

A Conceptual Study on the Impact of Proactive Behaviour of an Employee in an Organization as an Innovative Measure in Management

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ABSTRACT

Today's firms are overpopulated by people who are often passive and not adequately proactive. But the management can take innovative measures to bring out positive work outcomes. Proactive behavior is like any other motivated behavior, if rewarded, it will thrive. This study shows that proactive behavior is an important variable in the effectiveness of performance and achievement for organizations and individuals. In this study about proactive behavior and its outcomes, it shows that people who are able to change their environments are seen to be more effective in work performances and if lacking it could lead to maladaptive outcomes. It would be of interest for an organization with an innovative ideas to encourage proactive employee to bring out more positive work outcomes.

1. Introduction

One recent study on personality, found that people are not 'passive recipients of environmental pressures' (Buss, 1987, p. 1220), but they can influence their own environments.

According to George Bernard Shaw, the world has three kinds of people, one those who make things happen, those who watch what happens, and those who wonder what happened. On the road to the future, there are drivers, there are passengers, and there is road. The key differentiator among these distinctions is the extent to which behavior of people and firms is proactive. Managers everywhere are urged to "be proactive," and companies are urged to create their futures proactively. Most recently, Robert Kelley (1998) highlights proactive behavior as the key that distinguish star performers from average performers.

To be proactive is to change things, in an intended direction. Proactive behavior distinguishes individuals from the group, and organizations from the rest of the marketplace. Proactive individuals create change, not merely expecting it. To be proactive is to take the initiative in improving business. Behavior that is not proactive includes sitting back, letting others try to make things happen, and passively hoping that externally imposed change will "works out okay."

People can make conscious decisions to leave and enter situations, as and when they take a new job, make acquisition or divestment decisions, or enter new markets. This is a form of proactive behavior, it places people and firms in different environments. Most important here is people can intentionally and directly change environment through the creation of new circumstances, or the active alteration of current ones. This is what is meant by proactive behavior.

Proactive people persist in their efforts. They don't back off from the obstacles, they don't take no for an answer, they don't settle for less, and they aren't satisfied with being able to say

after a defeat, change must not merely be thought about or attempted, but achieved.

As expected, the intelligent, experienced, conscientious, extraverted sales agents were successful on the job. However, none of these things is the same as being proactive and proactive behavior. The predicted success is even more high. Clearly, this is a unique and desirable quality in professional sales people.

Today's firms are overpopulated by people who are often passive and not adequately proactive. As a successful U.S. entrepreneur told, "A reactive person waits for someone to call and say, 'I have a problem, can you help me with it?' Most workers are trained to be reactive." With the clear warning that people throughout the firm should focus their energies on broad organizational goals, they can often be allowed more freedom to pursue those goals in fruitful, creative, innovative ways thus relaxing the over controlling tendencies of many company policies and structures. But for proactive individuals, their behavior ultimately is like any other motivated behavior, if rewarded, it will thrive.

2. What is Proactive Behavior?

Proactive behavior is behavior that directly alters environments. The proactive dimension of behavior is rooted in people's needs to manipulate and control the environment (White, 1959; Langer, 1983). Maddi (1989) categorizes some individual behaviors as transcendent, that is, they transform environments rather than adjust to them. Individuals can be active rather than passive in the role-making process (Graen, 1976), and they can create 'ecological change' in their environments (Weick, 1979). Hirschman (1970) described how workers passively withdraw or actively try to change working conditions as they adapt to dissatisfying work environments. In general there exists great potential for assigning to the individual a more proactive role in models of employee behavior (Brief and Aldag, 1981) and for developing techniques of measuring proactive behavior.

Proactive behaviour is protective behaviour with the aim to influence either oneself or the work environment (Grant & Ashford, 2008). Proactive behavior is defined as the "taking initiative in improving current circumstances or creating new ones; it involves challenging the status rather than passively adapting to present conditions" (Crant, 2000). Employees change the environment by approaching their work with an initiative to create conditions which are favorable for them. The environment can control the behavior but the behavior also can control the environment (Bowers, 1973; Schneider, 1983) and that is proactive behavior.

3. Characteristics of a Proactive Personality

The proactive personality, are unconstrained by situational forces, and who effects environmental change. Other people, who are relatively passive - they react to, adapt to, and are shaped by their environments. Proactive people scan for opportunities, show initiative, take action, and persevere until they reach closure by bringing about change. They are pathfinders (Leavitt, 1988) who change their organization's mission or find and solve problems. They take it upon themselves to have an impact on the world around them. People who are not proactive fail to identify opportunities to change things. They show little initiative, and rely on others to be forces for change. They passively adapt to, and even endure, their circumstances.

It is used to identify the differences between people's tendency to influence their environment. They are undisturbed by situational forces and have a great effect on changing the environment (Bateman & Crant, 1993). They identify the opportunities and show initiative to persist until meaningful changes are achieved (Bateman & Crant, 1993). People with low proactive personality do not identify opportunities, cannot use them to cause changes and behave only passive and reactive on situational forces. They rather accept and adapt to circumstances rather than change them (Crant, 1995). Behavior of people is viewed as being both internally and externally influenced and situations which influence them are as much a function of person as vice versa (Schneider, 1983).

