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Employee Fit & Satisfaction Study

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Employee Fit & Satisfaction Study

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Purpose of the Study

Maintaining high employee satisfaction is important for both financial and ethical reasons. High employee satisfaction has been shown to be correlated with lower turnover, higher customer satisfaction and higher production, all of which have financial implications. Organizations who truly value their employees will also be concerned that their employees, who spend most of their lives at work, are satisfied with their work world. This study provides guidance for how an organization might increase it employees' levels of satisfaction.

This study was designed to examine the impact of fit on satisfaction in the workplace. Two types of fit were studied: 1) the fit between people's abilities and the demands of their jobs, called person-job or P-J fit; and 2) the fit between people and their superior's (supervisors, managers, directors or "boss") called person-superior or P-S fit. Three aspects of employee satisfaction were evaluated: satisfaction with current job roles; satisfaction with superiors; and satisfaction with working at an organization in general. It was hypothesized that the better each particular type of fit was, the greater would be the satisfaction for that domain.

Methods of Date Collection & Analysis

Both surveys and interviews were used to collect the data. The part of the survey used to evaluate satisfaction was drawn from three scales of the JDI, Job Descriptive Index, the most frequently used employee job satisfaction survey (Balzer et al., 1997). The three JDI scales were: 1) satisfaction with the job itself; 2) satisfaction with the superior; and 3) global satisfaction with the organization.

The survey also requested demographic information along with self perceptions of the employees' sense of fit with their job roles, their perspectives on their time horizons (TH), and their judgments regarding the time span of discretion of their job roles (TSD). (*See definitions at end of paper.*) TSD was used to judge level of complexity of the role and TH indicated the ability to handle certain levels of complexity.

Interviews with superiors, anyone overseeing another's work, were also used to determine the superior's perception of fit of those whose work they oversaw and to obtain their judgments regarding TH and TSD. The researcher had been coach by Dr. Jaques in the interview process.

Past research using the JDI indicates that several variables have had a significant impact on satisfaction (Balzer et al., 1997). To control for these variables, age, and managerial status were included as covariates in the study. Because there were several independent and dependent variables along with multiple covariates MANCOVA, multivariate analysis of covariance, was used to analyze the data.

Participants

Participants by Department

The Human Resource Department participated in the pilot study in order to evaluate the survey prior to wider distribution. The revised survey was distributed to the employees in the three departments who volunteered to participate: Resident Life, General Services and Dining Services. The decision to participate on the individual level in the study was also voluntary. Table 1 reports survey response rates by department.

Department	Total employees eligible for study*	Useable surveys collected	Response Rate	Percent of total surveys by department
Resident Life	28	28	100%	17%
General Services	154	54	35%	34%
Dining Services	155	79	51%	49%
TOTAL	337	161	48%	100%

 Table 1 - Participants by Department

* The sample was restricted to adults 18 and over.

Interviews with 41 supervisors, managers and directors from these three departments were also conducted.

Demographics of Participants

According to the survey, 66 or 41% of the respondents were male, 87 or 54% were female, while 8 (5%) did not indicate gender. Ages of the participants ranged from 18 (min. required) to 74 with the average age of 37. Thirty five of the survey respondents or 22% manage or supervise others. The frequency of each race responding to the survey is reported in Table 2.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
African/African American	36	22.4	24.2
Asian	16	9.9	10.7
Caucasian	56	34.8	37.6
Hispanic	24	14.9	16.1
Other	17	10.6	11.4
Subtotal	149	92.5	100.0
Missing	12	7.5	
Total	161	100.0	

Table 2 - Descriptive Statistics on Race of Origin

Results

Degrees of Fit (IV)

Two types of fit were evaluated in this study: 1) how the person fit his/her job role (P-J fit) and 2) how the person fit with his/her superior (P-S fit). Additionally, there were two ways of evaluating the fits. *Direct* measures of fit were obtained by asking the person or the superior if the person's abilities fit the demands of the job role. Fit was also calculated based on TH and TSD data collected from the surveys and interviews. The calculated measures of fit are called *indirect*.

Direct Fit

Direct judgments of fit were requested only for P-J fit. Of those who answered the

question, most people felt the job was just right for them (68%) whereas superiors more often thought the jobs were too easy for the people they supervised (47%).

