

Employees' desire for personal development in the front office of the InterContinental Miami

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Employees in the hospitality industry are under continuous pressure to perform better and to develop and adapt themselves to ever-increasing demands and challenges. The purpose of this research was to identify the relationship between the time an employee has been working for the InterContinental Miami hotel, their personality type and their perception of need for growth and personal development. A 74-measurement item survey was used to measure the variables. Surprisingly, the results showed no relationship between job tenure and the need for personal development. Relationships between job motivation and personal development, and the personality type agreeableness and personal development were identified. The data revealed that the relationship between job motivation and personal development turned out to be the strongest.

Keywords: job tenure, job motivation, personality, personal development, front office

Introduction

The hospitality industry has become a very challenging industry over the past years, and faces many issues to overcome. Besides the continuously increasing competition in a hotel's direct environment (Wang & Wang, 2009), the hospitality industry is confronted with dealing with ever-increasing customer demands (Dixit, 2013). In order for companies to keep delivering the high-quality performance their guests demand, it is crucial that they invest in their employees. By means of motivating and monitoring employees' personal development, companies support expertise development as well as make sure the employees are fit to adapt to new parameters, scenarios and challenges they face within their job and personal life (Beausaert, Segers & Gijselaers, 2011).

Over the last few years the workload has increased significantly for the employees working in the front office department of the InterContinental Miami. In the past five years the average occupancy percentage of the hotel has increased by 31%, resulting in an increase of 33% of the amount of arrivals and departures the front desk deals with. The average rate guests are paying has increased by 23% and the total room revenue of the company has increased by 61% (InterContinental Miami, personal communication, 13 December 2015). All numbers indicate that the hotel's business is increasing, as well as there being an increase in workload for the employees. With labour costs the highest cost a hotel has, it limits the option of hiring more staff.

These drastically increasing numbers for the InterContinental Miami raise a central question: whether all employees are fit to adapt themselves to the continuous changes and increasing challenges and parameters. This research will therefore focus on the need for personal development in the front office department of the InterContinental Miami hotel. To determine which employees are more eager to develop themselves, the

variables of job motivation, job tenure and personality will be taken into consideration.

Theoretical background

Many different definitions and explanations of personal development can be found. Thomas (2014) states that personal development is signified by the conscious pursuit to achieve growth by means of expanding one's knowledge and self-awareness in order to improve one's personal skills. It indicates that personal development is a process rather than one event occurring in which a person strives to improve. Beausaert, Segers and Gijselaers (2011) add that personal development is not only necessary to improve, but also to maintain one's expertise. Personal development is all about individuals learning about themselves, their strengths and weaknesses. It involves continuous improvement of a person's ability to master oneself (Thomas, 2014). All of the previous definitions show that the development is all focused on one's skills, abilities and expertise. However, Hughes and Youngson (2009) take it one step further and state that personal development does not only include the search for skills and knowledge, but that the search for acceptance, awareness and understanding is also essential in this process.

Determining one's personal development level can be done according to the Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS) developed by Robitschek (1998). The instrument determines a person's active and intentional involvement in changing and developing as an individual (Robitschek, 1998).

Another measurement tool used to assess employees' job motivation is the Shirom-Melamed Vigour Measure (SMVM) (Shirom, 2004). Shirom developed a three-dimension vigour measurement tool that included (1) physical strength, (2) emotional energy and (3) cognitive liveliness. SMVM specifically examines "vigour", defined by Shirom (2004) as a positive

affective response to an individual's on-going interactions with several elements in one's working environment. Moreover, Shirom (2007, p. 86) describes vigour as an affective dimension of energy reservoirs that all employees possess that could be used when challenges arise from the environment. One of the direct results of vigour is, according to Sheldon, Ryan and Reis (1996), that it will stimulate a proactive mind-set and creativity at work, as well as other forms of extra-role behaviour at work (such as taking extra initiative in performing additional tasks or ensuring tasks are of a higher quality).

