

12.14: Job Fitness and Performance

Learning Objectives

- Explain the concept of “fitness” within an organization.
- Explain the influence of common factors (such as work-life balance, stress, interpersonal relationships, attitudes, work ethic) on job performance.

Hiring new people is expensive, so organizations look for any edge to improve performance and retention. They want new hires to “fit” into this new environment. According to Dr. Kerry L. Schofield of Good&Co, “Research shows that workers who have good cultural fit to their organization are a third more productive, three times more creative and almost 90% less likely to quit. Cultural fit accounts overall for around two-thirds of the differences between people in both job satisfaction and performance. Poor fit is estimated to cost US industry \$15 billion a year; 86% of new hires that fail within a month do so because of this.”^[1]

Person-environment fit is the degree to which a person’s personality, values, and other characteristics match those of the company’s. A strong culture and shared values among coworkers can lead to a good fit. This can translate to increased levels of trust and a shared sense of corporate community.^[2] For the organization, this means reduced turnover, increased citizenship behaviors, and organizational commitment.^[3]

Person-job fit measures how a person’s knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics match the job demands. This is sometimes abbreviated as KSAO within the HR field. Someone who is conscientious and prefers routine may be the right fit at a power plant, while someone who is innovative and proactive may do well at a technology startup.

Consider the varied ideas in this chapter and your own experience with work, and you’ll see that this is a complex topic. Attempts to measure person-environment fit or person-job fit have had mixed results. More recent work suggests the relationships are not linear. For example, the performance of a misfit is not much different than that of an average person. But the performance of a person who is a strong fit is much better than an average person.

Practice Question

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Organizations Have Their Own Culture

As you’ve learned in a previous module, every organization promotes and has a particular culture. That culture may be healthy or unhealthy, but either way it has a strong influence on the performance and productivity of its members. Organizations that actively embrace the concept of organizational culture have an opportunity to intentionally shape that culture into a productive force.

Healthy Environment, Productive Employees

The benefits of a generally healthy culture and atmosphere within an organization are manifold and significant. The basic idea is summarized in the concept that a healthy environment results in productive employees. An unhealthy organizational culture leads to lower job satisfaction, worse attitudes, less productivity, increased levels of absenteeism, higher rates of employee turnover, and many other undesirable results. An organization can follow some strategies to promote a healthy work environment.

Managing Employee Stress Levels

Many of the negative results of an unhealthy environment are closely tied to high levels of stress, so many of the specific considerations here have significant ties to stress levels. In many ways, stress levels can become a helpful overall indicator of how healthy the organizational environment is. At the very least, high stress levels should serve as a warning sign that things need to change.

The reality is that stress is a part of life. Attempting to remove all stress would not be realistic, and chances are that it would not be healthy, either. An appropriate level of stress may actually be an essential part of a healthy environment. Stress may be an inherent part of the opportunity to achieve difficult and worthwhile goals that bring fulfillment. If there is no challenge or difficulty, there may be little to no satisfaction or sense of achievement either.

One approach to dealing with stress in the workplace is to train employees to manage their stress. Programs and resources for stress management can be helpful, but if stress levels are unreasonably high, organizations need to do more than try to help employees manage stress. Instead, they need to focus on changing the basic system and the forces in their organization that are causing those unhealthy levels of stress.

Work-Life Balance

One of the major issues that organizations and employees face is the difficulty in finding balance between work and personal life. It is not possible to separate those two areas completely, as problems or stress in one area strongly affect the other. Further, the two areas often compete with one another for individuals' time, energy, and attention. This leads to conflict and stress, which in turn causes lower performance levels on the job.



Some companies provide child care services to help employees manage their work and personal life balance.

Organizations realize that this is not a beneficial situation, and there are many things they can do to support the right balance between work and life. One of the most obvious is to limit expectations to reasonable levels of work commitment each week. Overloading employees and demanding an unreasonable portion of their time and energy inevitably leads to difficulties. Along these same lines, providing ample vacation time has also been identified as a wise policy that prevents employee burnout and increases productivity in the long run.

Many organizations are also increasingly open to the use of flexible hours for employees. Where possible, this allows employees the freedom to adapt their work schedules to the needs of their personal and family lives. Similarly, many organizations allow employees to do at least some of their work from home or other remote locations. Finding ways to accommodate family needs results in happier, more productive employees.

Interpersonal Relationships

Another major area of concern for a healthy work environment is the nature of the interpersonal relationships employees have. Because members of an organization spend a lot of time together and must collaborate with each other, often closely, how these relationships function is important.

On the negative side, interpersonal conflict can become a major obstacle to productivity. Being aware of such situations and having plans for resolving tensions and disagreements are essential to the goal of maintaining a healthy environment.

Ideally, the goal for interpersonal relationships is deeper than merely avoiding major conflict. If employees develop strong relationships of friendship and respect, the organization is likely to reap the benefits. Employees will work together better, enjoy their time together better, and be much less likely to want to leave the organization. For this reason, some organizations invest in providing social opportunities to build those relationships.

Health, Relaxation, and Entertainment

When considering how to create a healthy environment for employees, the whole person should be considered in its various aspects. For example, one area of increasing focus for businesses is the physical health of their employees. Organizations have realized that physically healthy employees are more productive. They have more energy and miss fewer days for sickness and health care issues. Companies often offer health-related incentives and create programs that promote physical well-being among their employees.



Company fitness centers are places for employees to relieve stress and improve physical health.

Along these same lines, many companies find it beneficial to provide certain types of extracurricular facilities for their employees. These might include fitness rooms, entertainment rooms, sports facilities, nap rooms, and other areas that are not directly tied to work matters. Even the simple act of beautifying the workplace can aid in creating a happier, more positive atmosphere.

Personal and Professional Development



Can you envision how providing a program such as chess training could be beneficial to an organization?

Another final area we will consider along these lines is that of personal and professional development. It makes sense for businesses to invest time and resources into building and developing employee skills and strengths. On a professional level, increasing employee skills and understanding strengthens the business. Many companies will help fund employees' education who want to pursue advanced degrees or certifications in their field. Training seminars and programs can also be useful tools for professional development.

Though it might not seem to be as directly related to business goals, investing in the personal development of employees also benefits the organization. This type of development could still be related to professional functions, such as programs that help develop leadership skills or seminars that train employees in how to manage interpersonal communication skills. These would have obvious practical value in most organizational settings. Even if personal development programs do not have direct application to the workplace, helping employees become well-rounded individuals and reach stability and fulfillment in their personal lives will always provide a carryover benefit to the organization.

? ? Practice Question

<https://assessments.lumenlearning.co...essments/12293>

1. Schofield, D. K. (2016, July 22). Gen Y and Workplace "Fit". Retrieved September 06, 2017, from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-kerry-l-schofield/gen-y-and-workplace-fit_b_11118852.html↵
2. Boon, C., & Den Hartog, D. N. (2011). Human Resource Management, Person–Environment Fit and Trust. *Trust and Human Resource Management*, 109-121. doi:10.4337/9780857932006.00013 ↵
3. Andrews, M. C., Baker, T., & Hunt, T. G. (2011). Values and person–organization fit: Does moral intensity strengthen outcomes? *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 32(1), 5-19. doi:10.1108/01437731111099256 ↵

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