Chapter XX

Organizational Commitment in the IS Workplace: An Empirical Investigation of Its Antecedents and Implications

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Information systems (IS) technology has become a strategic resource for most organizations to compete successfully in today's highly uncertain marketplace. One critical component of this strategic resource is the IS human resource. Unlike many other professions, IS professionals historically displayed a much higher rate of turnover due to rapid technological changes, job stress and emerging employment opportunities. Such excessive turnover can be very costly to the organization in terms of costs of recruiting and retraining and the loss of systems development productivity. Therefore, maintaining a qualified and stable body of IS staff has been continually ranked among the most important issues for the successful functioning of IS departments. However, this important IS human resource management issue has not received enough empirical research attention within the IS management literature. The current study attempts to fill this gap by empirically examining the relationships among a set of organizational and psychological factors (i.e., management support, degree of IS control, IS strategic significance, role stressors) and the

organizational commitment of IS managers. Empirical data was collected through large-scale questionnaire survey. The rigorous statistical method of LISREL path analysis was used. Results show that these variables are closely related to each other, which provides valuable insights for organizations to more effectively manage their IS human resource.

INTRODUCTION

Information systems (IS) technology is drastically changing every aspect of our lives as well as that of organizations. Organizations are increasingly dependent on IS technology to obtain market information, design and produce products, keep in contact with customers, and manage business operations (McGee & Prusak, 1993). The recent success of Internet-based electronic commerce technology has further integrated modern IS technologies into organizations' daily life (Timmers, 1999). Forrester Research (1998) estimates that U.S. business electronic commence will explode from $43 billion in 1998 to $1.3 trillion in 2003. In many industries, IS has emerged from a traditional supportive function to a strategic resource that may finally determine the firms' competitive capability (Sabherwal & King, 1995).

While the introduction of new IS technology offers strategic advantages to organizations, it may often incur negative effects on IS human resource management. For example, the widespread adoption of enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems requires companies to devote significant human resource to system implementation, support and maintenance (Callaway, 1999). Because of the complexity, high cost, limited project time-frame, and high expectations of ERP systems, IS personnel involved in the project are commonly under extreme pressure (Bingi, Sharma & Godla, 1999). Meanwhile, the introduction of such systems often requires reengineering the original IS structure through networking and downsizing (Benjamin & Levinson, 1993; Teng, Grover & Fiedler, 1994). These changes, coupled with the increased knowledge, awareness and demands of IS users, have considerably altered IS professionals' work environment, thus creating the potential for increased job stress (Thong & Yap, 2000). Job stress in turn profoundly alters IS staff's commitment to the organization and their motivation to stay with the organization (King & Sethi, 1997).

Maintaining a qualified and stable body of IS staff has been continually ranked among the most critical factors for successful functioning of IS departments (Brancheau, Janz & Wetherbe, 1996; Terry, 2001). However, it is shown that the turnover rate among IS professionals is consistently high and often exceeds 20% (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1997), which results in a turnover of almost half the IS personnel every 2 years. To organizations, such excessive turnover can be very costly in terms of costs of recruiting and retraining, loss of systems development productivity, lower staff morale, and erosion of corporate memory (Igbaria, Meredith & Smith, 1994; Lee, 2000). Experts estimate that it can cost as much as two and a half times an employee's salary to replace him or her considering all tangible and

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