Organizational Attractiveness: An Analysis of Recruitment and Retention.

GB 598 Business Research Proposal

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this research proposal involves the study of tangible data referring to the attractiveness of an organization based on its offered work-life balance programs and its correlation to the ability of the organization to recruit and retain employees. The role between work and life balance is one which is dynamic in nature. This is due to the ever changing competition for human resource departments to acquire and hold the most talented employees. The younger generations such as “X’ and “Y” are more focused on the balance of work and life and demand a more amiable work environment which fosters this ideal. Organizations are recognizing this concept and adapting to the changing environment through the development and implementation of such recruiting and retention programs as tools. Some organizations have embraced the latest technology in their industry as a tool to recruit tech savvy candidates. Other organizations have implemented “feminine” organizational culture to recruit females. This has prompted an explosion in academic research regarding the subject and is the rationale behind this proposal.
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INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance programs; what are they?

• Work-life balance programs (WLBP) are programs which have originated from more traditional practices such as family-friendly work practices (FFWP).
• In some organizational circles a hybrid version of the two programs has emerged as Family-and Work-Friendly Policies.
• WLBS can be classified as more progressive in nature.

Categories of Work/Life Balance Programs

The six fundamental classifications of work/life programs are:

• Flex time: Employees choose their own beginning and ending hours to their work day. They usually need to be at work during the peak hours of the day.
• Flexible week: This program allows an employee to work three 12 hour days per week or four 10 hour days and so forth. This option often allows the individual to choose which days of the week to work as well.
• Work-at-home, flex-place or telecommuting: A little or most of the work is completed off the employer’s site. In some cases, this work is done from outpost offices closer to the employee’s homes. Improved technology has made this possible in more industries.
• Part-time: This option is the most common to employers. Many people use this option after child birth or while caring for an elderly family member.
• **Job sharing:** Two or more individuals share or split the workload of a single job.

• **Part-time telecommuting:** This program pairs telecommuting with part-time employment.

In the past thirty years, the demography of the work-force has altered considerably. The amount of women in the work-force has improved, as has the quantity of workers who are part of dual-career couples. In reaction to these emerging tendencies, organizations have undertaken a new area of human resource (HR) management through supporting employees in harmonizing the strain of work with those of their off-the-clock activities. Numerous organizations have put into service work–life balance programs aimed to assist their workers with managing multiple demands on their time and boost the organizations’ efforts to enlist, encourage and hold on to current employees (Cappelli, 2000; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; McCracken, 2000; Nord, Fox, Phoenix, & Viano, 2002). Research performed in Australia indicates positive results concerning organizations’ profitability in relation to its implementation of work-life balance programs and their affirmative effect on employee retention and recruitment (Carless, Wintle 2007).

An example of one such study was conducted in Australia with the following data regarding whether or not employees found certain work-life balances more attractive than others:
Part-time work
Job share
Flexible starting and finishing times
Flexi-time
Rostered days off
Use flex days or rostered days off as half days
Work from home on an ad hoc basis
Telecommuting
Compressed work week
Study leave
Career break
Paid parental leave
48/52 week working year
Paid leave for religious holidays
Work-life balance programs effect regarding employee retention

Over the course of the average person’s lifetime, people generally hold several different jobs. Many companies today find themselves searching for practices to retain their employees for reasons such as cost of replacing and training an employee as specialization in occupations increase. “The typical worker today has a job which has lasted or will last about eight years. That is about 7 jobs a lifetime. Over a quarter of all workers are holding jobs which will last twenty years or more. Sixty percent hold jobs which will last five years or more” (Hall, 1982). Many U.S. companies invest time and money into establishing Work-Life Balance programs (WLB) in an effort to retain valuable employees for much longer periods. WLBs are practices that assist the resolution of work and life away from work. Many companies introduce these to complement legal requirements. This research project will attempt to discover how WLBs affect employee recruitment and retention.

Skilled labor plays an important role in retention of employees as technology grows and continues to become more specialized. For example, when creating a new type of smart-phone, there may be thousands of individuals involved in the engineering development due to its complex design and manufacturing process. Specialized and highly trained individuals are utilized in creating individual aspects of the phones capabilities from software to its hardware and peripherals. This creates a much lesser availability of job-specific skilled technicians to fill these positions. Finnish cellular phone giant, Nokia, U.S. employee numbers are as follows: “Hardware headcount is assumed to be
4,700 and 900 more for fundamental research. So Nokia’s total software headcount adds up to 11,600 people. Nokia smart-phone headcount adds up to about 8,000” (Dedui, 2012).

