Opinion Article | Open Access

Organisations, Individuals as Employees, Individuals as Consumers and the Relationships Between them

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Organisations

Organisations of all shapes and sizes face a significant number of challenges that they must meet if they are to thrive in today's globally hypercompetitive environment. Our aim is to help them deal with some of the most critical. An organisation is a collection of individuals working together in a structured way to achieve certain goals, and this understanding is central to our research interests. We aim to provide insights on current and emergent issues related to the three interconnected themes we focus on:

● the relationship between the individual as an employee and the organisation

● the relationship between the individual as a consumer and the organisation

● the relationship between the individual and the digitalised world.

The recommendations that flow from our research all have in common that they are corporately socially responsible. Our framework is based on CSR, sustainability and an ethical approach.

It is a cliché to say that people represent the key resource of any organisation, yet a cliché contains a nugget of truth. It is essential for an employer to recruit, select and retain people with the right set of skills, competencies and attitudes, and this is particularly necessary when thinking about present and future senior managers. For this reason we carry out research in the field of employer branding, where evidence shows that the stronger the brand, the better qualified are the applicants. We investigate the mechanisms through which employers can improve their brand and differentiate themselves from their competition in the war for talent, and provide guidelines to help companies link their employer brand with the brands of their products and services in order to benefit from the effect of synergies.

Once they have recruited high quality staff, companies need to retain them. Talent management is then an important theme for our research. We are interested in determining what are the most efficient and effective steps that companies can take to keep and motivate their key human resources. Here we have identified several key components, one of the most important of which is corporate health management (CHM). We are investigating the factors that distinguish good CHM from bad, and looking at ways of identifying the benefits to both company and employee that flow from good CHM. We are particularly interested in stress in the workplace and are in the process of looking at non-traditional tools and techniques that can be used, such as learning, relaxing and massage systems, and the contribution that can be made by yoga.

Employees need to learn from each other. Organisations of all sizes have intranets and blogs which are moderately successful in knowledge sharing, but we consider that other techniques can be even more useful. In particular we are interested in knowledge sharing by storytelling: we are studying how this can be encouraged within organisations in both formal and non-formal settings.

A further theme in this area is new forms of working. Telework, for example, has been in existence for around two decades, yet the challenges of how to best integrate teleworkers into the workplace have still not been fully met. Similarly, the growing trend to the casualisation of employment, where workers are employed on short-term contracts and not permanently, raises questions that we are attempting to answer about integration and cooperation.

New ways of doing things imply change: we have developed a multi-level processual model of change management that makes it possible to take into account the complex processes that must be managed before, during and after change, at the organisational, group and individual level. A necessary complement to and almost a precondition of successful change management is certified quality management, which when correctly implemented, plays a significant role in guaranteeing a clear structure to change initiatives and an output which can also be used for employer branding.

Changing processes require customised processes, all the more so when dealing with international companies and entities. The same applies to digitalization and technization. For activities that have an international component we are working on intercultural communication and management topics; we are exploring how to assess and take into account cultural specificities, which have an impact on all aspects of organisational activities, from human resource management to marketing.

Just as the relationship between the individual as an employee and the organisation is changing, so too is the relationship between the organisation and the individual as consumer. The customer has changed and now often becomes a presumer or prosumer. We are investigating this changing relationship between consumer and producer and developing ways in which companies can benefit from strengthening the links between themselves and presumers and prosumers.

There are many commonalities between our areas of interest. For instance: the individual as employee and as consumer is overloaded

with information and needs methods and platforms which focus his concentration and deliver information he can trust. Among the tools and methods that we investigate to help in this area are gamification and infotainment, whose value we have already been able to establish. Similarly, we are studying how word of mouth marketing, social media marketing and reputation marketing play an increasing role in these areas, e.g. for marketing products and services, for improving processes within companies, and for employer branding.

Digitalization has revolutionised and information paths and media and continues to do so. It has provided companies with the opportunity to deliver individualized offers. Targeting and retargeting are prime examples of this, as our ongoing studies show. We are working not only on the change to digitalization, however. Our research has made clear that there is a trend back to offline marketing, and to a new emphasis on combining online and offline marketing, e. g. in event marketing such as pop up-stores.

Our research deals with organisations, individuals as employees, individuals as consumers, and the relationships between them. Common to these areas of research is the need to take into account internationality and interculturality, digitalization and technization. We will continue to investigate how instruments like gamification and story telling can be used by organisations to interact with employees and consumers. And we look forward with great anticipation to developing new instruments and insights that can be used to benefit all.