Feel the Love: Building Emotional Employee Commitment

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Thanks for being here!

Importance of practitioner and scholar connection in areas of organizational learning, performance and change.
 Goals

1. Why organizational commitment?

2. Research findings from an integrative literature review on organizational commitment

3. The importance of emotional commitment

4. How to foster emotional commitment
Why are you here?
The Commitment Problem

• Look to your right and to your left: At least two of you aren’t engaged in your job.

• Gallup (2015) found that only 31.4% of American workers are engaged in their jobs.
The Commitment Problem

• How many of you are managers?
  – Only 38% of managers are engaged in their work.

• Even the agency that protects our President is suffering from a lack of commitment.

“...poor morale can be a cancer that slowly spreads and vitiates the commitment of even those who are seen as role models. The Secret Service fell from 66th on the 2007 list of the ‘Best Places to Work’ to 226 out of 300 in 2013”

(Risher, para. 5).
The Commitment Problem

• Millennials are the least engaged segment of the workforce.

• Gallup defines engaged employees as those who are “involved in, enthusiastic about, and committed to their work and workplace.”

• What is “commitment” from your perspective?

• Commitment is generally defined as the employees’ “psychological attachment to the organization.”
Why Commitment?

• Research has found that when employees are committed to their organizations they are:
  – Less likely to be absent
  – Less likely to leave (turnover)
  – Higher performers
  – More satisfied with their jobs
  – More likely to engage in “organizational citizenship behaviors

• *Type* of commitment, however, matters in determining these outcomes.
Response to Commitment Problem
Response to Commitment Problem

Powerball
Problem and Method

• Scholars and managers aren’t sure exactly what commitment is or how it develops after nearly 55 years of study.

• Integrative literature review (Torraco, 2005) was conducted that analyzed 75 scholarly articles that have theorized about or studied the causes and effects of organizational commitment since 1960.

• **Research Question:** What is the core essence of organizational commitment? What should managers and leaders be focusing on when building commitment?
Theories/Components of Commitment

• “Normative” commitment
  – How much people think they *should* stay in their organization
  – Guilt about leaving, feelings of obligation to stay

• “Continuance” commitment
  – How much people feel the *need* to stay in their organization
  – Salary, lack of alternatives, unwilling to leave
Theories/Components of Commitment

• “Affective” commitment
  – How much people want to stay in their organizations
  – Desire to stay, enthusiasm, pride, loyalty
Affective Commitment

• Through a review of the literature and meta-analyses of empirical studies studying the three components, affective commitment correlates more strongly with every significant outcome of commitment than any other type of commitment.

• Affective commitment captures the original conceptualizations of commitment as an emotional involvement.
Affective Commitment

- Affective commitment is best defined as:

  “…the emotional attachment to an organization as manifested by an individual’s identification with, and involvement in, that organization.”
Affective Commitment

Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) **Organizational Commitment Questionnaire** – only psychometrically sound instrument measured:

- Desire to remain in the organization
- Feelings of care for the organization
- Willingness to input high effort
- Belief in the values of the organization
- Pride in the organization
Exercise

• Pick something/someone in your life that you love.

• Now, write down three reasons *why* you love that person or thing.
Exercise

“The fact is that people are good. Give people affection and security and they will give affection and be secure in their feelings and their behavior.”

Abraham Maslow

(Lowry, 1973, p. 18)
Building Emotional Commitment

Research has found the below practices have the greatest impact on affective commitment:

1. High-commitment HR Practices
2. Socialization and social networking
3. Interpersonal relationships
4. Perceived organizational support

What don’t you see here?
The soft stuff is the stuff that works.
Socialization

• Researchers have found that when employees don’t feel positively connected to the values and mission of the organization in their first week, they are twice as likely to leave within the first year.

• Onboarding should focus on building values-congruence, pride, feelings of care for organization.
High-Commitment HR

• Focus on cultivating values-congruence and pride in organization
• Accessible/transparent policies and procedures
• Employee involvement and feedback in organizational HR decisions and policy
• Frequent and consistent communication directly with employees.
Interpersonal Relationships

Trust

• Bottom-up trust building has more of an effect on levels of affective commitment than top-down efforts.

• Direct supervisor-supervisee relationships are critical.

• “Heard in the hallways” – informal, overheard communications can impact feelings of trust.
Interpersonal Relationships

Mentoring

• Structured, mentoring relationships have a positive effective on levels of emotional commitment.

• Mentor must be emotionally committed to the organization. “Who” is important.
Social Networking

• Researchers have found that when employees have informal, positive relationships with co-workers, they are more likely to be emotionally committed to the organization.
Perceived Organizational Support

• Access to supervisors, managers, organization.

• Involvement in organizational decisions and strategy conversations.

• “My organization cares about me.”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LmyZMtPVoDo
Reflective Questions

• How much time is spent in your organization on cultivating an emotional bond?

• What does the first week look and *feel* like for a new employee?

• How do current employees *feel* about the organization?
Questions/Discussion