average age of 31.6 (range = 22-47 years) with an average work experience of 12.4 years (range = 3-26).

Measures

The following are brief descriptions of the independent (CMP) and dependent (job satisfaction, organizational commitment) variables used in this study (see Exhibit 1).

Job satisfaction was measured using the 16-item scale developed by Warr and colleagues (Warr et al., 1979). The scale provides a short, reliable, valid and easy-to-use measure of job satisfaction. This scale assesses the

degree of satisfaction/dissatisfaction. Each item is scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “very dissatisfied” to “very satisfied” (the higher the score, the higher the satisfaction). Coefficient alpha for this scale for the present sample was 0.83

EXHIBIT 1 Dependent and Independent Variables

Dependent Measures (Criterion)		
<i>Instrument</i>	<i>Variables</i>	<i>Scales</i>
Organizational Commitment Scale	Organizational commitment	Affective Commitment Normative Commitment Organizational Commitment
Job satisfaction Scale	Job satisfaction	Total job satisfaction
Independent Measures (Predictor)		
<i>Instrument</i>	<i>Variables</i>	<i>Scales</i>
CMP-questionnaire	Career-management process' perception	Internal promotion schemes Training programs; Career mobility Career development

Organizational commitment was measured by Meyer and Allen (1993) Organizational Commitment Scale. The 18 items (6 items for each scale), with seven-point Likert-type rating scales for each item, assess the degree of commitment. It contains three components: affective ($\alpha=0.76$), continuance ($\alpha=0.54$), and normative commitment ($\alpha=0.83$). Therefore in our study only two most reliable and appropriate subscales were considered (ACS, NCS). Also we took into account an overall index of organizational commitment. Higher scores indicate increased organizational commitment.

CMP questionnaire was developed on the basis of in-depth interviews and a pilot survey (phase 1). The questionnaire was pre-tested on a sample of employees and slight adjustments were made as a result of their comments (phase 2). The final questionnaire comprised 16 items rated on a seven-point Likert scale. It contains four subscales: subjective importance of internal promotion schemes; availability of training programs; level of career mobility and career development satisfaction.

Participants in this survey were asked about the extent to which they agree or disagree with some statements reflecting the specificity of CMP in their organizations. For instance, the first measure of subjective importance of internal promotion schemes is derived from responses by employees to the statement: *Generally speaking, I am well informed about all new vacancies within my company and have an opportunity to apply for the desirable one.* Participants were asked to select a number from 1 to 7, where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree; 3-4 is interpreted as a neutral response. For the purpose of this analysis, it is assumed that the higher number selected, the greater the level of satisfaction of career-management process in organization. This self-reporting instrument has strong content validity. Coefficient alpha for this scale was 0.71.

Moreover, control variables such as gender, age and length of experience were derived from employers' registers.

Statistical Method

To answer our research questions we used the SPSS program package for descriptive statistics and multivariate analysis of the data. The method of separate multiple stepwise regression analysis relates independent and dependent variables in a manner which takes mathematical inter-correlation into account. In addition, this statistical technique achieves the best linear prediction equation between a set of independent variables and the dependent variable.

RESULTS

Before carrying out multivariate analysis of the data, we assessed employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment scores. The highest levels of satisfaction were reported for the amount of physical working conditions and fellow workers; the lowest - for the amount of work, chance of promotion and relations between management and coworkers in the organization. Among the respondents there was, generally, only a moderate degree of organizational commitment. The lowest level of commitment was reported for normative one. The means and standard deviations for all dependent variables are presented in Appendix 2.

We also assessed employees' perception of career-management process in their organizations. According to a recent survey positive perception of CMP was based on clear information and subjective importance of internal promotion schemes and high level of career mobility.

No significant gender differences emerged in response patterns to job satisfaction, organizational commitment and CMP statements in this survey. However, we received some generational differences: older workers were significantly more satisfied with their job than younger workers; they also demonstrated the higher level of subjective importance of internal promotion schemes and affective and normative commitment.

Separate multiple stepwise regression analyses were performed to analyze the relationships between each of the dependent variables (overall job satisfaction and organization commitment) and the independent variables (CMP, gender, age and length of experience). The factors predictive of job satisfaction included availability of training programs, opportunity of career development in organization and age. The factors predictive of organizational commitment included availability of internal promotion schemes, the level of career mobility and age. The outcome of the multiple regression analysis is shown in Appendix 3.