Job tenure refers to the length of time an employee works in a certain job or has been working with an employer. With job tenure being one of the most readily available metrics that organisations have of their employees, it has been used in much research to try and determine its impact on employee performance (Bartłomiejczuk & Jin, 2015). However, there are two contrasting theoretical approaches that display a different relationship of job tenure to job performance. Human capital theories suggest that one's performance should increase over time due to the fact that employees gain in job experiences. Job experience increases overall knowledge, skills and the abilities to perform a task and makes an employee thus more capable of properly performing their task (Bartłomiejczuk & Jin, 2015). However, motivation and job design theories suggest otherwise and emphasise the fact that the longer an employee stays in a position, the more it reduces their motivation and engagement, and thus results in poorer performances (Bartłomiejczuk & Jin, 2015).

An individual's unique pattern of thoughts, their feelings and behaviour that persist over time and across different situations is defined as personality (Morris & Maisto, 2012). Therefore, every person has his own unique personality; all individuals behave in a different manner and perceive situations in their own way. After decades of doing research, the research field is approaching a general consensus on taxonomy of personality traits, namely the "Big Five personality dimensions" (Pervin & John, 1999). The Big Five personality dimensions do not represent one particular theoretical perspective, but serve as an integrated function to represent the various and diverse personality descriptions in one common framework (Pervin & John, 1999). The five dimensions are identified by Goldberg (1990; 1992) as: Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Openness to Experience (O), Agreeableness (A), and Conscientiousness (C).

The first dimension, Neuroticism, shows the extent to which someone is self-conscious, moody, anxious and insecure about oneself (Barrick, Mount & Judge, 2001). Extraversion displays the extent to which an individual is social, talkative and assertive. Furthermore, Openness to Experience shows the extent to which an individual is likely to be curious, unconventional, open-minded and imaginative. The traits of being cooperative, caring, concerned for others and being generally good-natured are associated with the dimension Agreeableness. The final dimension, Conscientiousness, is associated with traits such as being achievement-oriented, responsible, rule abiding and dependable (*ibid.*).

Research approach

This research specifically focused on a correlational analysis. It is this type of research in which relationships between variables are explored. According to the research questions, several issues needed to be explored. Four variables are central in the research, namely investigating how long an employee has been working in the company, what their need for development is, what their job motivation is, and how the employees score on the Big Five personality dimensions.

Aim

Based on the information, the theoretical background provided and the still unknown relation between the variables, the following problem statement has been created which this research will further investigate.

Identifying the relationship between the time an employee has been working for the InterContinental Miami, their personality type and their need for growth and personal development is the first problem statement.

In order to be able to answer this problem statement, several research questions have been created:

- To what degree do the employees in the front office department of the InterContinental Miami feel the need for personal development?
- What relationship exists between job motivation and the need for personal development?
- What relationship exists between the time an employee has been working for the InterContinental Miami and their need for personal development?
- How are the employees' personality dimensions related to their need for personal development?

The need for development was investigated by means of the reviewed version of Robitschek et al. (2012) known as the Personal Growth Initiative Scale II (PGIS-II). This revised version consists of a 16-item questionnaire which the respondents had to answer by means of 7-point Likert scale (0 = disagree strongly; 7 = agree strongly). The PGIS-II scale contains four items in the subdivision "readiness for change", five items for "planfulness" (i.e. ability to plan), three items for "using resources", and four items for "intentional behaviour". The total mean of all 16 items provided the overall initiative score.

For the theoretical background, the Shirom-Melamed Vigour Measure (SMVM) (Shirom, 2004) is a tool that can be used to measure employees' motivation towards their jobs. The questionnaire for this particular part consisted of a 12-item questionnaire existing of the three subscales; (1) physical strength, (2) emotional energy, and (3) cognitive liveliness. These three subscales were measured based on a 7-point Likert scale.

In order to measure the employees' personality types according to the Big Five theory, it was decided to make use of the Big Five Inventory (BFI) measurement method created by John, Donahue and Kentle (1991). In the literature, the most commonly used measurement tools for the Big Five are the NEO-PI-R, the NEO-FFI and the BFI. For this research, BFI was selected due to fact that it was less time-consuming (than the NEO-PI-R) for a respondent to fill in the questionnaire, while still maintaining its complexity when compared to other measurement tools. The finalised 74-item self-completion

questionnaire was first subjected to a pilot survey before being distributed among all participants.

