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What Makes that Employee so Good? Identifying the Characteristics of High Performance Hourly Employees in the Theme Park and Attraction Industry

Ady Milman
University of Central Florida, Ady.Milman@ucf.edu

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What Makes that Employee so Good?

Identifying the Characteristics of High Performance Hourly Employees in the Theme Park and Attraction Industry

A Case Study

A Research Report submitted for:
IAAPA Chairman's program 2001-2002



Ady Milman, Ph.D.
Rosen School of Hospitality Management
University of Central Florida
Orlando, FL 32816
milman@mail.ucf.edu
(407) 823-2982

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Background:

Following the September 11th, 2001 events, the United States has seen the first decline in employment expansion in over a decade. The services industry lost 111,000 jobs, mainly in travel-related businesses like hotels (46,000) and auto services (13,000), in particular auto rental agencies and parking services (U.S. Department of Labor, 2001).

The hospitality industry, like many other sectors of the service industry is faced with the challenge of recruiting and retaining employees. Employment in the theme park and attraction industry is not an easy task. Human resource professionals are challenged on a daily basis with unique task of recruiting, selecting, training and developing employees. In the wake of September 11th events, some hourly employees who have been laid off from their theme park and attraction facilities may have chosen not to return to the industry. Less than a year after the tragedy, many facilities are rebounding and having considerable problems locating high-performance employees.

Identifying the traits and characteristics of high-performing employees and distinguishing them from average-performance employees would assist many operators in the theme park and attraction industry.

Although many theme park and attraction facilities provide detailed training for their employees, no major research was conducted to identify the personal background, personality, or other employment-related characteristics that may predict high-performing hourly employees.

Project Overview, Goals and Objectives:

The major objective of this study is to explore and identify the various employee characteristics that may contribute to a high performance evaluation of hourly employees in the theme park and attraction industry. The study also distinguishes high performance hourly employees from average performance hourly employees.

Methodology and data collection:

The research project adopted a case-study approach by collecting data from current hourly employees in several and large medium-size Central Florida theme parks and attractions. A self-administered questionnaire was developed and administered to 550 hourly employees through the human resource departments. The participants returned 330 questionnaires to yield a response rate of 60%. The questionnaire was administered to two groups: "high performance" and average performance" employees.

Findings:

1. General Profile of the Respondents:

The respondents that participated in the study represented all age groups and had a median age of 19-25 years. Most of the respondents were single (68.5%), and the rest were married (23.8%), divorced/separated (6.8%), and widowed (0.9%). The median level of education of the overall sample was a community college degree and the gender distribution between females and males was 54% and 46%, respectively.

2. Respondents' Current Job Responsibilities:

The respondents that participated in the study were employed by their theme parks and attractions for a median of 1-2 years. The respondents had responsibilities in a variety of areas, mainly in ride operation (55.1%) and guest relations (13.8%). The participants in the study worked in average 34.36 hours per week and a median of 37 hours per week.

3. Respondents' Job Search Process:

Respondents were asked what attracted them to their current job. A very large proportion of the overall sample mentioned that free admissions and discounts (49.7%), flexible hours (49.1%), interaction with people of different backgrounds (41.8%), and employee benefits (39.9%) were the most important motives that attracted them to their current job. Please note that pay level was at the bottom of the list of the reasons that attracted the hourly employees to the current job.

4. Respondents' Previous Employment Experience:

The majority of the participants in the study (71.6%) had worked for another employer in the past. A small proportion of the respondents who had previously worked for another employer worked in the theme park and attraction industry (15.8%). Others worked in other hospitality industry options like hotels or food services (32.8%). The remainder of the sample (51.5%) had worked for non-hospitality businesses.

5. Respondents' Perception of their Current Employment Experience:

All employees that participated in the sample agreed that "good employees should be reliable and honest," and if were able, they "would always complete every task their supervisor assigns them." The hourly employees were also in agreement that they would be willing to learn any new task in their park, they always come to work on-time, there is always room for improvement in their performance, and they were interested in performing other challenging jobs in their parks.

Respondents disagreed that: they “did not like interacting with people,” when they did not want to work they called in sick, they did not always follow the rules in their parks, they did not like getting into small talk with guests, and sometimes their emotional problems affect their job performance.

T-tests revealed that “high performance” employees differed significantly from “average performance” employees in their views regarding their employment experience on the following issues: Reliability, honesty, compliance with supervisor assignments, punctuality, and being challenged. These seemed to be much more crucial to “high performance” employees than “average performance” employees. “High performance” employees were also more emotionally attached to their jobs (“I love working here”) and disassociated their personal troubles from their job tasks. Their perception of their organization’s communication process was overall more positive.

6. Level of Importance of Employment Characteristics:

Respondents indicated that the most important employment characteristics were the following: Receiving respect from their supervisor, being supported by management, being informed about new changes in the park, coming to work on time, receiving good employment evaluations, working with people who respect them, and being an excellent employee. No statistically significant differences were found between “high performance” and “average performance” employees.

7. The Impact of Personality Characteristics on Employment Performance:

The respondents agreed that they were very dependable, independent persons, tolerant, and cooperative with other people. The respondents also considered themselves to be sociable and loved meeting different people. The hourly employees disagreed that they were not always obeying their job rules, and that they were not very flexible or secure.

T-tests revealed that “high performance” employees considered themselves to be significantly more social and dependable individuals than “average performance” employees.

8. Respondents’ Level of Satisfaction with their Job:

The data indicated that 76% of the respondents were either satisfied (52%) or very satisfied (24%) with their job. Further analysis of the data indicated that “high performance” employees were significantly more satisfied with their job than “average performance” employees.

