

Individual Employee Behavior

Chapter sections

10.1 Job satisfaction

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10.3 Organizational commitment

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Learning Objectives:

Upon completion of studying this chapter, *Individual Employee Behavior*, learners should be able to:

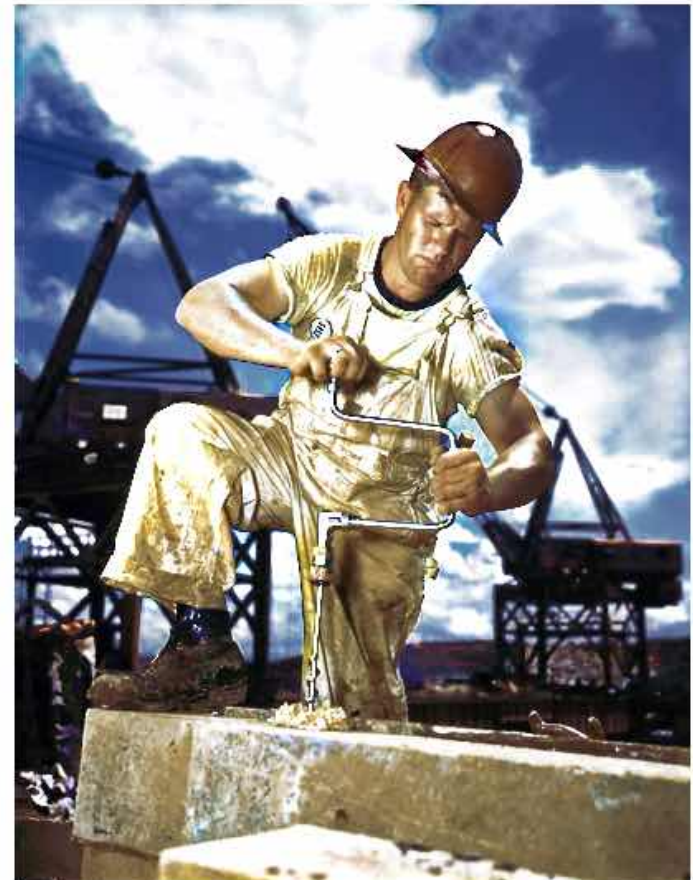
- Discuss roles of personality and values in determining work behavior
- Define concepts of personality-job fit and how it affects work behavior
- Assess job attitudes and organizational commitment at work

"We know where most of the creativity, the innovation, the stuff that drives productivity lies—in the minds of those closest to the work."

—Jack Welch

"What is the recipe for successful achievement? To my mind there are just four essential ingredients: Choose a career you love, give it the best there is in you, seize your opportunities, and be a member of the team."

—Benjamin Fairless



Palmer Carpenter A. Photo credit

Predominantly based on contributions from social psychologists, the area of organizational behavior attempts to explain, predict, and influence individual work behavior of employees.

Our behavior at work often depends on how we feel about being there, which in turns depends on our work attitudes.

Attitude refers to a predisposition - rooted in opinions, beliefs and feelings- to respond positively or negatively to something or someone. We have attitudes toward the people we meet, the courses we take, and of course the job we do.

The three components of attitude are: cognition (beliefs, opinions, knowledge and information), affect (emotions, feelings), and behavior (intention to behave).

Cognition may vary from favorable to unfavorable or supporting to derogatory. Affect can vary from pleasurable to unpleasurable, and behavior can range from favorable and supporting to unfavorable and hostile.¹ Here is an example: you may believe that smoking is bad for your health and the health of others around you (cognition). You tell your friends you do not like Erica because she smokes (affect). Overtime you choose to avoid Erica because of your feelings about her (behavior).

Your parents have instilled in you the value of getting an education because they believe it leads to a prosperous life. You

read news articles that show how those who graduate from college earn way more money than non-grads and are more satisfied with their jobs (cognition) . Therefore you do not mind going to college, in fact you enjoy going to school and learning all kinds of skills (affect). As a result you make the effort to go to class and get decent grades (behavior).

When it comes to attitude, managers are specifically interested in job-related attitudes, and the three most important ones are:

1.Job satisfaction refers to the level of contentment one feels toward a job, things like the nature of the work, the schedule, the supervision, the physical work environment, etc.

2.Job performance involves how efficient an employee is at a job.

