Organizational Commitment:
A Qualitative Assessment of Training Programs

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INTRODUCTION

In the highly competitive climate of enterprise, corporations large and small continue to feel pressure from financial stakeholders to increase return on investments. A most obvious consideration within any organization is the need to control labor costs while delivering a good or service that not only meets but exceeds customer expectations. Thus the value chain of human resource endeavors must at its core focus on the ability to recruit, train and retain an engaged workforce is critical for long-term viability of any organization.

This study sought to determine whether any connection existed between training investments in the employees and their attitudes toward their work roles and the organization. Specifically, this study sought to determine whether levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment were boosted in employees who participated in leadership development activities. Additionally, this study sought to determine if the work units to which these employees were assigned experienced any shifts in employee retention in the year following completion of the leadership development training program.

BACKGROUND

Connections between job satisfaction, commitment to the organization and organizational strategic success have long been purported. Yet the ability to directly link these constructs to one another is challenging enough that few substantial studies of success (or failure) at the firm level exist. Furthermore, studies of success or failure at the work-unit level – while more plentiful – are still not abundant. Nonetheless researchers must push forward to understand and hence articulate the need for organizational leaders to execute plans which engage followers and as such increase employee satisfaction with their roles thus bolstering their organizational commitment. Becker, Huselid, Pickus and Spratt (1997) posited that human resource management practices shaped employees' attitudes and behaviors which collectively drive operation and financial outcomes. The roles of the leaders – when transformative rather than transactional – become symbiotic with the roles of the followers, the employees. To that theme, leaders are endowed with a sort of responsibility to the individuals whose charge they are given.

Kleinrichert (2007) defines social responsibility, "as a collective moral practice that is a precondition for sustainable business" (p. 4). Kleinrichert acknowledged a number of theories and definitions of social responsibility existed but added "theories include considerations of economic, legal, social, and environmental notions of what a corporation ought to take responsibility and accountability" (2007, p. 4).

Additionally, Kleinrichert (2007) suggested human choice as a collective endeavor and corporate community involvement is necessary for a corporation to be successful in the modern economic market place.

As most citizen leaders will work for organizations or corporations, the conception of social responsible dimensions are necessary to determine the totality of a citizen leader. These citizens will practice business in a moral concept of sustainable business; this is a commitment of doing no harm to people, animals, and the environment (Kleinrichert, 2007). Many theories have been developed to define a social responsible organization. The dimensions that define a social responsible organization are:

1. Economic,
2. Legal,
3. Social, and
4. Environmental.

A corporation will take appropriate measures to ensure these dimensions work for the greater good of the local and global community, and will be accountable for the result they incur. Kleinrichert posited that human choice is a collective endeavor, and corporate community involvement is necessary for the multinational corporation to be successful in the global economic market place (2007).

For employees to commit to an organization they must trust the leadership of the organization, and leaders must trust their own employees. Humans do not trust easily (Kilburg, 2010); it takes time to establish a relationship of trust accompanied by trial and error. By practicing a co-creation of work and reflection of that work, trust will come faster, and performance will increase. This co-creation of this process, allowed the reflection of all structures and processes within the organization, which lead to increased individual performance (Kilburg, 2010).

The current workforce is concerned about the changes taking place, and the consequences of the information era and globalization; and how this will affect the economy and social structures. Workers who have dedicated their lives working for a corporation, and then find themselves replaced with either a robot or outsourcing may feel lost, depressed, isolated and have their wealth depleted (Blustein, 2006). This played out during the recent recession of 2008, when many people were laid off from jobs where they worked for 20 years, and were close to retirement, but not close enough to retire.

This unknown fear can be addressed with trust, respect, and clear and concise messaging. Every organization has a complex set of rituals designed to give employees direction, however, these can generate emotions and resistance to change, and may cause fear, and fear and may impact commitment. For learning and professional development it is important to recognize this in groups and individuals, and lead them in a positive direction. For this reason it is for leaders to have clarity on the choices and actions they take. The creation of dialogue without clarity leads to breakdowns in all areas (Kilburg, 2010). The same may be said of a failure to commit to organizational development.

Corporate social responsibility has many facets especially as it pertains to stakeholders. Instrumental stakeholder theory suggests principles such as trust, trustworthiness and cooperatives combine to create competitive advantage for an organization (Jones, 1995).

Leaders influenced the motivation of their followers and increased unit performance beyond original expectations by purposefully using idealized influence to motivate and engage the followers (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Idealized influence, according to Kark, Shamir and Chen (2003) included such behaviors as leading by example, modeling high ethical standards, and sacrificing for the advantage of others. The leader pushes followers to assess problems in unconventional ways, to seek novel resolutions, and to stretch performance to levels that are beyond what was previously considered possible (Nahavandi, 2003).

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