9. Job Retention Indicator:

About three quarters of respondents (76%) were likely (22.2%) or very likely (53.8%) to remain with their current employer in the next twelve months. No statistically significant differences were found between “high performance” and “average performance” employees.

As expected, Pearson correlation indicated that likelihood to remain with the current employer was correlated with level of job satisfaction. Highly satisfied employees were more likely to remain longer with their current employer.

10. Employees' Perceived Performance Evaluation:

The data indicated that 81.3% of the respondents thought that they were either likely (36.3%) or very likely (45%) to receive "above satisfactory" evaluation in their next performance review. Further analysis of the data indicated that "high performance" employees thought that they were more likely to receive "above satisfactory" evaluation in their next performance review than "average performance" employees.

Pearson correlation indicated that employees' perceived likelihood to receive "above satisfactory" evaluation was correlated with their level of satisfaction on their job. Highly satisfied employees were more likely to believe that they would receive "above satisfactory" evaluation in their next performance review.

Furthermore, Pearson correlation indicated that employee perceived likelihood to receive "above satisfactory" evaluation was correlated with a number of variables that were clustered and labeled in six groups: passion to the organization, cooperation and dependability, emotional stability, long-range commitment to the organization, feedback from significant others, and extroversion.

PROJECT OVERVIEW, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

Overview: The U.S. Labor Market

The employment market in the United States continues to change. During the 1993-2000 period the majority (81%) of new jobs created were in categories paying higher than median wages, with a large proportion of the new “good” jobs more likely to be filled by non-college graduates (U.S. Department of Labor, 2001). Following the September 11th events, the United States has seen the first decline in employment expansion in over a decade. The services industry lost 111,000 jobs, mainly in travel-related businesses like hotels (46,000) and auto services (13,000), in particular auto rental agencies and parking services (U.S. Department of Labor, 2001).

The hospitality and tourism industry has also faced turmoil due to the recession of the early 2000s. Many hospitality and travel operations have experienced employee lay-offs and numerous positions eliminated. Many theme parks and attractions, like other hospitality operations, resorted to temporary deep discounting to keep attendance level at as close to historical levels as possible (De la Cruz, 2001).

Nonetheless, the hospitality and tourism industry remains the world’s largest employer generating over 7.5 million jobs in 1998. Additionally, 9.4 million jobs were supported by indirect and induced sales, resulting in a total of 16.9 million jobs during the year 1998 (Travel Industry Association of America, 2000). Meeting this incredible demand for employees in light of an economic cyclical downturn will be a challenging task in the years to come.

The hospitality business, like many other sectors of the service industry, is faced with the challenge of recruiting and retaining high-performance employees. Annual turnover rates are high in hospitality operations, often over 100%. Our goal as theme park and attraction

professionals continues to find solutions to recruit and retain quality employees within our facilities.

Employment in the theme park and attraction industry is not an easy task. Human resource professionals are challenged on a daily basis with the unique task of recruiting, selecting, training and developing employees. In the wake of September 11th, some hourly employees who have been laid off from their theme parks and attractions may have chosen not to return to the industry. Less than a year after the tragedy, many facilities are rebounding and having considerable problems locating high performance employees.

In the past decade or so, average hourly earnings in the services sector have grown faster than in all other industries except finance, insurance, and real estate. Service sector earnings per hour in the turn of the 21st century are more than the average for all other private industry sectors (Travel Industry Association of America, 2000).

While the prospects for employment are relatively high, the hospitality industry is faced with the challenge of recruiting and retaining high performance employees. Research indicated that employee attitudes and performance have an impact on their company income. For example, a survey conducted in 800 Sears stores showed that when employee attitudes improved by 5%, customer satisfaction increased by 1.3%, and consequently increasing revenue by one-half a percentage (Smith, 2001).

Identifying the traits and characteristics of high-performance employees, and distinguishing them from average-performance employees would assist many operators in the theme park and attraction industry not only in their recruitment, training, and retention practices, but also will lead to improving customer satisfaction.

The Amusement and Attraction Industry Labor Challenge

While there is limited research on the subject of the employment practices of hourly employees in the theme park and attraction industry, many facility operators are concerned with future labor issues. For example, a recent survey of IAAPA general managers revealed that employees are among the top three management's priorities. In the same study, general managers also predicted that the prospects for seasonal employees in the amusement, theme park, and attraction industry appeared to be worse in the next five and ten years (Milman, 1999).

A recent brain-storming session with ten operation managers of large and medium-size attractions held in Orlando indicated that one of their major areas of concern was the identification of the unique characteristics of high-performance employees and distinguishing them from average-performance employees.

While many facilities provide detailed training for their employees, no major research was conducted regarding the identification of personal background, personality, and other employment-related characteristics that may predict high-performance hourly employees. Identification of these characteristics may assist facility operators in their recruiting practices, retention strategies, and training programs. The findings could also be used in developing a rubric for the ideal front-of-the-house employee in the theme parks and attraction industry.

Previous Research on the Characteristics of High Performance Employees

Previous research investigated various employee and company-related traits and characteristics that predicted high level of performance. For example, Judge and Bono (2001) examined the relationships between core self-evaluations traits (self-esteem, generalized self-controlled, locus of control, and emotional stability) with job satisfaction and job performance.

Salgado (1997) explored the relationships between personality and job performance in the European community. The results indicated that employee conscientiousness and emotional stability were valid predictors for level of performance across job criteria and occupational groups.

Other research concluded that high-quality employees choose to work for companies with a high level of social responsibility that usually promote issues like quality of development products and services, women's rights in the workplace, environmental concern, and diversity (Greening and Turban, 2000). Krueger and Rouse (1998) also found that training had a positive on the incidence performance awards and job attendance.