3.Organizational commitment is defined in

terms of an individual's identification with the organization's goals and values and desire to continue as part of it.²

In a 2013 Gallup study, about one in eight workers are emotionally committed to their jobs and likely to be making positive contributions to their organizations. Sixty three percent are not engaged, meaning they lack motivation and are less likely to invest discretionary effort in organizational goals or outcomes. Twenty four are "actively disengaged," indicating they are



unhappy and unproductive at work, and liable to spread negativity to coworkers. In rough numbers, this translates to 900 million not engaged, and 340 million actively disengaged workers around the globe.³

10.1 Job satisfaction

Satisfied and committed employees have lower rates of turnover and absenteeism. The factors that have shown to be conducive to a high level of employee job satisfaction are: making work challenging and interesting; providing equitable rewards; and creating supportive colleagues and ensuring a good personality-job fit.⁴

10.1.1 Personality-job fit

What if you are not happy in your job or the subjects you are studying in school? It is possible that you are in the wrong career entirely? As you do your daily job or studies, you may realize that your tasks do not mesh well with your personality or talents. Individual personalities differ, as do jobs. This concern with matching the job requirements with personality characteristics is best articulated in John Holland's personality-job fit theory.

The theory is based on six personality types, and proposes that satisfaction and the propensity to leave a job depends on the

Holland's Personality-Job Fit



Figure 10-1 Based on Holland, J. L. (1997). Making vocational choices 3rd ed. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc.

degree to which individual characteristics successfully match their personalities to an occupational environment.⁵ Holland created a hexagonal model that shows the relationship between

personality types and environments. Each one of the six personality types has a congruent occupational environment.

Holland also developed a Vocational Preference Inventory questionnaire that contains 160 occupational titles. Respondents indicate which of these occupations they like or dislike, and their answers are used to form personality profiles. Figure 10-1 shows that the closer two fields or orientations are in the hexagon, the more compatible they are. Adjacent categories are quite similar, whereas those diagonally opposite are highly dissimilar. What does all this mean? The theory argues that satisfaction is highest and turnover lowest when personality and occupation are in agreement.

People search for environments where they can use their skills and abilities and express their values and attitudes. People of the same personality type working together in a job create a work environment that fits their type. For example, when artistic persons are together on a job, they create a work environment that rewards creative thinking and behavior—an artistic environment. Social individuals should be in social jobs, conventional people in conventional jobs, and so forth. How you act and feel at work depends to a large extent on your workplace (or school) environment. If you are working with people who have a personality type like yours, you will be able to do many of the things they can do, and you will feel most comfortable with them.

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Another widely recognized theory regarding personality type and how a person is expected to act and feel in a variety of situation including work is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). This tool is helpful in understanding the personalities of different employees and useful for placing them into jobs that take advantage of their strengths.

What is Your Personality Type?



Figure 10-2. Myers-Briggs personality types. Photo credit.

The MBTI assessment uses four dimensions of personality to identify 16 different personality types based on the responses to an approximately 100-item questionnaire. More than two million individuals take the MBTI assessment each year in the United States alone. About 80% of the Fortune 500 and 89 of Fortune 100 companies, like Hallmark, AT&T, Exxon, 3M, as well as many hospitals, educational institutions, and the U.S. Armed

Forces, use it to analyze the personalities of employees, in an effort to get them in the right roles and help them to succeed.⁷

Knowing these personality types can help managers see how the interaction between employees could play in the real world and make adjustment accordingly. For example, if your boss prefers intuition and you possess a sensing facet to your personality, you will deal with information in different ways. Your boss most likely prefers gut reactions, whereas you, prefer to deal with the facts. To work well with your boss, you have to present more than just facts about a situation, and discuss your gut feelings as well.

MBTI assessment has also been found to be useful in focusing on growth orientations for entrepreneurial types, as well as profiles supporting emotional intelligence, which was examined in the previous chapter.

The 16 personality types are based on four dimensions: extraversion versus introversion (EI), sensing versus intuition (SN), thinking versus feeling (TF), and judging versus perceiving (JP).

10.2 Job performance

For each job, the content of job performance may differ; measure include quality and quantity of work performed by the employee; the accuracy and speed with which the job is performed; and the overall effectiveness of the person on the job.