Direct P-J Fit Judged by:	Job too hard	Job just right	Job too easy	Ν	Missing
Superior	29	55	75	159	14 (8%)
% of answers	18%	35%	47%	100%	
Person	11	99	35	145	28 (16%)
% of answers	8%	68%	24%	100%	

Table 3 - Direct P-J Fit

Indirect Fits

<u>**P-J Fit:</u>** Whether people's abilities fit their job roles or not was calculated by comparing if a person's TH matched the TSD of their role. Based on the data collected from the superiors, over half (52%) of the employees fit their job roles well. Calculations of fit based on data provided by the person revealed 40% fit their roles; however, the response rate was only 38% rendering these calculations invalid.</u>

Table 4 - Indirect P-J Fit

Indirect P-J Fit Based on data from:	Job too hard	Job just right	Job too easy	N	Missing/173
Superior	14	85	63	162	11 (6%)
% of answers	9%	52%	39%	100%	
Person	16	26	23	65	108 (62%)
% of answers	25%	40%	35%	100%	

P-S Fit: Whether a person fit with their superior or not was determined by if the superior's ability to handle complexity, measured by time horizon (TH), was one and only one level above the person's ability, again measured by TH. Based on the data collected from the superiors, only 25% of the employees had superiors whose TH was one and only one level above their own, 40% of the employees had superiors who were too low for them and 35% had superiors whose TH was too far above them. Though there was not enough data collected from the persons themselves (only 13%) to make valid judgments, according to this data, 65% of the employees had superiors whose TH were too low for them. A confounding issue in evaluating P-S fit was that there was only a 72% consistency between who the person said was their boss or superior and who the superior said they supervised.

Table 5 - Indirect P-S Fit

Indirect P-S Fit Based on data from:	Superior too low	Superior just right	Superior too high	N	Missing Out of 173
Superior	61	38	54	153	20 (12%)
% of answers	40%	25%	35%	100%	
Person	15	4	4	23	150 (87%)
% of answers	65%	17.5%	17.5%	100%	

Levels of Satisfaction (DV)

Three JDI scales were used to evaluate satisfaction, two facet scales and one global: 1) satisfaction with the job itself (facet); 2) satisfaction with the superior (facet); and 3) global

satisfaction with the organization. Comparing the three areas of satisfaction, the participants in the study were most satisfied with working at the organization in general (average score of 74) and least satisfied with their specific job roles (average score of 66.5). Satisfaction with their superiors (to whomever they reported) fell between these two (average score of 70). Table 6 provides the statistics for each type of satisfaction.

	Satisfaction with					
	Job Itself (JDI)	Superior (JDI)	Job in General (JIG)			
Valid Surveys (N)	159	158	160			
Missing	14	15	13			
Average/Mean	66.53	70.17	74.09			
Middle/Median	68.00	75.00	75.00			
Most frequent/ Mode	62	81	81			
Std. Deviation	12.27	15.34	11.58			
Minimum	20	29	28			
Maximum	90	90	90			

 Table 6 - Descriptive Statistics for Satisfaction

Impact of Fit on Satisfaction

It was anticipated that this study would show that greater the P-J fit the greater the job satisfaction, the greater the P-S fit the greater the satisfaction with the superior, and that both P-J fit and P-S fit would positively impact global satisfaction with the workplace. These hypotheses were generally supported throughout the study with significant relationships found between fit and satisfaction in three areas: 1) P-J fit and satisfaction with the job itself; 2) P-S fit and satisfaction with the superior; and 3) P-J fit and general satisfaction with the work place.

1) P-J fit and satisfaction with the job itself

People whose personal abilities, as measured by ones ability to handles varying levels of complexity, fit the demands of their job roles were more satisfied with their roles than those who did not. Three of the four measures of P-J fit (P-J Direct by person; P-J Direct by Superior; P-J Indirect by Superior) demonstrated a significant relationship between P-J fit and satisfaction. The univariate tests for between-subject effects were then conducted with results found in Table 7.