DISCUSSION

Despite the rising interest in CMP across Russian companies, there are almost no scientific studies that systematically evaluate the results of these programs. In this article we explored the impact of CMP on employee attitudes. We aimed to enhance our understanding of the nature of this relationship by focusing on such useful psychological measures of organizational effectiveness as job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

According to a recent survey, among the respondents there was, generally, only a moderate degree of organizational commitment ($M= 71.75$ $SD= 13.21$). The study found that less than 30 per cent of all the workers are highly satisfied with their jobs. Rapid technological changes, rising productivity demands and changing employee expectations have all contributed to the decline in job satisfaction. Surveys over the past 10 years have shown that job dissatisfaction is widespread among Russian employees.

In describing the application of their Organizational Commitment Questionnaire scales, Meyer & Allen (1997) do not provide guidance about expected, desired, average, or ideal means for affective, continuance, and normative commitment. But the authors noted that the desired pattern is highest scores for affective commitment, followed by normative commitment, then continuance commitment.

According with above-mentioned notion the highest mean scores among the employees participating in this survey was received for affective commitment ($M= 4.1$ $SD= 1.46$). These findings illustrate employee's emotional attachment to and involvement with the organization. Affective commitment ties employees with their organization through a desire to invest more effort into it and they do so because it is their desire or willingness rather than a simple exchange-based relationship with the organization.

However the mean scores for normative commitment ($M= 3.2$ $SD= 1.78$) have not been as high as might be expected. These results suggest that some employees perceived themselves as not obliged to continue their membership in an organization because of some kind of social, cultural, or contextual norms. So, employees can not be expected to perform some extra role behavior to fulfill their obligation or to show their gratefulness towards their leaders or peers.

Thus the results of our study support the notion that in Russia over the last years the level of organizational commitment and job satisfaction tended to decrease. This correlates with recent trends of disappearing job security and high level of personnel external mobility.

As stated earlier, in our study generally positive perception of CMP in ($M= 4.1$ $SD= 1.44$) closely connected with the problem of job promotion. Unclear schemes of internal promotion, low level of career mobility, unavailability of training programs have all contributed to the decline in CMP satisfaction. The results of in-depth interviews with HR managers (step 1 of our study) show that less than 30 per cent of firms surveyed have equipped their line managers with the skills to effectively manage career opportunities for their staff.

The key findings of the study based on the regression models that showed that subjective assessment of each dimension of CMP was most strongly associated with a different dimension of employee attitudes. Regression analysis revealed that the subscale "internal promotion schemes" was the best predictor of organizational commitment. This finding may be because people who report high level of information about new vacancies and availability to apply for them may be more likely attached to or involved with the organization where he or she is employed, whereas those who are less informed and motivated for internal promotion reported the lower level of commitment.

As research has shown the most predictive factor for job satisfaction was the age of respondents. Moreover, age was predictive for organizational commitment too. These findings suggest that generational differences in work attitudes are evident: older employees consistently report a higher level of job satisfaction and organizational commitment than younger workers.

Unexpected result of this research is that no significant gender differences were found. These results are consistent with previous studies conducted using Russian workers. Linz S.J. (2002), using survey data collected in from 1,200 Russian employees in summer 2000, noted that response patterns associated with the job satisfaction measures used in her analysis of varied by occupation and generation, but not by gender.

CONCLUSION

The empirical results provide evidence to support the research hypothesis. It was shown that differences in employee attitudes can be partly explained by the sub-systems of HRM practices implemented. The findings of this study suggest employees expressing more positive perception of CMP tended to report the higher level of job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

These results suggest several practical implications. A managerial implication of this research is not only the demonstration of the positive effect of CMP on employees attitudes but also that effective use of existing performance management systems should provide sufficient information to assess individuals' career perceptions and expectations. In our study only in one company this information collated and taken beyond the creation of a training and development program into a more proactive talent management program that aligns these expectations with the company's business plans and projections. Moreover we assert that these results may be evidence for the need to enhance the communication between employees and their supervisors. Finally, this study contains some limitations that are important to keep in mind. First potential limitation relates specifically to the use of self-report data. Though their use is particularly appropriate in this case because in research of HRM practices both objective and perceived features are each likely to play a significant role. Moreover, we suggested that perception of CMP is most likely to result in employee attitudes.

