Career abandonment intentions among software workers

1. Ricardo Colomo-Palacios[1],
2. Cristina Casado-Lumbreras[2],
3. Sanjay Misra[3,*] and
4. Pedro Soto-Acosta[4]

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Abstract

Within the software development industry, human resources have been recognized as one of the most decisive and scarce resources. Today, the retention of skilled IT (information technology) personnel is a major issue for employers and recruiters as well, since IT career abandonment is a common practice and means not only the loss of personnel, knowledge, and skills, but also the loss of business opportunities. This article seeks to discover the main motivations young practitioners abandon the software career. To achieve this objective, two studies were conducted. The first study was qualitative (performed through semistructured interviews) and intended to discover the main variables affecting software career abandonment. The second study was quantitative, consisting of a Web-based survey developed from the output of the first study and administered to a sample of 148 IT practitioners. Results show that work-related, psychological, and emotional variable are the most relevant group of variables explaining IT career abandonment. More specifically, the three most important variables that motivate employees to abandon the career are effort–reward imbalance, perceived workload, and emotional exhaustion. In contrast, variables such as politics and infighting, uncool work, and insufficient resources influence to a lesser extent the decision to leave the career. © 2012 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

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