Sample

The research was conducted in the front office department of the InterContinental in Miami. The front office department in the InterContinental Miami consists of the following sub-departments: the front desk, the instant service centre, concierge, the bell desk and the gift shop. All employees in this department were included in the research and were asked to participate. Approximately 60 employees are employed in the entire department. As the company and department to be investigated had been selected beforehand and all employees from this department were included, the sampling was based upon pre-selected characteristics, and thus the sampling was done according to non-probability sampling. While conducting this research it was also essential to take the ethical issue of confidentiality into account. In order to guarantee the privacy of all employees who took part in the research, no questions concerning their demographics such as age or gender were required. These variables were not a subject of interest in the research and would have resulted in the researcher being unable to guarantee 100% anonymity.

Findings

Table 1 provides an overview of the correlational analysis that was conducted. This table forms the essence of the following section. Furthermore, Figure 1 provides a clear and concise visual overview of the key correlations this research discovered.

Tenure and personal development

Both job tenure and the average PGIS score ($r = 0.19$, $n = 39$, $p = 0.26$), as well as job tenure and the PGIS subscales show a significance of $p > 0.05$, and thus resulting in the conclusion that there is no relation between job tenure and personal

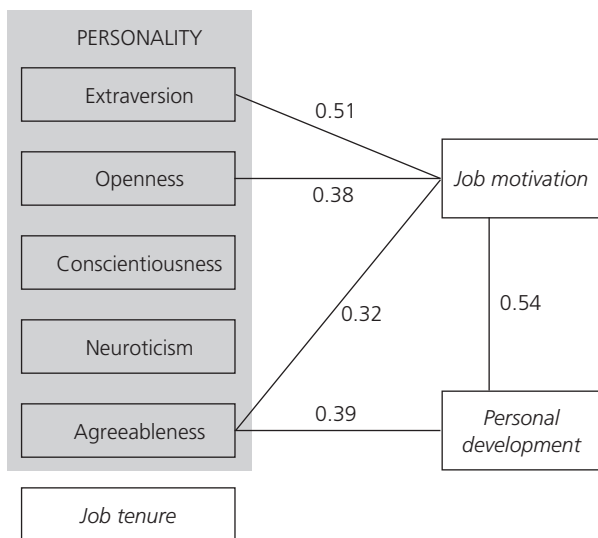


Figure 1: Key correlational

Table 1: Correlation matrix: personal development, job tenure, job motivation and personality types

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. PGIS	6.18	0.51	1														
2. Readiness for change	6.27	0.58	0.71**	1													
3. Planfulness	617.00	0.65	0.81**	0.57**	1												
4. Using resources	5.67	1.12	0.71**	0.23	0.30	1											
5. Intentional behaviour	6.50	0.49	0.80**	0.46**	0.58**	0.52**	1										
6. Job tenure	58.87	104.70	0.19	0.14	0.16	0.17	0.05	1									
7. Job motivation	6.17	0.55	0.54**	0.44**	0.47**	0.26	0.52**	-0.00	1								
8. Physical strength	5.92	0.70	0.49**	0.26	0.55**	0.20	0.52**	0.04	0.77**	1							
9. Emotional energy	6.40	0.73	0.32	0.32*	0.23	0.16	0.30	-0.11	0.81**	0.34*	1						
10. Cognitive liveliness	6.31	0.68	0.43**	0.52**	0.25	0.26	0.34*	0.08	0.72**	0.27	0.59**	1					
11. Extraversion	5.05	0.81	0.28	0.44**	0.30	-0.02	0.19	-0.17	0.51**	0.34*	0.48**	0.36*	1				
12. Agreeableness	5.96	0.71	0.39*	0.29	0.29	0.44**	0.06	0.06	0.32*	0.14	0.47**	0.13	0.57**	1			
13. Conscientiousness	5.61	1.07	0.13	0.17	0.44**	-0.23	-0.02	0.22	0.08	0.21	-0.02	-0.08	0.16	0.27	1		
14. Neuroticism	2.65	1.18	-0.07	-0.03	-0.02	-0.12	-0.03	-0.06	-0.16	0.18	-0.45**	-0.19	-0.28	-0.54**	-0.15	1	
15. Openness	5.13	0.63	0.20	0.02	0.20	0.19	0.14	-0.25	0.38*	0.22	0.41**	0.25	-0.04	0.23	0.03	-0.11	1

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
 **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

development. Through the correlation matrix it becomes evident that job tenure does not display any correlations with any of the other variables.