Gomez-Mejia et al. (1996) concluded that excellent employees would have the following traits:

- *Extroversion*: The degree to which someone is talkative, sociable, active, aggressive, and excitable.
- *Agreeableness*: The degree to which someone is trusting, amiable, generous, tolerant, honest, cooperative, and flexible.
- *Conscientiousness*: The degree to which someone is dependable and organized, conforms to the needs of the job, and preserves all tasks.
- *Emotional Stability*: The degree to which someone is secure, calm, independent, and autonomous.
- *Openness to Experience*: The degree to which someone is intellectual, philosophical, insightful, creative, artistic, and curious.

Of these five, *conscientiousness* has been considered to be the most valid predictor of job performance (Gomez-Mejia, 1996). In other studies investigating the relationships between these five traits and performance in the service industry, three dimensions (agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability) were highly correlated (Ford and Heaton, 2000).

Employees in high in customer orientation seemed to be more friendly, emotionally stable, and dependable (Ford and Heaton, 2000).

While these research projects highlighted the causes for employees' performance, none of the studies addressed seasonal or hourly employees, in particular in the theme park and attraction industry.

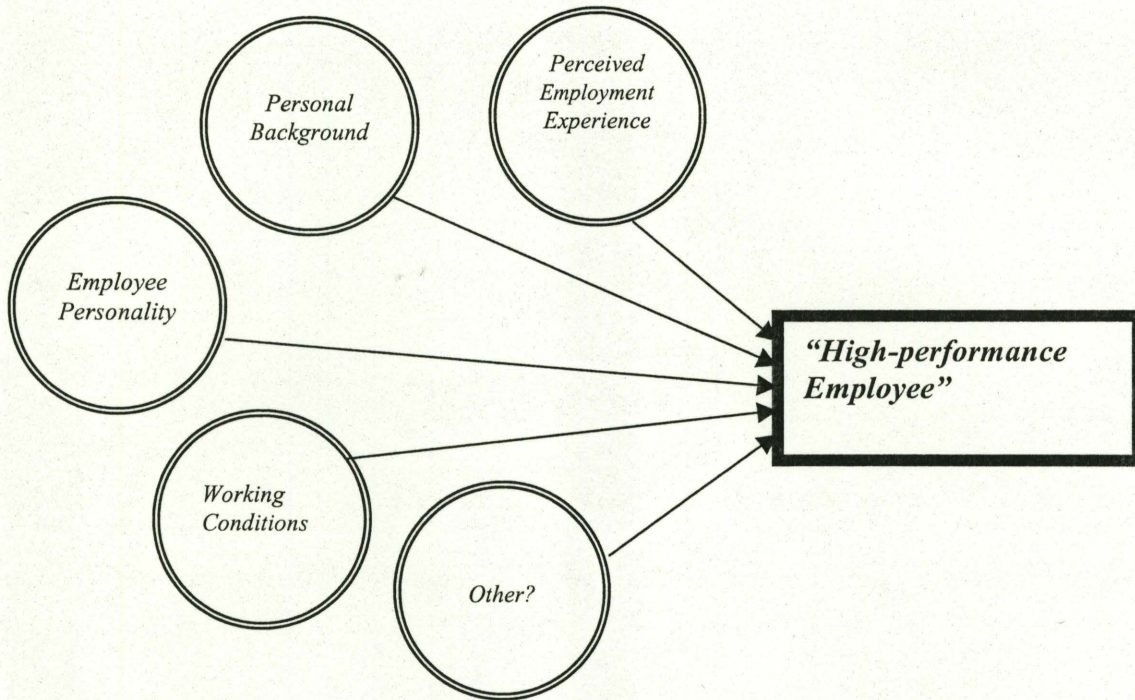
Project's Goals and Objectives

The major objective of this study was to explore and identify the various hourly employee attitudes and characteristics that may contribute to a high performance evaluation (Figure 1). The study also distinguishes high performance hourly employees from average performance hourly employees.

For the purpose of this study, *an hourly employee* was defined as "employee who works in a theme park or an attraction facility on an hourly basis for a period of at least six months." A *high performance employee* was defined as the "an employee that had received an overall "above satisfactory" or "outstanding" performance evaluation from his/her immediate supervisor in the past year. An *average performance employee* was defined as the "an employee that had received an overall "average" or "below average" performance evaluation from his/her immediate supervisor in the past year. *A theme park or an attraction* was defined as "a gated commercial facility that offers entertainment for a single admission price."

Figure 1:

Identifying the Characteristics of High Performance Hourly Employees
in The Amusement and Attraction Industry



INDUSTRY SIGNIFICANCE:

The study expanded on the body of knowledge in the area of hourly employee performance prediction in the theme park and attraction industry. The project distinguishes high performance employees from average performance employees. The results of the study identifies key areas that may be helpful for employers to identify employees that would be successful in their job and contribute to the company's overall performance and guest satisfaction.

This is a first attempt to study hourly employees performance in the theme park and attraction industry. With many facilities relying on hourly employees for their operation, the

findings are beneficial to identify key issues that would improve employee selection process, training, and retention.

ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER BENEFITS:

The findings could also be used by IAAPA to develop training and educational materials for human resource managers, department managers, and direct supervisors in theme park and attraction facilities, both in North America and overseas. Possible publication outlets may include brochures, manuals, presentations, or training videos.

The findings may also provide public relation opportunity to IAAPA as a hospitality trade association that has taken leadership initiative in the initiative to study the characteristics of high performance hourly employees.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

The research project adopted a case-study approach by collecting data from current hourly employees in several IAAPA-member theme park and attraction facilities. Several Central Florida large and medium-size theme parks and attractions participated in the study and provided access to current hourly employees. Since the study was exploratory in nature, no formal hypotheses were developed.

