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Yvette Blount

Department of Accounting and Finance, Macquarie University, yvette.blount@mq.edu.au

Tanya Castleman

Deakin Business School, Deakin University, tanya.castleman@deakin.edu.au

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The Curious Case of the Missing Employee in Information Systems Research

Yvette Blount
Department of Accounting and Finance
Macquarie University
Sydney, Australia
Email: yvette.blount@mq.edu.au

Tanya Castleman
Deakin Business School
Deakin University
Melbourne, Australia
Email: tanya.castleman@deakin.edu.au

Abstract

ICT has transformed our working lives. The IS discipline has a great deal to contribute to better understand the employee management issues associated with the implementation of new technologies. This paper analyses the IS literature to ascertain the level of research being undertaken in the area of employee management and human resource management. The analysis illustrates that employee management is currently not a key area of research in the mainstream IS discipline. The antecedents as to why there have not been many papers published in this area are many and as yet unstudied. The paper concludes by suggesting future areas of research addressing employee management issues.

Keywords

Literature Review, Human Research Management, Employee Management, Information Systems

INTRODUCTION

The importance of employee management for organisations of all types has been increasingly recognised. It is linked to business strategy and competitive advantage (Browning et al. 2009; Purcell et al. 2003) and is the subject of extensive academic as well as practitioner literature (Fleming and Asplund 2007; Li et al. 2008; Lynch 2008; Smith 2009; Winestock 2009). The human resource management (HRM) literature discusses the key practices of employee management as long standing ideas of how to manage people. Major areas of employee management practice include job design, recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management, retention and employee engagement because these specific processes are particularly relevant when considering employee management implications of adoption of new technologies (Guest 1997; Hendry and Pettigrew 1990; Huselid 1995; Storey 1995). In recognition of the centrality of managing people in organisations, Human Resource Management has grown into a key area of organisational development with a sharper focus on its strategic implications (Guest et al. 2003; Pfeffer 1998).

Information and communication technologies (ICT) are now an integral part of almost all organisations and strongly shape the work activities of employees and managers alike. We understand that working life has been transformed by ICT. Anyone who has experienced a power failure or server outage at work will be acutely aware that when information systems do not operate, work grinds to a halt. The centrality of ICT to work is further demonstrated by the high level of interest in email use (and abuse) because it is a universal aspect of working life. We are also aware that ICT continues to evolve and new applications and practices, both within organisations and between and beyond organisations are likely to shape work and employment in the future.

So what does the discipline of Information Systems contribute to knowledge about ICT and its role in working life and employment management? As the discipline which brings together technical expertise, business knowledge and social analysis, IS should be in a prime position to lead investigation into this topic area and contribute to theory and practice, informing the key areas of HR practice described above. How well has this area been represented in the mainstream IS publication venues? What have been the dominant research agendas in this area? What are the opportunities for further development of IS research that deals explicitly with work from the point of view of employees and employee management? This paper provides a partial answer to these questions on the basis of an analysis of recent publications in top IS journals.

This paper reports a focussed review of IS literature to gauge the level of interest and topics of focus in the area of employment and HRM. This analysis was conducted to provide a baseline measure of the level of attention

paid to the topic and to suggest potential gaps that might be filled by future research. The rest of the paper is structured as follows: the next section provides an overview of the key elements of HRM practice, after which the method of literature analysis is described. A summary of findings including a detailed description of journal articles and their areas of focus is followed by a discussion of the relevance and implications of these findings for IS and further research. The results of this initial journal analysis show that employee management is not currently a key area of research in the information systems discipline. The paper concludes that this is an area ripe for further research from the particular expertise that IS academics possess and that research topics and theoretical resources from the field of HRM and associated fields would enhance the field of IS research.

KEY ASPECTS OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The specific areas of job design, recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management, retention and employee engagement are the key aspects of HRM that provide a finer level of analysis of the selected journal articles. Each of these key aspects of HRM relate to each other providing a holistic perspective of employee management practices.