Because job performance determines whether a person is promoted, rewarded, given additional responsibilities, or dismissed, most employers observe and track it. This is done by a variety of methods such as metrics on the number of sales the

employee closes, the number of leads given versus the number sale closings, number of defects found in the employee's output, or the number of customer complaints or compliments received, etc. If you have ever leased or bought a vehicle you may have noticed that the salesperson at the end of the transaction tells you that you will be getting a survey about your experience at the store and would appreciate a good review. Well, that survey is extremely important to them because it is one of the ways his or her performance gets evaluated.

Under which conditions do people perform well, and what are those abilities and skills that predict good performance? One of the most powerful influence is our general mental ability, also known as cognitive ability or intelligence. It measures abilities like reasoning abilities, verbal and numerical skills, and analytical skills⁸

In jobs with high complexity, such as those in engineering, management, law and medicine, it is much more critical to have high general mental abilities. In positions such as police officer and clerical worker, the importance of intellectual intelligence for high performance is still integral, but weaker.⁹

In addition to cognitive intelligence, emotional intelligence—discussed in the previous chapter—plays a significant role. A 2006 study of 251 executives in six countries, conducted by Accenture, concluded that while intelligence is important for career success, it is a matter of how you are smart or “knowing why.” Interpersonal competence, self-awareness, and social awareness—all elements of emotional intelligence—are more accurate indicators of who will succeed, and who will not.

The second factor is “knowing whom,” or developing positive relationships including the skill of networking. The third

Figure 10-3 Based on "Do What You Are: Discover The Perfect Career for You Through the Secrets of Personality Type," Paul Tieger, Barbar Barron, and Kelly Tieger.1976.

TYPE	COMPATIBLE CAREER PATHS
ISTJ	Auditor, Accountant, Financial officer, Web development engineer, Government employee
ISFJ	Dentist, Elementary school teacher, Librarian, Franchise owner, Customer service representative
INFJ	Mental health counselor, Therapist, Social worker, HR diversity manager, Organization development consultant, Customer relations manager
INTJ	Investment banker, Personal financial advisor, Software developer, Economist, Executive
ISTP	Civil engineer, Economist, Pilot, Data communications analyst, ER room physician
ISFP	Fashion designer, Physical therapist, Message therapist, Landscape architect, Storekeeper
INFP	Graphic designer, Psychologist/therapist, Writer/editor, Physical therapist, HR development trainer
INTP	Computer programmer, Software designer, Financial analyst, Architect, College Professor, Economist
ESTP	Detective, banker, Investor, Entertainment agent, Sport coach
ESFP	Child welfare counselor, Primary care physician, Actor, Interior designer, Environmental scientist
ENFP	Journalist, Advertising Director, Consultant, Restaurateur, Event planner
ENTP	Entrepreneur, Real estate developer, Advertising director, Marketing director, Politician.political consultant
ESTJ	Insurance, Sales agent, Pharmacist, Lawyer, Project manager, Judge
ESFJ	Sales Rep., Nurse/Health care worker, Social worker, PR account executive, Loan officer
ENFJ	Advertising Executive, PR specialist, Corporate coach, Sales manager, HR professional
ENTJ	Executive, Lawyer, Market Research Analyst, Management/business consultant, Venture capitalist

Big Five Model of Personality



Figure 10-4 Based on Source: Goldberg, L. R. (1990). An Alternative "Description of Personality": The Big-Five Factor Structure. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*.

factor is "knowing how," or educational/training. A 2010 study from Virginia Commonwealth University concluded that emotional intelligence is the strongest predictor of job performance. An analysis of more than 300 top-level executives from 15 global companies showed that six emotional competencies distinguished the stars from the average. In a large beverage firm, using standard methods to hire division presidents, 50% left within two years, mostly because of poor performance. When the firms started selecting candidates based on emotional competencies, only 6% left, and they performed in the top third of executive ranks. In 2013, yet another study—from the University of Georgia—concluded that linear, lifespan careers with traditional measure of success no longer exist. In boundary-less careers, the importance of pride and personal accomplishment becomes more important than external or tangible indicators such as salary growth.¹⁰

Our perception of how we are being treated also influences our performance. When we feel that the boss is equitable, supportive and trustworthy we tend to reciprocate by performing better.

The stress we experience in our life, either financial, personal, health or work related, negatively impact our performance level. When our mental energies are drained, we are less concentrated at work, make more mistakes and our performance suffers as a result.