IV		DV	Sat w/Job Itself F (Sig.)	Sat w/ Superior F (Sig.)	Sat in General F (Sig.)
P-J Fit	Indirect	Superior	5.632 (.005**)	1.295 (.278)	.485 (.617)
P-J Fit	Direct	Superior	2.085 (.129)	.213 (.808)	.714 (.492)
P-J Fit	Direct	Person	8.047 (.001**)	1.312 (.273)	5.313 (.006**)

Table 7- ANCOVA Results

The relationship between P-J fit and satisfaction was strongest when P-J fit was evaluated by the person's self perception of fit (direct). It is interesting to note that people who felt their jobs were too easy for them were basically just as dissatisfied as those who felt their jobs were too hard for them. Figure 1 illustrates this relationship while Table 8 provides the statistics to support it.



Figure 1 - Estimated Means of Role Satisfaction for P-J Fit Direct by Person

Direct evaluation of P-J fit by person.

P-J Fit Direct	Mean	Std Error	95% Confidence Interval		
by Person	INICALL	Lower Bound		Upper Bound	
a, too hard	59.5	3.313	52.996	66.095	
b, just right	70	1.110	67.949	72.337	
c, too easy	60.8	1.857	57.128	64.472	

Table 8 - Estimated Means of Job Satisfaction Scores for P-J Fit Direct by Person

2) P-S fit and satisfaction with the superior

People whose superior's ability to handle complexity was one and only one level above their own ability to handle complexity were more satisfied with their superiors than employees who had superiors who were at their same level or lower. Employees with superiors who had the ability to handle complexity more than one level higher than their own were also less satisfied with their superiors but this was not a significant difference. The relationship between P-S fit and satisfaction with the superior was strongest when the fit was calculated (indirect) based on data from the superior (λ [Roy's largest Root] = .097, $F_{3,112}$ = 2.945, p = .036). The follow-up univariate test indicated that the P-S fit/indirect/superior was significantly correlated with satisfaction with the superior ($F_{2,113} = 4.370$, p = .015) while there was no significant relationship between P-S fit and either satisfaction with the job itself or overall satisfaction. The post hoc analysis shows that persons who have a superior below the prescribe one stratum above their own stratum have significantly lower satisfaction with one's superior than do persons who have a superior that is at the "ideal" level. Figure 2 demonstrates this relationship while Table 9 provides the supporting statistics.



Figure 2 - Estimated Means of Satisfaction with Superior for P-S Fit Indirect

Table 9 - Estimated Means of Satisfaction with Superior Scores for P-S Fit Indirect

P-S Fit by	Moon	Std Error	95% Confide	ence Interval
Superior	Wean	Stu. Entor	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Superior Below Ideal for Person	68	1.867	64.505	71.888
Perfect Fit	76	2.267	71.466	80.428
Superior Above Ideal for Person	72	1.996	67.870	75.763

3) General Satisfaction with the Work Place.

Satisfaction with the overall workplace was evaluated but there were no judgments made of how the person fit the overall workplace, which is commonly known as person-organization fit (P-O fit). P-O fit is generally based on having common values with the organization rather than on abilities as was the case with P-J and P-S fit. Satisfaction with the organization was highest among people who felt the job was just right for their abilities. In fact, these people felt even more satisfied with the workplace in general than they had with the job itself. They also felt significantly more satisfied with working at this organization than those who felt the job was too hard for them. There was not a significant difference in satisfaction between those who felt their jobs were too easy for them. Figure 3 shows the relationship between self perception of P-J fit and general satisfaction. Table 10 provides the supporting statistics.





Table 10 - Estimated Means of General Satisfaction with P-J Fit Direct by Self

P-J Fit by Person -	Moon	Std Error	95% Confidence Interval				
Direct	Iviean	Slu. Ellui	Lower Bound	Upper Bound			
a, too hard	65	3.090	58.892	71.108			
b, just right	77	1.035	74.943	79.036			
c, too easy	72	1.732	68.604	75.453			

Conclusion

According to this study, certain types of fit impact certain types of satisfaction. P-J fit, as judged directly by the person and indirectly by the superior, primarily impacts satisfaction with the job itself but additionally has a lesser but significant impact on satisfaction with the work place in general. The fit between a person's abilities and their boss's or superior's abilities (P-S fit), with the superior being one level higher than the person, impacts satisfaction with the superior. It is important to note that P-S fit only impacts satisfaction with the superior. P-S does not seem to effect satisfaction with either the job itself or general satisfaction with the work place.

