

Chapter 13

Attracting and Retaining ICT Professionals in Brazilian Companies: Expectancies, Learning, and Gender in the Workplace

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ABSTRACT

Although attracting and retaining the best professionals is of utmost importance for Human Resource Management and Information Technology Management in a company, this issue seems to be even more critical in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) industry because the number of qualified workers is chronically not meeting the needs of this ever growing market.

As a result, it is necessary to deepen the understanding of the expectancies that drive professionals working in ICT companies. Therefore, this chapter focuses on identifying the differences and similarities on expectancies of professionals in ICT (ICTs) and in non-ICT (non-ICTs) Brazilian companies. To attain this goal, a new conceptual model to assess expectancy was developed that is grounded in the literature review. This framework was used to statistically compare proportions of expectancy, learning and development, and gender for ICTs and non-ICTs. Brazil was selected as a target case for the study because it is a dynamic and growing ICT market, both from the domestic and foreign viewpoint. A survey of 550 domestic and multinational companies running business in Brazil was conducted, totaling 142,913 responses (from which 107,464 were valid).

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Results show that ICT professionals consider learning and development the most important expectancy in the workplace, followed by satisfaction and motivation. Women in ICT companies consider the learning and development expectancy much more important than their peers in non-ICT companies, and even more than men in both ICT and non-ICT companies. For HR and IT managers, this chapter provides some insights on what expectancy variables could be better explored and exploited to attract and retain IT professionals.

INTRODUCTION

No matter the industry, attracting and retaining top professionals is a major concern for Human Resources Management (HRM) and Information Technology (IT) Management. This is even truer for IT organizations, which contain perhaps the archetypal *knowledge workers* (Drucker, 1999; Castells, 1999).

Moreover, the IT profession is chronically suffering from a shortage of experienced workers; the number of qualified candidates currently in the marketplace and those being trained in Universities and Technical Schools are not meeting the needs of this huge and growing market. Whenever the demand increases—as was the case during the dot com boom and the Y2K bug—shortage of top IT professionals becomes evident. In this situation, how can IT organizations be capable of attracting and retaining the best talent?

Companies are currently adopting a number of policies and initiatives to attain this goal. However, are these policies and initiatives meeting employees' expectancies? Employees have expectancies regarding the workplace, and these expectancies can or cannot be in line with what the company provides.

Consequently, measuring up to these expectancies must be a desired target for both HRM and IT Management because the higher this fulfillment, the better a company can attract and retain talent. However, how can companies fulfill these expectancies if they do not know how to measure them?

This troublesome challenge is somewhat complicated because, in several occasions, individuals

are inhibited from expressing themselves—HRM provides no means of communication, a direct boss has different values, the organizational culture is divergent from their opinions etc., and thus they find it difficult to communicate their expectancies to the organization.

On the one hand, even if some research has been conducted to define expectancy, in general, literature fails to propose an accepted definition. On the other hand, it is not surprising that IT professionals prioritize different expectancies than those not in the IT industry. As a result, it is of utmost importance to identify what these differences are and deepen the discussion on how to fulfill the gap between companies' initiatives and the expectancies of their employees.

In this context, this chapter aims at identifying the differences and similarities between expectancies of IT professionals in Brazilian ICT companies when compared to workers in companies in other industries. One specific expectancy, learning and development, will be further discussed because there is evidence that this is an important expectancy for knowledge workers (Nakata, 2009). Moreover, the gender issue will also be investigated deeper because literature showed that men and women may hold different expectancies (Bruschini, 2000, Scott, 1990).

Empirical research was conducted to comply with these goals because the better ICT companies understand their employees' motivations, the better management can act to fulfill these expectancies.

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