The level of employee job satisfaction also correlates to our job performance. In fact, this never ending topic is one of the most venerable research tradition in the field of industrial-organizational psychology. Several models have been proposed to show that relationship, some scholars asserting that job satisfaction causes job performance, others that job performance causes job satisfaction, and yet others that both are reciprocally related, or that they are moderated by another variable.¹¹ In general it can be said that in some professions like engineering or research and development, happy workers have an inclination to be more engaged at work because they may be more motivated. In other vocations like those in nursing or involving assembly-lines, that link is weaker. Nurses may feel unhappy with the work environment but they still put a lot of effort into the work out of a moral obligation to care for their patients.

It has been previously discussed that understanding personality traits helps managers and employees alike discover a good personality-job fit. Personality traits also help predict job performance—particularly the Big Five model of personality.

As illustrated in Figure 10-4, the dimensions are openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Combined, the initials create the acronym OCEAN. Everyone has some degree of each of these traits; it is the unique configuration of how high or low a person rates on the traits that produces the quality of personality.

Conscientiousness is the one personality trait that uniformly predicts how high a person's performance will be across a variety of occupations and jobs.¹² In fact, conscientiousness is the trait most desired by employers, and highly conscientious applicants tend to succeed in life. A staggering amount of research confirm that conscientiousness is linked to high income, job satisfaction, job performance and is the most important factor for finding and retaining employment. "Conscientious people tend to be super organized, responsible, and plan ahead. They work hard in the face of challenges and can control their impulses."¹³

As a way to summarize the impact of the Big Five traits on higher job performance, it has been shown that:

1. Highly conscientious people develop more job knowledge, exert greater effort, and have better job performance, compared to any of the other traits.
2. Emotional stability (the opposite of neuroticism) is related to job satisfaction.
3. Extroverts tend to be happier in their jobs, and have good social skills. It is a great fit for highly social jobs like sales.
4. Open people are more creative, and can be good leaders.

5. Agreeable people are good in social settings.

10.2.2 Absenteeism

Absenteeism refers to intentional or unintentional absences from work. It is quite difficult to tackle this problem because there are both legitimate and poor excuses for missing work. Regardless of the legitimacy of the absences, they hurt company finances in reduced productivity, wages paid to absent employees, overtime paid to replacement employees, administrative cost of managing absenteeism, and low morale among employees who have to fill in to cover absent coworkers. It is reported that unscheduled absenteeism cost about \$3,600 per year for each hourly worker and \$2,650 for salaried employees.¹⁴

Some of the most common causes of absenteeism are:

- Serious illness, medical appointments, injuries, accidents, depression.
- Bullying and harassment. Burnout, stress, low morale, work withdrawal, disengagement.
- Job hunting, childcare and eldercare.

To address absenteeism some companies have moved toward a mandatory paid sick leave policy, others offer incentive for going to work, such as earned time off. Other firms use a proactive approach aimed at keeping workers healthy like implementing wellness programs, educating employees about proper nutrition, helping them exercise, and rewarding them for healthy habits.¹⁵

TABLE 10-1 PREREQUISITES FOR ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Personal Characteristics	Age: Older workers tend to be more committed than the younger ones. Gender: Men tend to be less committed than women. Education: More highly-educated workers tend to be less committed, perhaps because of the greater expectations which cannot always be met. Perceived Competence: Those who perceive themselves as having high levels of competence tend to display greater commitment, perhaps because they can use the organization to meet their needs for achievement and growth. Work Ethic: Those who believe in the intrinsic value and necessity of work find the organization is the place where their needs can be satisfied.	
Job Attitudes	Job Satisfaction: correlation between job satisfaction and organizational commitment is high Org. Citizenship Behavior: Organizations could not survive unless employees were willing to occasionally engage in extra-role behaviors not explicitly recognized by an organization's reward system.	
Job Characteristics	Those whose job level is high tend to show greater organizational commitment. This may be related to other findings that older workers and those with longer position tenure are more committed. Workers who can apply a variety of job skills have greater autonomy on the job, find greater challenges in their jobs, and tend toward organizational commitment.	
	Role Stress	Employees can experience role stress at work, and away from work, as well. Lack of clarity in work role (role ambiguity), inconsistencies between role expectations (role conflict) and unreasonable expectations of time and energy in a role (role overload) all contribute to low organizational commitment.
Relationship with co-workers and supervisors	Group Cohesiveness the forces that keep a group of coworkers together. For group cohesiveness to occur, members of the group must be committed to the group and identify with the organization.	
	Leadership	The extent to which leaders define their own and their subordinates' roles (initiating structure) and the extent to which the leaders are concerned with the well-being of their subordinated (consideration) are both positively related to organizational commitment.