Proactive person can directly and intentionally change their current circumstances, social and non-social. Their behavior directly alters environments. Bandura (1986) stated that these people create environments and set them in motion.

4. Impact of Proactive Behaviour to an Organization

Proactive work behaviour can influence to increase individual and organizational performance, such as overall performance, career-related outcomes, sales, and organizational success (Fay & Frese, 2001; Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006; Raabe, Frese, & Beehr, 2007), it is beneficial for organizations. Organizations might achieve a competitive advantage if they were able to motivate their employees to behave in a proactive manner.

More specifically, employees need to become more flexible and active and they need to attack occurring problems in a proactive way instead of just fulfilling their jobs and reacting passively to new situations (Parker, 2000; Swan & Fox, 2009). The goal of this paper is to extend the study on

proactive work behaviour by examining antecedents as well as outcomes of proactive work behavior.

Traditionally, researchers as well as practitioners supposed that employees might rather be passive and solely following instructions of their supervisors would be sufficient to grant good performance and organizational success (Frese, 2008). Due to changes in the work environments, these traditional views have changed towards a more proactive point of view.

5. Expectations from Employee for sustainable development

Today's jobs are typically characterized by rapid changes and decentralized work structures. Therefore, it is increasingly important that employees do not just fulfil their jobs and react passively to new situations but that they become more flexible and active, and that they attack occurring problems in a proactive way.

Today's employees are often confronted with rapid changes in their jobs, including the need to deal with innovations and new technologies, and to work in companies with decentralized management (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Campbell, 2000; Howell & Higgins, 1990; Schilling & Steensma, 2001; Thatcher & Zhu, 2006). Typically, job stress is increased, for instance by job stressors such as job demands, obstacles, role conflicts, and uncertainty (Armenakis&Bedeian, 1999; Härenstam et al., 2004; Jimmieson, Terry, & Callan, 2004). Moreover, proactive working is demanded and employees have to become more flexible and active, and have to approach occurring problems in a proactive way (Parker, 2000; Swan & Fox, 2009). Proactive behaviour, which is typically seen as anticipatory behaviour with the aim to influence either oneself or the work environment (Grant & Ashford, 2008), is beneficial for the organization as it is related to increased individual and organizational performance, overall performance, career-related outcomes, sales, and organizational success (Fay & Frese, 2001; Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006; Raabe, Frese, & Beehr, 2007).

6. Antecedents and Outcomes of Proactive behavior

Research has focused on the antecedents and outcomes of proactive behaviour. Studies done by Crant (2000) showed that individual differences (e.g., proactive personality, role breadth self-efficacy, job involvement, goal orientation, need for achievement) and contextual factors (organizational culture and norms) act as antecedents of proactive behaviour. The research has found out that antecedents distinguished between individual factors (age, gender, knowledge, abilities, readiness to change, learning goal orientation) and situational factors (job autonomy, complexity, job stressors, leadership, climate).

Prior research has showed outcomes were associated with proactive behavior. The outcomes of proactive behavior found out through research are individual job performance, career success, well-being, identification, role clarity, team effectiveness, and organizational success (Crant, 2000; Fay & Frese, 2001).

It is important to determine the relationship between proactive personality and affective commitment. Jobs stressors

occur in every work environment. Particular job stressors which appear in jobs, such as role conflict and role ambiguity and workloads (Spector, 2006). These are the job stressors which are researched in this study. There is a relationship between proactive personality and job stressors which might influence the relationship between proactive personality and affective commitment. Job stressors have different effects on people with high proactive personality than on people with less proactive personality (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1997).

At first glance, these positive relationships between job stressors and proactive behaviour are surprising. Why should employees engage in extra proactive efforts when being confronted with stressors at work? Intuitively, one might rather think that if employees are confronted with job stressors, fulfilling the required tasks should be more demanding and should require more task-related effort (Frese & Zapf, 1994; Hockey, 1997). Therefore, time and resources for additional proactive actions should be scarce. Studies showed that there is a positive relationship between job stressors and proactive behaviour. Therefore, relationships might have occurred because of common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003) or might reflect an individual perception of activation.

People who are able to change their environments are seen to be more effective in work performances. To prove this Bateman and Crant (1993) developed the Proactive Personality

Scale which measures the construct of proactive personality. The Proactive Personality Scale was used in studies to identify the effects of proactive personality on different work outcomes. Outcome variables like individual job performance (Crant, 1995), career outcomes (for example career success, salary, number of promotions) (Seibert, Crant & Kraimer, 1999), leadership (Crant & Bateman, 2000), organizational innovation (Parker, 1998), team performance (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999) and entrepreneurship (Becherer & Maurer, 1999) were studied and positive correlations were found.

7. Conclusion

This states that proactive personality is an important variable in the effectiveness of performance and achievement for organizations and individuals. As mentioned before Bateman and Crant (1993) that not all effects of proactive personality are positive and as it can also lead to negative outcomes. In a study about proactive personality and its outcomes, the situational judgment skills are important moderators of proactive personality and if lacking it could lead to maladaptive outcomes. The study to find the outcomes of proactive behaviour would be of interest to an organization with the idea that a proactive employee leads to more positive work outcomes than a passive employee.

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