This study also demonstrated the influence of the method of data collection on the results. It was difficult to get accurate information via the survey regarding TH and TSD (low correlation between two questions per topic). Interviews proved a much more reliable source of data for TH and TSD (significant correlation between both direct and indirect means). Surveys did, however, seem to produce clear judgments of how people felt their abilities fit the demands of their job (P-J fit – direct – demands-ability).

Recommendations

Maintaining high employee satisfaction is important for both financial and ethical reasons. High employee satisfaction has been shown to be correlated with lower turnover, higher customer satisfaction and higher production, all of which have financial implications. Organizations who truly value their employees will also be concerned that their employees, who spend most of their lives at work, are satisfied with their work world. This study provides guidance for how an organization might increase it employees' levels of satisfaction.

Satisfaction with the Workplace in General

Comparing the three types of satisfaction evaluated in this study, employee satisfaction was highest for working at the organization in general. People were least satisfied with their roles but slightly more satisfied with their superiors. Perhaps people stay at this location because of a fit with the organizational culture rather than because they fit their jobs or their superiors. This may be particularly true for non profit and NGO organizations where people stay due to a commitment to the organization's mission. If so, job retention, and perhaps organizational effectiveness, might be significantly improved if job roles and reporting hierarchies were adjusted to increase P-J and P-S fit. Since employees are already quite satisfied with the organization at large this could be particularly beneficial in this situation.

Improving P-J Fit

One means of increasing P-J fit is to first make sure that the majority of tasks in a particular job role fit within one level of complexity (*See Table 11, p. 10*). Level of complexity of a task can be identified by measuring its time-span of discretion (TSD). The next step would be to match the person's TH with the TSD of the role. Having a P-J fit results in greater satisfaction since research has shown that people are most satisfied when working in roles with appropriate degrees of challenge-not too much, not too little.

Interestingly, people for whom the job was too easy were basically just as dissatisfied as those for whom the job was too hard. While the organization may benefit in the short run from having over-capable people in a role, the long run results can be just as detrimental for the agency since low satisfaction is connected with turnover. Of course, there may be cases where a person may choose for various reasons to be under-employed, but it still would benefit the company and the employee to put each person's abilities to the greatest use possible and increase satisfaction.

Improving P-S Fit

The first step in improving P-S fit is to establish a P-J fit for everyone. The next step is to structure the reporting relationships so that the boss's ability to handle complexity is one and only one level above the persons they oversee. The ability to handle complexity is evaluated by a person's time horizon (TH), that is, his or her ability to work into the future. If it is necessary for one superior to oversee people in more than one stratum/level, make sure that the superior is too high for those they oversee rather than too low. This is important since the study showed that satisfaction is lowest with superiors who are too low in ability but not significantly lower if the superior is too high.

In order to establish the P-S fit it is essential that the boss/superior of each employee be clear. The 28% discrepancies between self-report and superior report regarding reporting relationships show that knowing who your boss is, is a real issue for this organization. Jaques' belief is that this discrepancy occurs most often when the superior is too low and the person does

not consider them worthy to be counted as their boss. Jaques also recommends that with shift work there be only one boss regardless of shift even though there will need to be team leaders when the boss is absent. Clarifying who reports to who could substantially increase P-S fit and, in turn, satisfaction with the superior.

In summary, this study demonstrated that P-J fit accounts for a unique sense of satisfaction with the job itself while P-S fit seems to impact satisfaction with one superior. In this study P-J fit also correlated with a global satisfaction with the workplace in general. This study serves to extend both the satisfaction and fit literature and has made a significant step towards finding a way to help employees use their abilities to the optimum and thus find satisfaction and meaning in their work.

Definitions

(All definitions are from the Glossary of *Requisite Organization* (Jaques, 1998) unless noted otherwise.)

Complexity: Complexity is determined by the number of factors, the rate of change of those factors, and the ease of identification of the factors in a situation. [p.p. 23, 64]

Complexity of Information Processing (CIP): The complexity of the processes which an individual can apply in handling the complexity in a task. [p.p. 18]

Job role: The specific work role the person fills (Nyberg).