Instrument Development:

1. Four focus groups were conducted:
 - Three focus groups of hourly employees who received above average performance evaluations in the past 12 months in the facility that they work for. The groups included representations in terms of age, gender, ethnic background, job tasks, and tenure with the facility.
 - A focus group of supervisors employed in the theme park and attraction industry was also conducted. The group included representations in terms of age, gender, ethnic background, previous job tasks, and tenure within the attraction.

The focus groups were conducted to identify major areas of concern associated with performance of hourly employees, and to generate some research questions to be tested in a quantitative instrument.

2. A self-administered questionnaire was developed based on literature review and the focus group findings. The focus groups generated the perceived characteristics of "above average" employees, both from the employees and the supervisors. These included issues like: adherence to the rules, people-orientation, sense of humor, friendliness, grooming, and communication skills. Other characteristics included the following: team playing, flexibility, acceptance of tasks given by supervisors, maturity, listening skills, creativity, and the exercise of work ethics.

The questions in the questionnaire included items pertaining to the respondent's current job responsibilities (3 items), previous employment experience (2 items), source of motivation to seek the current job (1 item), and respondent's evaluation of the current employment experience (19 items). Other questions asked respondents to evaluate the level of importance of employment characteristics (17 items), and personality traits (9 items).

Respondents were also asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with their current job (1 item), their likelihood to remain with their current employer in the next twelve months (1 item), and their likelihood to receive "above satisfactory" evaluation in their next performance review (1 item). The last set of questions asked respondents to share their demographic characteristics (4 items).

The questionnaire was administered to both high-performance and average performance employees. The two versions of the questionnaire were distinguished by a hidden symbol that was marked on the bottom of each page of the form.

Data Collection:

The questionnaires were distributed through supervisors of each the six facilities participated in the study during the months of March-June 2002. A total of 550 questionnaires were distributed proportionally to the number of hourly employees in each facility in the following manner:

1. 275 questionnaires were distributed to "high-performance" employees. Questionnaires were distributed to hourly employees who worked in various facility operation jobs (e.g. rides and shows, admissions, custodial services), food services, merchandising, and transportation.

2. 275 questionnaires were distributed to “average-performance” employees. Questionnaires were distributed to hourly employees who worked in various facility operation jobs (e.g. rides and shows, admissions, custodial services), food services, merchandising, and transportation.

The participants returned a total of 330 questionnaires to yield a response rate of 60%.

The distribution of returned questionnaires between “high performance” employees and “average performance” employees was 166 and 164, respectively.

FINDINGS

1. General Profile of the Respondents:

The respondents that participated in the study represented all age groups and had a median of 19-25 years (Table 1). The largest age groups represented in the overall sample was 19-25 years (40.9%), followed by the "18 and under" group (18.6%). It is interesting to mention that 45.7% of "high performance" employees were represented in the 19-25 years age group, compared with only 36% of "average performance" employees. In addition, 26.1% of "average performance" employees were represented in the "18 and under" age group, compared with 11.1% of "high performance" employees. We can conclude that within the under-25 years age group, high performance employees tended to be older.

Most of the respondents were single (68.5%), and the rest were married (23.8%), divorced/separated (6.8%), and widowed (0.9%) (Table 2). A larger proportion of "high performance" employees were married (30.1%) compared with "average performance" employees (17.4%) (Table 2). The median level of education of the overall sample was a community college degree, however, "high performance" employees were more educated and had some college education, compared with "average performance" employees who attained a technical diploma (Table 3). The gender distribution between females and males was 54% and 46%, respectively (Table 4).

**Table 1:
Age Group of the Respondents**

Age group	All respondents (%)	“High performance” Employees (%)	“Average performance” Employees (%)
18 or under	18.6	11.1	26.1
19-25	40.9	45.7	36.0
26-30	10.5	9.9	11.2
31-35	8.4	7.4	9.3
36-40	5.6	4.9	6.2
41-50	7.7	9.3	6.2
51-60	5.3	6.8	3.7
61 or over	3.1	4.9	1.2
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents	323	162	161
Median	19-25 years	19-25 years	19-25 years

**Table 2:
Marital Status of the Respondents**

Marital status	All respondents (%)	“High performance” Employees (%)	“Average performance” Employees (%)
Single	68.5	66.3	70.8
Married	23.8	30.1	17.4
Divorced/ Separated	6.8	3.7	9.9
Widowed	0.9	-	1.9
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents	324	163	161

**Table 3:
Level of Education of the Respondents**

Level of Education	All respondents (%)	“High performance” Employees (%)	“Average performance” Employees (%)
Grade school	1.5	0.6	2.5
High school	38.0	30.1	46.0
Technical diploma	4.0	5.5	2.5
Community college degree	9.3	12.3	6.2
Some college	31.8	33.7	29.8
College degree	13.0	14.7	11.2
College advanced degree	2.5	3.1	1.9
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents	324	163	161
Median	Community college degree	Some college	Technical diploma

**Table 4:
Gender of the Respondents**

Gender	All respondents (%)	“High performance” Employees (%)	“Average performance” Employees (%)
Female	54.0	56.2	51.9
Male	46.0	43.8	48.1
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents	322	162	160

2. Respondent's Current Job Responsibilities:

All the respondents that participated in the study were employed by their theme parks and attractions for a median of 1-2 years (Table 5). "High performance" employees had longer tenure within their organization (a median of 2-4 years), compared with "average performance" employees (a median of 1-2 years).

The respondents had responsibilities in a variety of areas, mainly in ride operation (55.1%) and guest relations (13.8%). Other areas included merchandise, food services, custodial services, entertainment and shows, maintenance, and security (Table 6).