In turn, companies are increasingly focused on retaining these skilled individuals as they are more difficult and costly to locate replacements for. One way companies are approaching these challenges are by implementing WLBs in their company’s culture. WLBs are being implemented in companies across the U.S. to determine whether or not there is a measurable attribution to putting them into practice.

**Work-life balance programs effect regarding employee recruitment**

One particular company has made tremendous progress on the work-life balance front by incorporating genuinely innovative programs for recruitment and retention purposes. Accenture, a large global consulting firm, is the focus of the following study. An internal study by Accenture, a very large consulting firm, describes the emerging issue regarding the retirement of the baby boomer generation and the effect it will have on the available “Talent Pool”. Organizational behavior and human resource experts predict a lack of talented candidates for the current and future economy. This concern has forced organizations to compete for these scarce candidates in many ways. One of the most popular methodologies behind this competition has been directed at providing work-life balance benefits to potential and current employees for
recruiting and retention purposes. The study is based on the massive company, Accenture, and its internal study to examine its employees’ job satisfaction.

Three individual case studies highlight Accenture’s thriving “Future Leave” program which is innovative and fresh. Future Leave affords employees the opportunity to take leave from work for up to three months every three years of employment. The leave is unpaid yet insurance coverage continues. Some employees use it to care for aging parents, sick family members or trekking across Europe. Accenture also piloted a program termed “Flexible Transitions” as a means to stay in touch with employees on Future Leave and to help mothers transition back to work with helpful advice and classes.

This article was very enlightening concerning one of the leading-edge organizations such as Accenture and what types of progressive work-life balance programs they are making available to their employees. The percentages regarding the internal study helped illustrate the importance of such programs. Also the gender comparison helped show the importance of understanding the needs of each. The weakness of this study is a lack of external studies to compare and contrast.

*Men and Women; what organizational culture is attractive to each?*

The following research examines how men and women differ in their view of organizational attractiveness based on the organizations culture. The approach to the study is based on questions regarding employment pursuit intention, organizational partiality, and organizational selection for two spurious
organizations portrayed in recruitment literature as possessing either a supportive “womanly” or competitive “mannish” organizational culture in a 2x2 repeated measures design. Picking the culture which was supportive required the trade-off of lower financial compensation. Outcomes indicate men are more likely to pursue the competitive organizations than women although the majority of both men and women chose the supportive culture although salaries were lower. The implications of this research indicate organizations would benefit by integrating “feminine” ideals into the organizational culture and to advertise these programs in the recruitment literature.

The strength of this study is its ability to demonstrate the gender gap is closing. This can be due to several factors; more male parental involvement, dual-career families and a positive change in social perception. This article is vague in some regards and could have benefitted through a more crude description of the authors’ theories.

Do organizations who invest in technology have the ability to recruit more tech savvy candidates and also retain current employees by offering the latest in high-tech tools to get their job done?

The following article, “Keeping Current Can Help Firms Overcome Recruitment and Retention Challenges” by author, Bob Dias, details the ability of technologically advanced companies to recruit more tech savvy employees by implementing technology in different means. As new recruits are progressively more tech savvy, firms have recognized this attribute and geared their
Organizational efforts into employing technology within their infrastructure. Organizations claim they attract higher quality candidates due to this. When a firm emphasizes the latest technology for its employees to utilize to perform their job functions, it creates an environment that illustrates to its employees that the organization cares about its staff and wants them to be successful by investing in them through technology. Advances in technology can allow employees more flexible work schedules or the ability to work from remote locations and can ease stress by doing so. The author explains that businesses regularly get a return on their technology investment by providing the ability to recruit the best candidates and cash in on the organizations reputation as a desirable place to work based on its willingness to employ the latest tools of the trade.

The problem of recruiting candidates and retaining current employees is not a problem at all for the individuals being pursued. The burden lies on the recruiter and the HR manager. As described throughout this paper, organizations are pouring resources and time into developing work-life balance programs in order to recruit and retain candidates and employees. The following is an overview of the process of researching this topic concerning the following hypothesis.

**Hypothesis**

*Benefits related to available work-life balance programs increase organizational attractiveness regarding employee recruitment and retention.*
Research Methodology

The method of obtaining the research data regarding the test of the hypothesis will include a survey questionnaire. The survey will be completed via “Survey Monkey”, an online survey company. The survey is designed to establish whether or not current employees from four different organizations (the chosen organizations will be same-size concerning employee numbers for proportional sampling reasons), were influenced to make their decision to accept employment and/or remain employed based on the organizations’ attractiveness due to its availability and support of work-life balance programs. The sample size of our statistical tests has no need for justification as we will survey all employees of each company. This measure will be taken to ensure accuracy. The survey will be emailed as a link to employees for convenience sampling purposes. Three different types of survey questions will be used. Below are the examples of such and the account of how each will be analyzed.

