

TRAINING TRANSFER: THE INTERACTION OF CHANGED BEHAVIOUR AND CO-WORKER SUPPORT ON JOB PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined the moderating effect of changed behaviour on the relationship between co-workers support on frontline employees job performance. The authors hypothesize that co-workers support are more strongly related to performance among frontline employees reporting low than high level in changed behaviour. Results of Structural Equation Modeling, gathered from 264 employees who held positions as Food and Beverage outlet servers in 4 and 5 star ratings hotels, support the hypothesis. The result indicates that when frontline employees' exhibit low changed behaviour, the relationships between co-worker support and job performance are stronger. Implications for substantive research, strengths and limitations, and directions for future research are offered.

Keywords: *changed behaviour, employees, job performance training transfer*

INTRODUCTION

Hospitality is one of the fastest growing business sectors, and in the ever-changing market conditions it is vitally important that it continues to build a skilled and competent workforce with a greater level of responsiveness. According to McKenzie (2009), skills training can never be cut as it is the lifeblood of the industry, and personal development for junior and senior staff alike keeps them motivated and challenged. The author added that, in a buoyant market, change would be seen as a driver for training needs and this environment is throwing up change at every turn.

Co-worker or peer support refers to co-workers assisting one another in their tasks when needed by sharing knowledge and expertise, as well as providing encouragement and support (Zhou & George, 2001). Peer support has been shown to increase the likelihood of learning transfer (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Goldstein, 1980).

Facteau, Dobbins, Russell, Ladd, and Kudisch (1995) identified four major sources of social support: subordinate, peer, supervisor, and top management. Their study is designed to examine the independent and differential effects of subordinate support, peer support, supervisor support, and top management support on the training transfer of 967 managers and supervisors in departments within state government agencies. Their study concluded that, of four forms of social support, only subordinate and peer support are positively related to perceived transfer, supervisor support is negatively related to transfer, and top management support shows no significant relationship (Facteau et al., 1995). Similarly, study by Ford, Quiñones, Sego, and Sorra (1992) concluded that those trainees who reported having colleagues and supervisors with positive attitudes towards training, reported that they had more opportunities to utilize new skills. Therefore, managers who believe that their subordinates and peers are supportive of their training efforts are more likely to perceive greater transfer of their training skills.

Clarke (2002) noted that the most consistent factor explaining the relationship between the work environment and transfer is the support trainees receive to use their new skills and knowledge in the

workplace. Employees may also acquire task-relevant knowledge and expertise from supportive co-workers, which may make new ways of doing things possible (Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffin, 1993). In this context, working with helpful, supportive colleagues promotes an environment where new ideas can be discussed more openly and freely (Joiner, 2007).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Behaviour change

Changes in job behaviour or performance, involve studying the change in job behaviour which takes place as a result of the training. This is to evaluate employees on whether the newly acquired skills, knowledge, or attitude are being used in the everyday environment of the learner. At this point, evaluation sees whether tasks are performed differently before and after the training. In line with Casper (2005), behaviour change is a measure of the extent to which learners change their behaviour and use the learned principles and techniques on the job.

Behaviour change, or the actual utilization of what was learned in training on the job, was the theme of Kirkpatrick's step 3 (Kirkpatrick, 2005). Kirkpatrick (2005) listed five basic requirements that must exist if a person is going to change his/her job behaviour. The basic requirements are: 1) he/she must want to improve; 2) he/she must recognize his own weaknesses; 3) he/she must work in a permissive climate; 4) he/she must have some help from someone who is interested and skilled; and 5) he/she must have an opportunity to try out the new ideas.

Green (2001) stated that the measurement of changes in job behaviour as a result of participation in a training program is often referred to as the transfer of training or transfer of learning. Kirkpatrick (2005) concluded that a change in job behaviour due to training is only possible if trainees acquire the new knowledge, skills and attitudes. In other words, the main antecedent of training transfer is the learning gained during the training. There is nothing more important

than measuring the extent that on-the-job behaviour has changed as a result of the training. If the trainees do not apply what they have learned, the program has been a failure even if learning has taken place. Therefore, measuring behaviour change is necessary, not only to see if the behaviour has changed, but also to determine the reasons why change has not occurred.