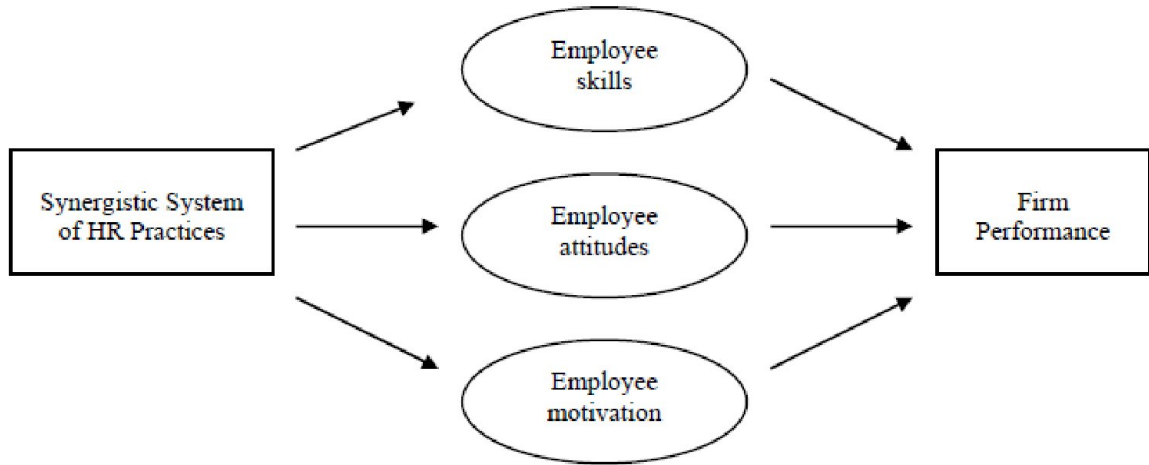
Another limitation of this study is that the effect of other HRM practices was not controlled. As Becker and Huselid (1998) noted that for better results it is necessary to study the influence of each element of HR system on firm performance including employee attitudes simultaneously in one model.

Finally, the results should be interpreted with caution, as the study is based on a small sample limited to the north-west region of Russia. However, our findings provide a useful first insight into CMP and give rise to several questions for future research. We suggest that future research should increase not only a sample size of the study but also the variety of firms included in the sample.

In conclusion, with the above limitations acknowledged, we are confident that this study makes an important contribution to opening up the black box between HRM and firm performance. This study has confirmed the hypothesized effect of CMP to employee attitudes. So, effective or positively perceived CMP may be considered as a strong motivator for employees in service industry with rapid staff turnover.

APPENDIX 1

Park, Mitsuhashi, Fey & Björkman's Partial Mediating Model



Source: Park et al. (2003; 21)

APPENDIX 2

Mean scores and standard deviations on Warr, Cook & Wall's Job Satisfaction Scale*

Dimension	Mean	SD
Your fellow workers	5.41	1.23
The physical working conditions	5.37	1.29
The freedom to choose your own method of working	4.95	1.38
Your hours of work	4.91	1.42
Your job as a whole	4.90	1.26
Your job security	4.79	1.26
The attention paid to suggestions you make	4.78	1.27
The opportunity to use your ability	4.70	1.63
Your immediate boss	4.31	1.64
The amount of variety in your job	4.25	1.57
Your rate of pay	4.21	1.56
The recognition you get for your good work	4.12	1.53
The way your practice is managed	4.01	1.32
The amount of work you are given	3.88	1.46
Your chance of promotion	3.64	1.38
Industrial relations between management and coworkers	3.52	1.65
Total job satisfaction	71.75	13.21

* Mean scores of the Scale presented in order of importance (score range 1±7, low satisfaction±high satisfaction)

Mean scores and standard deviations on Meyer and Allen's Organizational Commitment Scale

Dimension	Mean	SD
Affective commitment	4.1	1.46
Continuance commitment	3.7	1.18
Normative commitment	3.2	1.78
Organizational commitment	3.7	1.12

APPENDIX 3

Multiple regression analysis of subjective perception of CMP on overall job satisfaction

Variable	b-coefficient	SE	R2	Multiple R
Age	3.9	1.35	0.24	0.49
Training programs	3.3	1.40	0.19	0.43
Career development	4.01	1.35	0.10	0.31

F = 4.87 P < 0.01

Multiple regression analysis of subjective perception of CMP on organizational commitment

Variable	b-coefficient	SE	R2	Multiple R
Internal promotion schemes	3.2	1.37	0.81	0.55
Career mobility	3.1	1.41	0.21	0.43
Age	3.8	1.32	0.15	0.31

F = 7.01 P < 0.001

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