Job design refers to the way in which work is organised into positions held by individual employees. Job design has been shown to influence how well a workforce adapts to new technology and determines the skills and capabilities of employees. These skills determine how well employees are able to utilise and take advantage of new technologies (Hendry and Pettigrew 1990:28). Obtaining the appropriate level of skills requires an effective recruitment and selection process.

Recruitment and selection is the process of attracting potential employees with the required skills and capabilities (Zedeck and Blood 1977). Employing labour with the right mix of skills is an important criterion for achieving competitive advantage (Fombrun et al. 1984). However, organisations may not always be in a position to recruit the employees with the qualifications, skills and capabilities they require. Organisations may have to invest in training and development to increase the value of their human capital (Burke 2006).

Training and development is targeted at the skills the organisation needs (Diepen et al. 2006). Many jobs have been redesigned because of the uptake of ICT and e-commerce which require different skills and capabilities. Organisations may have to invest in training and development to continue to develop the evolving skills and capabilities required to interact with customers, suppliers and colleagues (Berge et al. 2002; DeVito 1996).

Jobs with a high level of complexity and variability will need careful recruitment and selection processes as well as management of performance. The more complex the job, the more important it is to recruit and select people who have proven ability (Hunter et al. 1990). Individual performance needs to be managed from the time an employee is recruited through to termination of the employment relationship (Boxall and Purcell 2003). Managing performance includes consideration of how to effectively manage turnover so that skills are kept within the company (Cappelli 1999; Holbeche 2001).

Every organisation needs a retention policy to retain high performers and develop (or manage out) low performers (Kamoche 1999). It is a costly exercise to recruit new employees. This includes intangible costs such as customer dissatisfaction (Cappelli 1999) and lost productivity because the employee is no longer committed to the organisation. This has a direct impact on the level of engagement by the employee and others in the organisation.

Employee effectiveness will be limited unless they can be engaged with the organisation's goals and motivated to perform (Hunter and Lafkas 2003). Job satisfaction is a major component of employee motivation. One area of increased job satisfaction is the level of interest and variety that a job entails (Guest 2002; Hackman and Oldman 1980). Employee engagement and motivation are important for how effectively and efficiently information systems are used. Information Systems discipline has an important contribution to make here, both in the interests of the employee and of the organisation.

METHOD and ANALYSIS

Articles were reviewed from the "basket" of six journals suggested by the Association of Information Systems (AIS) as being the top journals in the IS field. These articles were used as a starting point to establish the areas of research being undertaken by scholars in the area of employee management or human resource management (HRM). There were 485 articles in total selected from the years 2007 to 2009 (only partially available) to establish if employee management issues were part of the most current research trends. Some past topics included issues relating to telework and user adoption, however these were not considered from a HRM perspective.

Recent articles were chosen to establish the most recent research developments and establish a way forward. All articles in the senior scholars' basket of six journals from the AIS website from 2007 to 2009 (as of June 2009) were reviewed to establish how employee management is incorporated into the domain of information systems research. Articles were reviewed from the following journals: European Journal of Information Systems, Information Systems Journal, Information Systems Research, Journal of AIS, Journal of MIS and MIS Quarterly.

These articles were selected from these specific journals because they are considered the top journals in the IS field. According to the AIS website (<http://home.aisnet.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=346>), the review processes for these journals is stringent, the editorial board members are well respected and recognised and there is international readership and contribution.

The list of journals and the number of articles is summarised in the following table:

Journal Name	2007	2008	2009	Total
European Journal of Information Systems (EJIS)	58	47	6	111
Information Systems Journal (ISJ)	20	26	12	58
Information Systems Research (ISR)	23	25	8	56
Journal of AIS (JAIS)	31	32	17	80
Journal of MIS (JMIS)	40	40	9	89
MIS Quarterly (MISQ)	32	36	23	91
Totals	210	200	75	485

Table 1: Number of papers surveyed by journal 2007-2009

The reason for selecting the years 2007 to 2009 was to ensure the analysis focused on the most recent research in the IS discipline area. Editorials were excluded from the analysis. There is a long publication cycle for these journals which means that an article published in 2007 may be at least five or six years old if there is a publication cycle of two or three years. Conference papers were considered as a source of more recent research, however, it was important that articles that were considered the best quality in the IS discipline were analysed and this is the reason for selecting the specific journals.