METHODOLOGY

In the present study, to identify whether or not there are any significant differences in the path coefficient, a two-group of path analysis, as suggested by Hair, Black, Anderson, and Tatham (2005) was performed. The first step involved setting the parameter from co-workers support to employees' performance to be estimated freely. Secondly, the parameter was constrained to be equal across groups. A difference in chi squared ($\Delta\chi^2$) values between the two models could be used to identify whether changed behaviour had a moderating effect on the relationship between co-workers support and employees performance Hair et al. (2005). The procedure was applied to assess the moderating effect of changed behaviour on the co-worker support and employees' job performance relationship.

THE MODERATING EFFECT OF CHANGED BEHAVIOUR ON CO-WORKERS SUPPORT - PERFORMANCE RELATIONSHIP

The path suggested that changed behaviour moderates the relationship between co-worker support and job performance. The result reveals that the chi-squared differences were significant for the link between co-worker support and job performance (11.093, $p < .01$). The path coefficient of low CB was greater than that of high CB. Changed behaviour significantly moderates the relationship between co-worker supports to employees' job performance.

This result indicates that when frontline employees' exhibit low changed behaviour, the relationships between co-worker support and job performance are stronger. Thus, it seems that co-worker support

is more effective for frontline employees with low changed behaviour than those with high changed behaviour characteristics. This result can be explained by referring to the characteristics of frontline employees with low changed behaviour. There is a possibility that frontline employees with low changed behaviour characteristics prefer to have less interaction or coordination with other work colleagues. Given that, it is possible that frontline employees with low changed behaviour will prefer to seek advice or guidance from top management, in directing them to perform their job, instead of referring to their work colleagues. With sufficient guidance and direction from top management, the performance of frontline employees with low changed behaviour would increase.

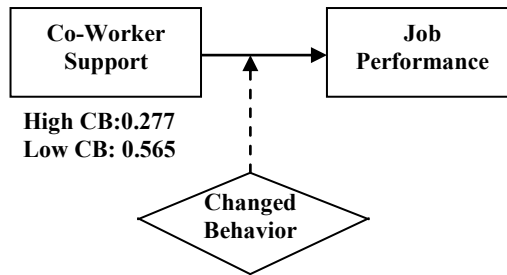


Figure 1.1: Changed Behaviour Moderating Effect between Co-Worker Support and Job Performance

CONCLUSION

The conclusions drawn from the findings of the study are subject to several limitations that suggest a fruitful direction for future research. In evaluating the effectiveness of training, the most meaningful factor is the trainee's work performance and therefore, a better performance indicator may be in the knowledge and skills employees transfer from the training back to the work environment. Although employees may be able to apply the learned knowledge and skills during a training program, elements of the employees' characteristics and work environment may impact on their ability to transfer these learned knowledge and skills to the job. Individuals may be motivated to share knowledge and transfer these back to the job, but may be discouraged, inhibited, or prevented from doing so by cir-

cumstances in their work environment. This situation may occur due to the culture of Asian employees that present a particular group pattern of behaviour and attitude which resulted from their cultural backgrounds, such as respect for authority, introversion and self-restraint, other than experiencing communication barrier. In relation to this subject matter, hospitality business in Malaysia having diverse employees who are locals and foreign workers are experiencing the same situation. With the multi-nationality workforce, diversity will have a noteworthy impact on the hospitality industry.

The research was based on data collected from four and five stars rating hotel segments, primarily from frontline employees working in food and beverage departments in Klang Valley of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Thus, the result may not be directly generalized to other segments of the hotel industry. Replication in other research settings is encouraged, as it will extend our knowledge across a broader range of the hospitality industry.

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