

3.4: Work-Related Attitudes

5. How can managers and organizations develop a committed workforce?

When we apply the concept of attitudes to work settings, we have to specify which attitude we are concerned with. Although a variety of work-related attitudes can be identified, the one receiving the most attention is job satisfaction. As this is one of the most widely studied concepts in organizational behavior, we will examine it here in some detail.

Job Involvement and Organizational Commitment

First, however, we should introduce two job attitudes that should also be recognized: job involvement and organizational commitment. **Job involvement** refers to the extent to which a person is interested in and committed to assigned tasks. This is not to say that the person is “happy” (or satisfied) with the job, only that he feels a certain responsibility toward ensuring that the job itself is done correctly and with a high standard of competence. Here the focus of the attitude is the job itself.³⁰

Organizational commitment, on the other hand, represents the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in an organization.³¹ Commitment can be characterized by three factors: (1) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization’s goals and values, (2) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and (3) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization. When viewed this way, commitment represents something beyond mere passive loyalty to the company. Instead, it involves an active relationship with the organization in which individuals are willing to give something of themselves in order to help the company succeed and prosper. A careful reading of the research on keys to the success of many Japanese firms will highlight the importance played by a committed work force. Now we turn to the third work attitude of job satisfaction.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction may be defined as “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experience.”³² It results from the perception that an employee’s job actually provides what he values in the work situation.

Several characteristics of the concept of job satisfaction follow from this definition. First, satisfaction is an emotional response to a job situation. It can be fully understood only by introspection. As with any attitude, we cannot observe satisfaction; we must infer its existence and quality either from an employee’s behavior or verbal statements.

Second, job satisfaction is perhaps best understood in terms of discrepancy. Several writers have pointed to the concept of job satisfaction as being a result of how much a person wants or expects from the job compared to how much he actually receives.³³ People come to work with varying levels of job expectations. These expectations may vary not only in quality (different people may value different things in a job), but also in intensity. On the basis of work experiences, people receive outcomes (rewards) from the job. These include not only extrinsic rewards, such as pay and promotion, but also a variety of intrinsic rewards, such as satisfying coworker relations and meaningful work. To the extent that the outcomes received by an employee meet or exceed expectations, we would expect the employee to be satisfied with the job and wish to remain. On those occasions when outcomes actually surpass expectations, we would expect employees to reevaluate their expectations and probably raise them to meet available outcomes. However, when outcomes do not meet expectations, employees are dissatisfied and may prefer to seek alternative sources of satisfaction, either by changing jobs or by placing greater value on other life activities, such as outside recreation.

Dimensions of Job Satisfaction. It has been argued that job satisfaction actually represents several related attitudes. So, when we speak of satisfaction, we must specify “satisfaction with what?” Research has suggested that five job dimensions represent the most salient characteristics of a job about which people have affective responses. These five are:

1. **Work itself.** The extent to which tasks performed by employees are interesting and provide opportunities for learning and for accepting responsibility.
2. **Pay.** The amount of pay received, the perceived equity of the pay, and the method of payment.
3. **Promotional opportunities.** The availability of realistic opportunities for advancement.
4. **Supervision.** The technical and managerial abilities of supervisors; the extent to which supervisors demonstrate consideration for and interest in employees.
5. **Coworkers.** The extent to which coworkers are friendly, technically competent, and supportive.

Although other dimensions of job satisfaction have been identified, these five dimensions are used most often when assessing various aspects of job attitudes in organizations.

Measurement of Job Satisfaction. Probably the most common attitude surveys in organizations today focus on job satisfaction. Satisfaction is considered by many managers to be an important indicator of organizational effectiveness, and therefore it is regularly monitored to assess employee feelings toward the organization. By far the most common means of assessing satisfaction is the rating scale. Rating scales represent direct verbal self-reports concerning employee feelings; they have been widely used in companies since the 1930s. Several job satisfaction scales exist. One of the most popular is the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ). This instrument uses a Likert-response format to generate satisfaction scores on 26 scales, including satisfaction with compensation, promotion opportunities, coworkers, recognition, and so forth. You can assess your scoring on a short version of this instrument in the assessment section of this chapter.