Job motivation and personal development

In order to display whether a relation exists between the factors of job motivation and personal development, a Pearson correlation test was conducted between the scores of the variables, while also taking the subscales into account.

According to Table 1, several relations exist between the variables. With $p < 0.05$ between the overall job motivation and the PGIS score, it can be seen that there is a significant relationship between personal development and job motivation ($r = 0.54$, $n = 39$, $p = 0.00$).

All data show that the relationship between the overall job motivation and the PGIS score display the strongest relationship, with $r = 0.54$, and all other relationships between job motivation and PGIS and its subscales display rather weak relationships with r varying between 0.32 and 0.52.

Personality and personal development

The final research question looked into the fact whether a relationship exists between personality and one's need for personal development. With the data presented in Table 1, it becomes evident that a total of four relationships can be found between the two variables. First of all, it shows that a clear positive relationship exists between one's need for personal development and the personality type of agreeableness ($r = 0.39$, $n = 39$, $p = 0.01$). The personality type of agreeableness is also slightly stronger, and positively related towards the subscale using resources ($r = 0.44$, $n = 39$, $p = 0.01$).

Besides the previous two correlations, two different ones can be discovered as well. First of all, the personality type of extraversion is positively related with one's readiness for change ($r = 0.44$, $n = 39$, $p = 0.01$), and the personality type of conscientiousness is positively correlated with one's planfulness towards personal development ($r = 0.44$, $n = 39$, $p = 0.01$).

The strength of the four relationships are rather similar with the value of r between 0.39 and 0.44. However, it can be stated that the relationships do display as moderate to weak.

Personality and job motivation

Even though it was not a defined research question, Figure 1 displays several personality traits showing significant correlations with the variable of job motivation. The strongest relationship exists between the trait of extraversion and job motivation ($r = 0.51$). Moreover, openness ($r = 0.38$) and agreeableness ($r = 0.39$) show a significant relationship with job motivation.

Conclusions

First of all, this research showed that the employees of the InterContinental Miami indicated a high motivation for personal development as an element of change and innovation, as they scored 6.18 out of 7. This information indicates that the employees are looking for ways to change themselves and have the intention of changing themselves.

Several relationships between job motivation, personal development and one's personality exist. One's personality has an impact on one's overall attitude towards one's own personal

development and is also related to job motivation. The three personality traits of extraversion, openness and agreeableness displayed a positive correlation with job motivation, and the trait of agreeableness also showed a positive relationship with personal development. The strongest relationship appeared to be between job motivation and personal development. This relationship is in agreement with earlier studies. Sheldon, Ryan and Reis (1996) state that a direct result of job motivation is that it increases employees' engagement in extra role behaviour at work, such as taking increased initiative towards increasing their performance. A conclusion that can be drawn is that staff spending time on personal development appear to have a larger interest in development of the company, and are better able to cope with change.

Job tenure, on the other hand, did not display any relationship with personal development or job motivation. Thus, employees who have been working in the company for a longer period of time are not necessarily more motivated, nor do they have a higher need for personal development compared to employees who recently joined the company.

Therefore, it is advised that the company takes personality and perhaps even personality testing into consideration in their recruitment and selection process. Focusing on the teams' different personalities will have a direct effect on the overall job motivation and need for development and can contribute towards the effort the team will make to strive towards change and development.

When it comes to limitations of this study, it is clear that it was specifically focused on the employees in the front office department of the InterContinental Miami, entailing that it specifically applies to the hospitality industry in the US state of Florida. Therefore, the findings may be less applicable to employees in other departments of the property or even to other front office employees in different cities or countries. Conclusions that were drawn were specifically related to the population that was used in this research, therefore the conclusions may differ in a different cultural context.

Moreover, it could be argued that the total sample size ($n = 39$) could be considered to be relatively low, and for more accurate results increasing the sample size is suggested. The final limitation is the assumption that the respondents completed their surveys by providing answers they expected to be socially desirable. Respondents might have found themselves in an ethical dilemma, as they might have been afraid results would be given to their superiors and that the results would not remain anonymous.

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