Chapter II

Strategies for Staffing the Information Systems Department

Magid Igbaria
Claremont Graduate University, USA
Tel Aviv University, Israel

Conrad Shayo
California State University, San Bernardino, USA

ABSTRACT

The chapter explores the main factors contributing to high IS staff skill shortages, high turnover rates, job stress, and burnout. We provide managerial implications and practical “best practice” recommendations for action. Some of the recommendations are that: Information System department managers must learn how to leverage the career orientations of all Information System department employees. They should realize that not all IS employees are driven by the same sets of values and goals. IS employees should discuss their needs, values, and career orientations with
their managers, and jointly develop realistic and meaningful career goals. Managers should be rewarded for assuming this role. Since an employee’s career orientation influences his/her value system, it is imperative that organizations provide different types of incentives for different employees. Top management must make sure that the working environment is equitable, fair, and consistent for all its employees regardless of gender, age, or race.

INTRODUCTION

“...the best [IT] workers do not necessarily rise to the top, because the employers are not good at identifying them.”

Norman Matloff, December 2002

An IT staff shortage is being experienced worldwide. Studies have shown that some CEOs are spending up to 60% of their time headhunting for top information technology (IT) talent (Rabbite, 2001). The general consensus in the literature is that although the demand for IT professionals is expanding, a corresponding supply of IT talent is lacking (Moore, 2000). There is a gap between the number of positions available for IT workers and the number of available qualified workers to fill them. It is estimated that the IS staff shortage will continue to grow on a global scale into the 21st century (Knowlton, 2000). In the USA alone, it is estimated that the IS staff shortage will grow from 200,000 in 2000 to about 1.3 million in 2005. In the USA, the gap is estimated to be between 25% and 35%. Worldwide, in 1998, the IT staff shortage gap was estimated to be between 15% and 25% or 600,000 and growing (Summit on Employment and Training in the Information Society, 2000). As the IS personnel staffing crisis deepens, many organizations are searching for appropriate mechanisms for recruiting, selecting, placing, and retaining IS professionals. Development of strategies for managing the careers of IS professionals has emerged as a critical element in the strategic use of IT in organizations.

Effective human capital management in the IS department requires an understanding of the nature of IS staff and what they experience as they accomplish their assigned duties. The rapid change in technology platforms, software development tools, and business processes that characterize the IT industry require IS employees to cope with those changes. This has created a higher incidence of job stress and burnout among IS professionals. As well
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