The participants in the study worked in average 34.36 hours per week and a median of 37 hours per week (Table 7). Please note that "high performance" employees worked in average about two more hours per week (35.37 hours) compared to "average performance" employees (33.33 hours). A t-test confirmed these statistically significant differences (t-value= 2.20, degrees of freedom=323, two-tailed significance=0.044).

**Table 5:
Employment Tenure with Current Theme Park**

Employment tenure	All respondents (%)	"High performance" Employees (%)	"Average performance" Employees (%)
1. Less than 6 months	17.0	14.5	19.6
2. 6-12 months	16.7	13.3	20.2
3. 1-2 years	21.3	19.9	22.7
4. 2-4 years	23.7	28.3	19.0
5. 4-6 years	5.8	6.6	4.9
6. Over 6 years	15.5	17.5	13.5
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents	329	166	163
Median	1-2 years	2-4 years	1-2 years

**Table 6:
Respondents' Main Area of Responsibility**

Areas of responsibility	All respondents (%)	"High performance" Employees (%)	"Average performance" Employees (%)
Ride operation	55.1	52.4	57.8
Guest relations	13.8	15.2	12.4
Merchandise	3.7	3.7	3.7
Food services	3.4	3.0	3.7
Custodial services	3.4	1.2	5.6
Entertainment/shows	3.4	5.5	1.2
Maintenance	0.3	0.6	-
Security	0.3	0.6	-
Other	16.6	17.7	15.5
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents	325	166	161

**Table 7:
Respondents' Weekly Working Hours**

Number of hours	All respondents (hours)	"High performance" Employees (hours)	"Average performance" Employees (hours)
Mean	34.36	35.37	33.33
Standard deviation	9.33	8.98	9.58
Median	37.00	40.00	35.50
Number of respondents	323	163	160

3. Respondents' Job Search Process:

Respondents were asked what attracted them to their current job. A very large proportion of the overall sample mentioned that free admissions and discounts (49.7%), flexible hours (49.1%), interaction with people of different backgrounds (41.8%), and employee benefits (39.9%) were the most important motives that attracted them to their current job (Table 8).

Other issues included: Reputation of the organization (34.8%), employee working environment (34.8%), friend/family member already works at the park (22.0%), job tasks (18.3%), ease of commute (15.5%), and pay (14.9%) (Table 8). Please note that pay level was at the bottom of the list of the reasons that attracted the hourly employees to their current job. There were no ample differences between “high performance” and “average performance” employees with regard to employment characteristics that attracted them to their current job.

**Table 8:
Employment Characteristics that Attracted Respondents to their Current Job**

Employment characteristics	All respondents (%)	“High performance” Employees (%)	“Average performance” Employees (%)
Free admissions and discounts	49.7	48.5	50.9
Flexible hours	49.1	48.5	49.7
Interaction with people of different backgrounds	41.8	43.6	39.9
Employee benefits	39.9	38.8	41.1
Reputation of the organization	34.8	37.0	32.5
Employee working environment	34.8	38.2	31.3
Friend/family member already works in the park	22.0	20.6	23.3
Job tasks	18.3	21.2	15.3
Ease of commute	15.5	15.8	15.3
Pay	14.9	15.8	14.1
Other	15.5	17.0	14.1
Number of respondents	328	165	163

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% due to multiple responses

4. Respondent's Previous Employment Experience:

The majority of the respondents (71.6%) had worked for another employer in the past (Table 9). A small proportion of the respondents who had previously worked for another employer worked in the theme park and attraction industry (15.8%) or in other hospitality industry operations like hotels or food services (32.8%). The remainder of the sample (51.5%) had worked for non-hospitality businesses (Table 10). No major differences were found between “high performance” and “average performance” employees with regard to their employment history.

**Table 9:
Previous Employment History**

Previous employment	All respondents (%)	“High performance” Employees (%)	“Average performance” Employees (%)
No	28.4	26.7	30.1
Yes	71.6	73.3	69.9
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents	328	165	163

**Table 10:
Previous Employment Industry**

	All respondents (%)	“High performance” Employees (%)	“Average performance” Employees (%)
Attractions and theme parks	15.8	17.6	14.2
Other hospitality industry	32.8	31.2	35.4
Non hospitality industry	51.5	51.2	53.1
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents	292	121	113

5. Respondents' Perception of their Current Employment Experience:

Respondents were asked to evaluate their current employment experience from a list of nineteen statements. The statements were generated mainly from the focus groups conducted in the theme parks and attractions. For each statement respondents was asked to express their agreement or disagreement on a 5-point scale, where "1" indicated "strong disagreement" and "5" indicated "strong agreement."

It appears that all respondents agreed that "good employees should be reliable and honest" (mean=4.73), and if they were able, that they would always complete every task their supervisor assigns them (mean=4.53). The hourly employees were also in agreement that they would be willing to learn any new task in their park (mean=4.32), they always come to work on-time (mean=4.25), there is always room for improvement in their performance (mean=4.25), and they were interested in performing other challenging jobs in their parks (mean=4.25) (Table 11).

Respondents disagreed that they did not like interacting with people (mean=1.60), when they did not feel like working they called in sick (mean=1.77), they did not always follow the rules in their parks (mean=2.02), they did not like getting into small talk with guests (mean=2.11), and sometimes their emotional problems affect their job performance (mean=2.19) (Table 11).