Likert Scale survey questions, for example:

*How effortless is it to balance your work-life and personal-life at your place of employment?*

- **Extremely easy**
- **Very easy**
- **Moderately easy**
- **Slightly easy**
- **Not at all easy**
Analysis of Likert-type items:

These items fall into the ordinal measurement scale. Descriptive statistics recommended for ordinal measurement scale items include a mode or median for central tendency and frequencies for variability.

Open-ended questionnaires, for example:

*What are your reasons for choosing this organization?*

*Please explain:*

I chose to apply to this organization based on......

Analysis of Open-ended questionnaires:

The use of a larger number of open-ended questions has traditionally been seen as cost-prohibitive because of the analytical overhead incurred with the interpretation of responses. Text analytics software for surveys offer an alternative to this costly procedure, since it can accomplish the coding of open-ended responses in a fraction of the time required to do the job manually. Through the use of advanced linguistic theory and technologies, text analytics software for surveys analyzes open-ended response text as a set of phrases and
sentences whose grammatical structure provides context for the meaning of a response. You can use built-in category building techniques to automatically create categories and manual techniques to fine-tune the results.

**Fixed-alternative questionnaires, for example:**

*How much of your decision to apply was based on the organization’s available work-life balance programs?*

- 76-100%
- 51-75%
- 26-50%
- 0-25%

**Analysis of Fixed-alternative questionnaires:**

Pre-coding will be used since the researcher understands what response categories exist before the data is collected. A coding framework which supports the standardization of answers will be utilized to illustrate the data in a histogram.

**Expected Results**

Results are expected to illustrate a positive correlation between recruiting and retention concerning an organization’s attractiveness regarding availability of work-life balance programs.
**Value of the Research**

The value of the research can be determined by several factors. Some factors are cognitive, emotional, physical and in most cases monetarily positive. Some examples are:

1. Has this research indicated a positive correlation of these implemented programs and organizational attractiveness?
2. Has the organization profited by recruiting top performers in relation to offered WLBs?
3. Has the company retained their top talent by implementing their WLBs?
4. Has the company recruited their top talent by implementing their WLBs?
5. Has WLBs produced a significant drop in sick days thus saving the organization money?
6. Has development in WLBs created higher employee performance due to an increased feeling that their employer desires to create a fostering environment for its employees?

I expect the value of the information to outweigh the cost of the research in a short period of time. Many companies have experienced a significant positive financial return whether it is less employee sick days or higher performance due to higher morale.

**Test hypothesis**

The next step would be to test my hypothesis. This is necessary in order to gather data for analysis. Performing this function produces your data for analysis. This
is crucial to understand whether or not your hypothesis is confirmed or disproven. This will provide the central information which is required to determine if your experiment produced positive or negative results that correlate with the implementation of WLBs.

### Research Timeline

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<tr>
<th>Business Research Proposal</th>
<th>Begin date</th>
<th>Due date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop Research Goals and Questions</td>
<td>12/31/2012</td>
<td>1/4/2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Choose Research Method(s)</td>
<td>1/7/2013</td>
<td>1/11/2013</td>
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<td>Create Research Plan</td>
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<td>Design Research Instruments</td>
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<td>Collect Your Data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Release the Report</td>
<td>5/10/2013</td>
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Possible hurdles…

The sincerity of the programs offered by organizations can be a determinant of success (i.e. supervisor and senior management support). Males are underrepresented when considering which programs to offer although many of today's males perform a significant amount of the childrearing responsibilities which many programs are only offered to females.

Conclusions

Most academic research conducted recently, reinforces my hypothesis. More research needs to be conducted to determine what specific programs are important based on regional, physical and cultural differences that exist globally. These differences may affect how employees rank organizational attractiveness based on the WLBPs offered. This can be an obvious concern for a global director of human resources. Differences in gender and family situations are important for HR managers to understand so that they maintain a fair balance for all employees. If HR managers can maintain this stability of Work-Life Balance programs, their organization will virtually attract any candidate or retain any employee. Companies will continue to see an increase in recruiting and retention abilities by implementing programs and practices which promote employee well being and result in high morale.
References