Managerial Accountability Hierarchy (MAH): A system of roles in which an individual in a higher role (manager) is held accountable for the outputs of persons in immediately lower roles (subordinates) and can be called to account for their actions. [p.p. 4]

Person-Job role fit (P-J Fit): The fit of a person to their job role. The fit can be based on a variety of criteria. P-J fit relates to how a person fits the demands of a job (demands-abilities) or how the job supplies the needs, desires and values of the person (supply-values) (Edwards, 1993).

Person-Superior fit (P-S Fit): The fit of a person to their superior (Allinson, Armstrong, & Hayes, 2001), the one who assigns a person's role and tasks within the role and manages their work whether called a supervisor, manager, or director.

Requisite Organization: The pattern of connections which ought to exist between roles if the system is both to work efficiently and to operate as required by the nature of human nature and the enhancement of mutual trust.

Role Complexity: The complexity in a role as measured by time-span.

Superior: A collective term referring to all those in roles with reporting subordinates. *Time-Horizon (TH):* A method of quantifying an individual's potential capability, in terms of the longest time-span s/he could handle at a given point in their maturation process. [p.p. 24]

Time-Span of Discretion (TSD): The targeted completion time of the longest task or task sequence in a role. Time-span measures level of work in a role. [p.p. 37-40]

Table 11 - CIP, TH & TSD Compared

	Ways to measure:	People				Roles		
Drder of Complexity	STRATUM (Level of Complexity)	COMPLEXITY OF INFORMATION PROCESSING (CIP)		TIME HORIZON (TH)		TIME SPAN of DISCRETION (TSD)		
tual	VIII	Parallel	8	85+Y-100Y		85+Y-100Y	Н	
				70+Y-85Y		70+Y-85Y	М	
				50+Y-70Y		50+Y-70Y	L	
	VII	Serial	7	40+Y-50Y		40+Y-50Y	Н	
				30+Y-40Y		30+Y-40Y	М	1
				20+Y-30Y		20+Y-30Y	L	
	VI	Cumulative	6	17+Y-20Y		17+Y-20Y	Н	
lect				14+Y-17Y		14+Y-17Y	М	
Con				10+Y-14Y		10+Y-14Y	L	
act (V	Declarative	5	8+Y-10Y		8+Y-10Y	Н	-
stra				6½+Y-8Y		6½ +Y-8Y	М	
$\mathbf{A}\mathbf{b}$				5+Y-6 ½Y		5+Y-6 ½Y	L	
Symbolic Verbal Representation	IV	Parallel	4	4+Y-5Y		4+Y-5Y	Н	-
				3+Y-4Y		3+Y-4Y	М	
				2+Y-3Y		2+Y-3Y	L	
	ш	Serial	3	20+M-2Y		20+M-2Y	Н	
				16+M-20M		16+M-20M	М	
				1+Y-16M		1+Y-16M	L	
	П	Cumulative	2	9+M-1Y		9+M-1Y	Н	
				6+M-9M		6+M-9M	М	-
				3+M-6M		3+M-6M	L	
	I	Declarative	1	1+M-3M		1+M-3M	Н	
				1+W-1M		1+W-1M	M	
	0			1D-1W		1D-1W	L	
entation	PI	Parallel	0	1D		1D	Н	
							М	
				2+H		2+H	L	
	P II	Serial	-1	2Н		2H	Н	
Seres							М	
ncrete Verbal Rep				30+min		30+min	L	
	P III	Cumulative		30 min		30 min	Н	
			-2				М	
				3+min		3+min	L	
	P IV	Declarative		3 min		3 min	Н	
Cor			-3	1 min		1 min	M	

H = hour, D = day, W = week, M = month, Y = year; L = low, M = medium, H = high

<u>Note</u>. Adapted from <u>Requisite Organization</u> (pp.12, 30) by E. Jaques, 1998 Arlington, VA: Cason Hall & Co. Publishers. & <u>Human Capability</u> (p. 96) by E. Jaques & K. Cason, 1994 Arlington, VA: Cason Hall & Co. Publishers. Adapted with permission.

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