Table 11:
Level of Agreement or Disagreement with Statements
Regarding Current Employment Experience
(All Respondents)

Statements	All Employees	
	Mean	Std Dev
Good employees should be reliable and honest	4.73	0.59
If able, I would always complete every task my supervisor assigns me	4.53	0.69
I am willing to learn any new task in this park	4.32	0.93
I always come to work on-time	4.25	0.94
There is always room for improvement in my performance	4.25	0.83
I am interested to do other challenging jobs here	4.25	0.90
I don't let my personal problems interfere with work	4.09	0.98
I like to resolve guest problems creatively	4.00	0.86
I would like to grow professionally within this company	3.94	1.09
I love working here	3.86	0.98
This attraction should hire only employees who really want to work seriously	3.84	1.06
Sometimes guests can hurt my feelings	2.92	1.34
In this attraction, there is very little communication between the various departments	2.76	1.19
I follow the rules with regard to guests, but my supervisor often breaks them	2.41	1.20
Sometimes my emotional problems affect my job performance	2.19	1.14
I don't like getting into small talks with guests	2.11	1.12
I do not always follow the rules here	2.02	1.12
When I don't feel like working, I call in sick	1.77	1.09
I don't like interacting with guests	1.60	0.94

Note: 1 to 5 scale, "1"- Strongly disagree, "5"- Strongly agree.

To check if there were any statistically significant differences between “high performance” and “average performance” employees, a series of t-tests were conducted between these two groups of employees. The findings revealed that “high performance” employees differed in their attitudes and perceptions regarding their employment experience in eight out of the nineteen statements (Table 12).

T-tests revealed that “high performance” employees agreed significantly stronger that “good employees should be reliable and honest,” that if they were able, they would always complete every task their supervisor assigns them, they always come to work on-time, and they were interested in performing other challenging jobs than “average performance” employees. In addition, “high performance” employees agreed more strongly that they don’t let their personal problems interfere with work and that they love working in their theme parks and attractions than “average performance” employees.

On the other hand, “high performance” employees disagreed significantly stronger than “average performance” employees that there was very little communication between the various departments in their theme parks or attractions and that sometimes their emotional problems affect their job performance.

We may conclude that reliability, honesty, compliance with supervisors’ assignments, punctuality, and being challenged seemed to be significantly more crucial issues to “high performance” than “average performance” employees.

In addition, “high performance” employees were more emotionally attached to their jobs (“I love working here”) and dissociated their personal issues of concern from their job tasks, compared to “average performance” employees. The perception of “high performance”

employees regarding their organization's communication process was more positive than "average performance" employees (Table 12).

Table 12:
Level of Agreement or Disagreement with Statements
Regarding Current Employment Experience:
Comparison between "High performance" and "Average Performance" Employees

Statements	"High performance" Employees		"Average performance" Employees		T-test	
	Mean	Std Dev	Mean	Std Dev	T value	Sign.
Good employees should be reliable and honest	4.85	0.39	4.60	0.72	3.99	0.00
If able, I would always complete every task my supervisor assigns me	4.65	0.59	4.41	0.76	3.03	0.05
I always come to work on-time	4.41	0.79	4.09	1.04	3.17	0.02
I am willing to learn any new task in this park	4.41	0.85	4.23	1.00	N/S	N/S
I am interested to do other challenging jobs here	4.38	0.78	4.11	0.98	2.63	0.00
There is always room for improvement in my performance	4.33	0.77	4.17	0.88	N/S	N/S
I don't let my personal problems interfere with work	4.21	0.95	3.98	1.00	2.14	0.03
I would like to grow professionally within this company	4.06	1.07	3.83	1.10	N/S	N/S
I like to resolve guest problems creatively	4.04	0.89	3.96	0.84	N/S	N/S
I love working here	4.01	0.94	3.7	0.99	2.84	0.05
This attraction should hire only employees who really want to work seriously	3.96	1.02	3.72	1.08	N/S	N/S
Sometimes guests can hurt my feelings	2.98	1.30	2.86	1.39	N/S	N/S
In this attraction, there is very little communication between the various departments	2.69	1.17	2.83	1.21	2.08	0.03
I follow the rules with regard to guests, but my supervisor often breaks them	2.47	1.17	2.36	1.22	N/S	N/S
I don't like getting into small talks with guests	2.06	1.11	2.15	1.14	N/S	N/S
Sometimes my emotional problems affect my job performance	2.06	1.09	2.33	1.17	-2.29	0.02
I do not always follow the rules here	1.99	1.15	2.04	1.09	N/S	N/S
When I don't feel like working, I call in sick	1.71	1.04	1.82	1.13	N/S	N/S
I don't like interacting with guests	1.55	0.92	1.66	0.96	N/S	N/S

Note: 1 to 5 scale, "1"- Strongly disagree, "5"- Strongly agree.

N/S= No statistical significant differences.

6. Respondents' Perceived Importance of Employment Characteristics

Respondents were asked to evaluate twenty-two employment characteristics with regard to their perceived importance. Each variable was evaluated on a 5-point scale where "1" indicated "unimportant" and "5" indicated "very important."

All respondents indicated that highly important employment characteristics were: receiving respect from their supervisor (mean=4.73), being supported by management (mean=4.71), being informed about new changes in the park (mean=4.68), coming to work on time (mean=4.67), receiving good employment evaluations (mean=4.66), working with people who respect them (mean=4.65), and being an excellent employee (mean=4.64).

While still high on the importance scale, other significant issues to the hourly employees were: the opportunity to be empowered (mean=4.29), consistency in working hours (mean=4.36), meeting their superior expectations (mean=4.45), flexible working hours (mean=4.47), and following the rules of their organization (mean=4.47).

Please note that no statistically significant differences were found between "high performance" and "average performance" employees with regard to these twenty-two employment characteristics.