The MSQ and similar rating scales have several advantages for evaluating levels of job satisfaction. First, they are relatively short and simple and can be completed by large numbers of employees quickly. Second, because of the generalized wording of the various terms, the instruments can be administered to a wide range of employees in various jobs. It is not necessary to alter the questionnaire for each job classification. Finally, extensive normative data (or norms) are available. These norms include summaries of the scores of thousands of people who have completed the instruments. Hence, it is possible for employers in other organizations to determine relative standings.

However, although rating scales have many virtues compared to other techniques, at least two drawbacks must be recognized. First, as with any self-report inventory, it is assumed that respondents are both willing and able to describe their feelings accurately. As noted by several researchers,³⁴ people often consciously or unconsciously distort information that they feel is damaging and enhance information that they feel is beneficial. For example, it is possible that employees who think their supervisors may see the results of their questionnaire may report overly favorable job attitudes.

A second problem with rating scales is the underlying assumption that questionnaire items mean the same thing to all people. There may, in fact, not be a common interpretation across individuals. Even so, rating scales have proved to be helpful in assessing satisfaction in various aspects of the job situation. Managers can use the results to identify potential problem areas and to generate discussions and action plans of how to correct aspects of jobs or the organization that are causing unacceptable levels of dissatisfaction.

customer satisfaction and quality

How Satisfied Are Employees?

If you've ever flown on Southwest Airlines, you can tell something is different just from the first interaction with their employees. From the flight attendants, to the pilot's announcements, and even to their customer service representatives, they have a cheerful disposition, and contrary to popular belief, this isn't an act.

In 2017, Southwest Airlines announced that it would be sharing their \$586 million in profits with its 54,000 employees, given them a bonus of approximately 13.2 percent on average. This doesn't account for the extra \$351 million that they contributed to the employee's 401(k) plans either. This is just one of the many ways that Southwest has given back to their employees in a day and age when minimum wage for even qualified candidates seems like a fight.

Southwest CEO Gary Kelly reflects that "Our people-first approach, which has guided our company since it was founded, means our company does well, our people do really, really well. Our people work incredibly hard and deserve to share in Southwest's success." With this attitude, it is no wonder the employees on and off your flight are showing their satisfaction in their everyday attitudes. The year 2017 was the 43rd year that Southwest shared its profits with their people. While compensation ranks among one of the most attributed traits of a company to help with employee satisfaction, it goes much deeper than that to keep motivation high.

At Southwest, they rank employees first and customers second. They create a culture of fun and inclusive core values that help to give their employees a sense of community and belonging. When their employees are motivated and take pride in what they do, they are able to give their best to their customers every day, which accounts for their highly ranked customer satisfaction results on surveys each year.

Sources: Dahl, Darren, "Why do Southwest Employees Always Seem so Happy," *Forbes*, July, 28, 2017, www.forbes.com/sites/darrend...loyees-always-seem-so-happy/#3cba8dbc59b0; Martin, Emmie, "A major airline says there's

something it values more than its customers, and there's a good reason why," *Business Insider*, July 29, 2015, <https://www.businessinsider.com/southwest-first-2015-7>; Ramdas, Shreesha, "The Southwest Way to Employee Satisfaction: Flying High Like the High Flier," *Customer Think*, May 12, 2018, (<http://customerthink.com/the-southwest-way-like-the-high-flier/>).

Questions:

1. Oftentimes it is hard to stay at the top. What considerations should Southwest take to maintain their employee satisfaction and keep improving?
2. Not all companies can share profits. What would you suggest to a new company that is just starting off to help gain high employee satisfaction?

concept check

1. How can organizations foster positive job involvement and instill positive attitudes in their employees?
2. What are the dimensions of job satisfaction?

-
30. T. Lodahl and M. Kejner, "The Definition and Measurement of Job Involvement," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 1965, 49, pp. 24–33.
 31. R. T. Mowday, L. W. Porter, and R. M. Steers, *Employee-Organization Linkages: The Psychology of Employee Commitment, Absenteeism and Turnover* (New York: Academic Press, 1982).
 32. E. A. Locke, "The Nature and Causes of Job Satisfaction," in M. D. Dunnette, ed., *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1976).
 33. L. W. Porter and R. M. Steers, "Organizational, Work, and Personal Factors in Employee Turnover and Absenteeism," *Psychological Bulletin*, 1973, 80, pp. 151–176.
 34. B. M. Staw, *Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation* (Morristown, N. J.: General Learning Press, 1976)
-

This page titled [3.4: Work-Related Attitudes](#) is shared under a [CC BY](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [OpenStax](#).