10.2.3 Turnover

Turnover refers to the rate of employees leaving an organization and replacing them with new employees. Expert estimates that it cost more than twice an employee's salary to find and train a replacement, not including the damage to the morale among remaining employees.¹⁶ If a poor performer leaves it may actually be a blessing in disguise because it give the company a chance to hire someone who will be more committed to the organization. However it is particularly a problem when high-performing employees leave. To lower turnover in the workplace the company start by hiring the right people from the start (see sidebar about practices at Zappos); setting the right compensation and benefits package; paying attention to employees' personal needs and bolstering employee's engagement.

There has also been studies which conclude that there is a significant relationship between turnover behavior and several independent variables. That is, turnover is significantly influenced by age (i.e. younger employees are more likely to leave, and older more likely to stay); tenure in the organization (the more years in a company, the less likely and harder it is to leave, compared to those who have been in it for fewer years); overall job satisfaction; organizational commitment, perceived job security, and intention to search for an alternative position.¹⁷

It also has to be kept in mind that intention to search for an alternative position does not always translate into an employee actually leaving. The ability to actually leave will depend on factors like employability, age, and the condition of the job market. That is why when unemployment is high, many people who are unhappy will still continue to work; whereas when the economy is doing well, people will start moving to other

Organizational commitment and recruitment at Zappos

Zappos sells shoes over the Internet. The company expected to generate sales of more than \$1 billion in 2013, up from \$70 million five years earlier. Part of the reason for Zappos's meteoric success is that it offers customers a huge selection—four million pairs of shoes, handbags and apparel. It also offers free delivery and free returns if you do not like the shoes.

Zappos has also mastered the art of telephone service—a black hole for most Internet retailers. Zappos publishes its 800 number on every single page of the website, and its smart and entertaining call-center employees are free to do whatever it takes to make you happy. There are no scripts, no time limits on calls, no robotic behavior, and plenty of legendary stories about Zappos and its customers. But here is what is really interesting. It is a hard job answering phones and talking to customers for hours at a time. So when Zappos hires new employees, it provides a four-week training period that immerses them in the company's strategy, culture, and obsession with customers. People get paid their full salary during this period.

After a week or so in this immersive experience, though, it is time for what Zappos calls "the Offer." The fast-growing company, which works hard to recruit

companies.

In some cases employees may be extremely happy with a company but highly disloyal, a situation very common in tech companies. Google, for instance, has one of the highest turnover rate, it pays its average employee \$107,000, compared to ExxonMobil's \$97,700, yet the median employee tenure is 1.1 years and 6.5 years respectively. Since 2007 Google has Fortune Magazine's list of best companies to work for and has a job satisfaction rate of 84%, one of the highest in the Fortune 500. These job employees, no matter how satisfied they may be, are highly marketable and will jump ship as soon as they get bored or get a better offer elsewhere.¹⁸

10.3 Organizational commitment

According to Caught and Shadur, "organizational commitment is the employee's committed to assist in the achievement of the organization's goals, and involve the employees' level of identification, involvement and loyalty."¹⁹ Table 10-1 shows the factors that affect organizational commitment as summarized by Starnes and Truhon.²⁰ In several research studies, employees have identified those variables they feel are important for the development of high levels of commitment to their organizations. Here are the top factors:²¹

1. Good bidirectional communication channels - use of newsletters, open-door and open book policies.
2. Managers with high moral standards who visibly enforce organizational ethical policies.

3. Hiring practices where there is a good match between the values held by the potential employee and the organization.
4. Reward programs that recognize personal achievements - gift certificates, education scholarships, pay raises, promotions, and time off.

REVIEW 10.1

Question 1 of 3

An employee who brags about her company to friends and recommends all company products as gifts is likely to have high _____.

- ☐ **A. Job involvement**
- ☐ **B. Organizational commitment**
- ☐ **C. Personal commitment**
- ☐ **D. Job satisfaction**

Check Answer