Table 13:
Level of Importance of Respondents' Employment Characteristics:
Comparison between "High Performance" and "Average Performance" Employees

Statements	All Employees		"High performance" Employees		"Average performance" Employees	
	Mean	Std Dev	Mean	Std Dev	Mean	Std Dev
Receiving respect from my supervisor	4.73	0.58	4.77	0.51	4.70	0.63
Being supported by management	4.71	0.56	4.71	0.59	4.72	0.54
Being informed about new changes in the park	4.68	0.60	4.64	0.65	4.72	0.54
Coming to work on time	4.67	0.63	4.69	0.62	4.65	0.64
Receiving good employment evaluations	4.66	0.63	4.70	0.63	4.61	0.63
Working with people who respect me	4.65	0.61	4.68	0.63	4.62	0.60
Being an excellent employee	4.64	0.63	4.68	0.63	4.60	0.63
Maintaining my personal grooming	4.62	0.69	4.62	0.71	4.61	0.66
Good pay	4.59	0.71	4.55	0.77	4.63	0.64
Taking care of problems that arise during my job	4.58	0.61	4.61	0.59	4.55	0.62
Working with friendly people	4.56	0.68	4.59	0.65	4.53	0.70
Chance of promotion	4.52	0.80	4.53	0.86	4.52	0.75
Following the rules of this organization	4.47	0.73	4.46	0.70	4.48	0.76
Flexible working hours	4.47	0.80	4.44	0.88	4.50	0.70
Meeting my boss's expectations	4.45	0.79	4.48	0.81	4.43	0.78
Consistency in working hours	4.36	0.87	4.32	0.98	4.41	0.75
Given power by management to make decisions	4.29	0.85	4.36	0.82	4.23	0.89

Note:

Level of Importance: 1 to 5 scale; "1" - Unimportant, "5" - Very important.

No statistically significant differences were found between "high performance" and "average performance" employees.

7. The Impact of Personality Characteristics on Employment Performance:

Respondents were asked to evaluate a series of statements that may reflect on their self-perceived personality characteristics. For each statement, respondents were asked to express their agreement or disagreement on a 5-point scale, where “1” indicated “strong disagreement” and “5” indicated “strong agreement.”

All respondents agreed that they were very dependable (mean=4.52), they were independent persons (mean=4.43), and they were tolerant of and cooperative with other people (mean=4.43). The respondents also considered themselves to be sociable (mean=4.41) and they love meeting different people (mean=4.37). The respondents disagreed that they were not always obeying their rules on the job (mean=2.09); they were not very flexible (mean=1.76) or secure (mean=2.01) (Table 14).

**Table 14:
Respondents' Personality Characteristics**

Statements	All Employees	
	Mean	Std Dev
I am a very dependable individual	4.52	0.80
I am an independent person	4.43	0.74
I am tolerant of and cooperative with other people	4.43	0.71
I consider myself to be sociable	4.41	0.74
I love meeting different people	4.37	0.81
I consider myself to be a creative and artistic person	4.05	0.90
I don't always obey the rules of my job	2.09	1.14
I am not a very secure person	2.01	1.20
I am not a very flexible person	1.76	1.05

To check if there were any statistically significant differences between “high performance” and “average performance” employees, several t-tests were conducted between these two groups of employees. The findings revealed that “high performance” employees differed in their perception regarding their personality in two out of the nine statements (Table 15).

T-tests revealed that “high performance” employees considered themselves to be significantly more social (mean=4.48) and dependable individuals (4.33) than “average performance” employees (means=4.33 and 4.42, respectively) (Table 15).

Table 15:
Personality Characteristics:
Comparison between “high performance” and “average performance” Employees

Statements	“High performance” Employees		“Average performance” Employees		T-test	
	Mean	Std Dev	Mean	Std Dev	T value	Sign.
I consider myself to be sociable	4.48	0.67	4.33	0.80	1.97	0.05
I am a very dependable individual	4.61	0.78	4.42	0.80	2.23	0.02
I am tolerant of and cooperative with other people	4.45	0.69	4.40	0.74	N/S	N/S
I love meeting different people	4.43	0.74	4.32	0.88	N/S	N/S
I am an independent person	4.41	0.73	4.45	0.75	N/S	N/S
I consider myself to be a creative and artistic person	4.04	0.90	4.06	0.91	N/S	N/S
I don’t always obey the rules of my job	2.03	1.11	2.15	1.16	N/S	N/S
I am not a very secure person	1.93	1.17	2.09	1.24	N/S	N/S
I am not a very flexible person	1.70	0.99	1.82	1.11	N/S	N/S

8. Respondents' Level of Job Satisfaction:

To find out respondent level of satisfaction with their job, they asked to indicate their level of satisfaction on a 5- point scale where 1 indicated "very dissatisfied" and "5" indicated "very satisfied."

The data indicated that three quarters of the respondents were either very satisfied (24%) or satisfied (52%) with their job (Table 16). Further analysis of the data indicated that "high performance" employees were significantly more satisfied with their job (mean=4.01, on a 5-point scale) than "average performance" employees (mean=3.81, on a five-point scale). The statistical significance differences were confirmed with a t-test ($t=2.06$, degrees of freedom=325, significance level=0.040).

Level of satisfaction was also associated with employee-perceived personality traits. Pearson correlation revealed that satisfied hourly employees were more keen to meet different people ($r=0.283$), considered themselves more sociable ($r=0.254$), tolerated and cooperative ($r=0.259$), independent ($r=0.222$), and flexible ($r=-0.203$).

**Table 16:
Respondents' Level of Satisfaction with Current Job**

Level of Satisfaction	All respondents (%)	"High performance" Employees (%)	"Average performance" Employees (%)
1. Very Dissatisfied	1.8	1.8	1.9
2. Dissatisfied	4.9	2.4	7.5
3. Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied	17.2	17.7	16.8
4. Satisfied	52.0	48.8	55.3
5. Very Satisfied	24.0	29.3	18.6
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents	325	164	161
Mean	3.91	4.01	3.81
Standard deviation	0.88	0.86	0.89
Median	"satisfied"	"satisfied"	"satisfied"

9. Job Retention Indicator:

To find out respondents' retention propensity, the participants were asked to indicate their likelihood to remain with the current employer in the next twelve months on a 5- point scale where 1 indicated "very unlikely" and "5" indicated "very likely."

The data indicated that over three quarters of the respondents were very likely (53.8%) or likely (22.2%) to remain with their current employer in the next twelve months (Table 17). A t-test indicated that no statistically significant differences were found between "high performance" and "average performance" employees with regard to their likelihood to remain with their current employer in the next twelve months.

Pearson correlation indicated that likelihood to remain with the current employer was correlated with the level of employee satisfaction on the job. Highly satisfied employees were

more likely to remain with their current employer ($r=0.337$). Furthermore, the likelihood to remain with the current employer in the next twelve months was also associated with several employee self-perceived personality traits. Pearson correlation revealed that higher likelihood to remain with the current employer was stronger among employees who were keener to meet different people ($r=0.243$) and considered themselves to be more sociable ($r=0.246$).

Table 17:
Respondents' Likelihood to Remain with Current Employer in Next 12 Months

Level of Likelihood	All respondents (%)	"High performance" Employees (%)	"Average performance" Employees (%)
1. Very unlikely	5.0	3.1	6.9
2. Unlikely	4.1	5.0	3.1
3. Somewhat Likely	15.0	13.0	17.0
4. Likely	22.2	19.9	24.5
5. Very Likely	53.8	59.0	48.4
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents	320	161	159
Mean	4.16	4.27	4.04
Standard deviation	1.13	1.07	1.19
Median	"very likely"	"very likely"	"likely"

10. Employees' Perception of their Performance Evaluation

Respondents were asked to indicate the level of their probable performance evaluation by asking them "how likely is it that you will receive above satisfactory evaluation in your next performance review?" The respondents were asked to respond on a 5- point scale where 1 indicated "very unlikely" and "5" indicated "very likely."

The data indicated that over three quarters of the respondents thought that they were very likely (45%) or likely (36.3%) to receive “above satisfactory” evaluation in their next performance review.” (Table 18).

Further analysis of the data indicated that “high performance” employees thought that they were more likely to receive “above satisfactory” evaluation in their next performance review (mean=4.33, on a 5-point scale) than “average performance” employees (mean=4.11, on a five-point scale). The statistical significance differences were confirmed with a t-test ($t=2.09$, degrees of freedom=320, significance level=0.037).

Table 18:
Respondents’ Perceived Likelihood to Receive “above satisfactory” Evaluation in their Next Performance Review

Level of Likelihood	All respondents (%)	“High performance” Employees (%)	“Average performance” Employees (%)
1. Very unlikely	0.9	0.6	1.3
2. Unlikely	2.2	1.2	3.1
3. Somewhat Likely	15.6	11.8	19.5
4. Likely	36.3	37.3	35.2
5. Very Likely	45.0	49.1	40.9
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents	320	161	159
Mean	4.22	4.33	4.11
Standard deviation	0.86	0.78	0.91
Median	“likely”	“likely”	“likely”

A series of Pearson correlations were conducted to check if there were any relationships between employees' self-perception of their performance evaluation and a number of job-related and personal characteristics. Pearson correlation indicated that employee perceived likelihood to receive "above satisfactory" evaluation was correlated with a number of variables that were clustered into six groups (Table 19):

- Passion to the organization (Employee's level of liking love, affection, and caring of the organization)
- Cooperation and dependability (Employee's level of commitment, obedience, and compliance with their job tasks and supervisors)
- Emotional stability (Employees' level of self-esteem, security, and self-assurance)
- Long-range commitment to the organization (Employee's commitment to a long-term relationships with the organization)
- Feedback from Significant others (Employee's level of importance attached to remarks and observations from supervisors, co-workers, guests, and other significant others)
- Extroversion (Employee's level of sociability, companionability, and conviviality)

Table 19:
Pearson Correlation between Employees' Perception of Likelihood to Receive "above satisfactory" in their Next Performance Review and A Variety of Variables

Statements	All Employees	
	r	N
Passion to the Organization		
I love working here ^(a)	0.338	318
Being an excellent employee ^(b)	0.344	321
Cooperative and dependable		
If able, I would always complete every task my supervisor assigns me ^(a)	0.332	318
Meeting my boss's expectation ^(b)	0.256	321
I am interested to do other challenging jobs here ^(a)	0.211	319
I am a very dependable individual ^(a)	0.313	320
I am tolerant of and cooperative with other people ^(a)	0.230	320
I don't always obey the rules of my job ^(a)	-0.207	317
Emotional Stability		
I don't let my personal problems interfere with work ^(a)	0.249	317
Sometimes my emotional problems affect my job performance ^(a)	-0.222	318
Long-range Commitment to the Organization		
I would like to grow professionally within this company ^(a)	0.271	319
Likelihood to remain with current employer ^(c)	0.263	322
Feedback from Significant others		
Being supported by management ^(b)	0.231	321
Receiving good employment evaluations ^(b)	0.265	321
Working with people who respect me ^(b)	0.251	321
Maintaining my personal grooming ^(b)	0.231	321
Extroversion		
I consider myself to be sociable ^(a)	0.340	319
I love meeting different people ^(a)	0.205	320

Note:

(a) Level of Agreement: 1 to 5 scale, "1"- Strongly disagree, "5"- Strongly agree.

(b) Level of Importance: 1 to 5 scale; "1" - Unimportant, "5" - Very important.

(c) Level of Likelihood: 1 to 5 scale; "1" - Very unlikely, "5" - Very likely.

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