The articles from the six journals were analysed in two phases. In the first phase, the predominant themes relating to overall themes addressed by the articles. The four categories used for this analysis were technological themes, interactions with customers, employee management and other. The themes were derived from previous research dealing with the interactions between technology, customers and employees in service organisations (author reference – not included for review).

1. Articles categorised as having a **technological theme** dealt with the overall issues relating to technology implementation, technology infrastructure, software development, methodologies and technology investment.
2. Articles focusing on **interactions with customers** dealt primarily with how technology was used by customers. Papers covered issues such as customer security and privacy, B2C e-commerce (eg. online shopping) and service quality.
3. Articles that were relevant to **employee management** were selected on the basis that they had some implications for employees as users or as stakeholders. Some of the themes included B2E portal user satisfaction, IS training, online training, user adoption of technology, IT profession, work teams, leadership relating to acceptance and use of technology.
4. **Other** articles related to topics such as analysis of the literature, critique of the IS discipline, research quality including rating of journals, ontology and IS education.

In the second phase the articles that were related to employee management were further analysed to establish the extent to which they were related to employee management or human resource management policies and practices as outlined in the previous section. The data from the six journals are described in the next sections.

FINDINGS

The next level of analysis was to ascertain the extent to which the employee management policies and procedures of job design, recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management,

retention and employee engagement were addressed. The purpose was to develop a finer level of granularity of the research being undertaken in this area.

Table 2 shows the percentage distribution of all articles in the survey period by broad topic for each of the journals:

Article Category	JMIS %	JAIS %	ISR %	ISJ %	MISQ %	EJIS %	TOTAL %
Technology	58	70	43	60	40	63	56
Customer	38	6	41	10	28	13	22
Employment	3	1	14	10	12	9	8
Other	0	23	2	19	21	16	14
Total number	89	80	56	58	91	111	485

Table 2: Broad topics of research articles by journal (%)

This analysis demonstrates the relatively low percentage of articles that dealt with topics of relevant to employees and employment which was lower than the percentage dealing with customer issues in all the journals and much lower than those that dealt with technology issues. The majority of articles in all four journals were devoted to technology topics (56%) with only 39 or 8% dealing with employment issues in the survey period. The highest representation of articles relevant to employment was ISR with 14%.

This Table 3 shows how the 39 articles in all six journals which were relevant to employment issues addressed the various aspects of employee management discussed above. Note that some papers will have more than one category.

Employee Management Issues	Code*	Number of articles in all 6 journals
Job Design	JD	9
Recruitment and Selection	RS	3
Training and Development	TD	7
Performance Management	PM	1
Retention	RT	4
Employee Engagement	EE	25

Table 3 – Focus of articles relevant to employee management

* These codes are used in the tables below to classify the individual articles reported in them

The articles related to job design were selected on the basis that there was some reference to work practices. Recruitment and selection was related to skills and capabilities of employees. Training and development referred to online learning and training effectiveness. Articles that involved management of employees were classified under performance management. Retention articles discussed issues relating to how to effectively keep skills in an organisation. Finally employee engagement was the category used if the research was associated with how employees interacted with technology, for example to use technology to ensure service standards are met.

The articles for each journal are reported in the following tables in reverse chronological order:

European Journal of Information Systems (EJIS): Title of Paper	Author and Article Details	Description of Research	Code See Table 3
'When users are IT experts too: the effects of joint IT competence and partnership on satisfaction with enterprise-level systems implementation'	Davis, J.; Kettinger, W., Dimitar G Volume 18, Number 1, February 2009:26-37	The level of IT competencies held by users and the IT department and how this contributes to user satisfaction	EE
'User satisfaction with business-to-employee portals: conceptualization and scale development'	Tojib, D. ; Sugianto, L.; Sendjaya, S. Volume 17, Number 6, December 2008: 649-667	An analysis of B2E user satisfaction measures	EE
'Resilience of super users' mental models of enterprise-wide systems'	Karuppan, C.; Karuppan, M. Volume 17, Number 1, February 2008:29-46	IS training effectiveness as it pertains to the implementation of enterprise-wide systems.	TD
'Explaining changes in learning and work practice following the adoption of online learning: a human agency perspective'	Chu, T; Robey, D. Volume 17, Number 1, February 2008:79-98	Online learning applications and the implications for work practices and learning	JD, TD, EE
'Hospitality and hostility in hospitals: a case study of an EPR adoption among surgeons'	Jensen, T; Aanestad, M. Volume 16, Number 6, December 2007: 672-680	Adoption and use of new technology and the implications for work practices.	JD, EE
'An epidemic of pain in an Australian radiology practice'	Van Akkeren, J.; Rowlands, B Volume 16, Number 6, December 2007: 695-711	Considers the relationship between the users and technology with the wider social issues around technology use.	JD, EE
'Focusing the research agenda on burnout in IT: social representations of burnout in the profession'	Pawlowski, S; Kaganer, E; Cater, J Volume 16, Number 5, October 2007:612-627	The implications of employee burnout in the IT profession	RT, JD
'Managing strategic contradictions in hybrid teams'	Cousins, K; Robey, D.; Zigurs, I Volume 16, Number 4, August 2007: 460-478	Analysis of effectiveness of teams working in dispersed locations	PM
'Distributed leadership in the development of a knowledge sharing system'	Zhang, J; Faerman, S Volume 16, Number 4, August 2007: 460-478	An analysis of leadership roles in organisations implementing knowledge sharing systems.	EE
'Charismatic leadership and user acceptance of information technology'	Neufeld, D; Dong, L; Higgins, C. Volume 16, Number 4, August 2007: 494-510	Considers the role of project champions in user adoption of large scale implementations of IT.	EE

Table 4: Articles relevant to employee management in EJIS

Information Systems Journal (ISJ): Title of Paper	Author and Article Details	Description of Research	Code
'Virtual team collaboration: building shared meaning, resolving breakdowns and creating translucence'	Björn, P; Ngwenyama, O. May 2009, Vol. 19 Issue 3:227-253	Investigation of virtual teams and how to develop shared meaning when communicating.	EE
'IT project managers' construction of successful project management practice: a repertory grid investigation'	Napier, N.; Keil, M.; Tan, F May 2009, Vol. 19 Issue 3:255-282	Analysis of skill requirements of IT project managers	RS
'Surviving the paradoxes of virtual teamwork'	Dubé, L; Robey, D. Jan 2009, Vol. 19 Issue 1:3-30	The challenges of virtual teamwork or paradoxes are examined and some strategies to deal with this are identified.	JD, EE
'Knowledge transfer in globally distributed teams: the role of transactive memory'	Oshri, I; van Fenema, P; Kotlarsky, J Nov 2008, Vol. 18 Issue 6:593-616	Examination of onsite and offsite team interaction, particularly as it relates to shared meaning.	EE
'Collaborative technologies in knowledge telework: an exploratory study'	Bélanger, F; Allport, C Jan 2008, Vol. 18 Issue 1:101-121	Investigation on how collaborative technologies such as groupware assist with knowledge sharing.	EE
'Prospering in a transition economy through information technology-supported organizational learning'	Janson, M; Cecez-Kecmanovic, D; Zupančič, J Jan 2007, Vol. 17 Issue 1: 3-36	A longitudinal study investigating organisational learning in the context of IT adoption and innovation.	TD, EE

Table 5: Articles relevant to employee management in ISJ

The employee management discussed was predominantly on virtual teams. The ISR analysis of papers is shown in table 6:

Information Systems Research (ISR): Title of Paper	Author and Article Details	Description of Research	Code
'Does fit matter? The impact of task-technology fit and appropriation on team performance in repeated tasks'	Fuller, R; Dennis, A. March 2009; Vol.20, Issue 1:2-17	Investigates the link between technology fit and performance.	EE
'The Consequences of Technostress for End Users in Organizations: Conceptual Development and Empirical Validation'	Ragu-Nathan, T-S; Tarafdar, M; Ragu-Nathan, B; Tu, Q. December 2008, Volume 19, Issue 4:417-433	Investigates the way users experience stress using ICTs and the implications for job satisfaction and retention.	JD, RS, RT
'A Model of Conflict, Leadership, and Performance in Virtual Teams'	Wakefield, R; Leidner, D; Garrison, G. December 2008, Volume 19, Issue 4:434-455	Analysis of conflict resolution in virtual teams and potential resolutions.	EE
'Casting the Net: A Multimodal Network Perspective on User-System Interactions'	Kane, G; Alavi, M September 2008, Volume 19, Issue 3:253-272	Examines user adoption and use of multiple information systems and the links to organisational outcomes.	EE
'Social Capital and Knowledge	Lionel P. , Dennis, R;	Investigation of digital	EE

Integration in Digitally Enabled Teams'	Ahuja, M September 2008, Volume 19, Issue 3:314-334	teams and social capital and knowledge integration	
'Using Self-Regulatory Learning to Enhance E-Learning-Based Information Technology Training'	Santhanam, R; Sasidharan, S; Webster, J March 2008, Volume 19, Issue 1:26-47	E-learning and learning outcomes associated with training effectiveness.	TD
'Is the World Flat or Spiky? Information Intensity, Skills, and Global Service Disaggregation'	Janson, M; Cecez-Kecmanovic, D; Zupančič, Je September 2007, Volume 18, Issue 3: 237-259	Skill levels and information intensity of service occupations and the propensity to disaggregation..	JD

Table 6: Articles relevant to employee management in ISR

Journal of AIS: Title of Paper	Author and Article Details	Description of Research	Code
'From Prediction to Explanation: Reconceptualizing and Extending the Perceived Characteristics of Innovating'	Compeau, D, Meister, D., Higgins, C. Volume 8, Issue 8, 2007, August:409-439	User adoption and use of IT using perceived characteristics of innovating.	EE

Table 7: Articles relevant to employee management in JAIS

Journal of Management Information Systems (MIS)	Author and Article Details	Description of Research	Code
'Competence of IT Professionals in E-Business Venture Teams: The Effect of Experience and Expertise on Preference Structure'	Kollmann, T, Häsel, M, Breugst, N Spring2009, Vol. 25 Issue 4:51-79	Analyses competencies for IT professionals for e-business technologies.	RS
'Individual Adaptation to IT-Induced Change: The Role of Social Networks'	Bruque, S, Moyano, J, Eisenberg, J Winter2008, Vol. 25 Issue 3:177-206	Examines the role of social networks in employee adoption of new technologies.	EE
'The Impact of Technostress on Role Stress and Productivity'	Tarafdar, Monideepa, Qiang Tu, Ragu-Nathan, Bhanu S., Ragu-Nathan, T. S. Summer2007, Vol. 24 Issue 1: 301-328	Considers the impact of productivity on stress created by technology.	RT

Table 8. Articles relevant to employee management in JMIS

MIS Quarterly: Title of Paper	Author and Article Details	Description of Research	Code
'Model Of Acceptance With Peer Support: A Social Network Perspective To Understand Employees' System Use'	Sykes, T, Venkatesh, V, Gosain, S Jun2009, Vol. 33 Issue 2:371-393	Considers the social network implications for user acceptance of new technologies.	TD, EE
'Predicting Different Conceptualizations Of System Use: The Competing Roles Of Behavioral	Venkatesh, V; Brown, S.; Maruping, L.; Bala, H Sep2008, Vol. 32 Issue 3:483-	Behavioural expectation is used to predict system use.	TD, EE

Intention, Facilitating Conditions, And Behavioral Expectation'	582		
'Emotional Dissonance And The Information Technology Professional'	Rutner, P.; Hardgrave, B.; McKnight, D. H. Sep2008, Vol. 32 Issue 3:635-652	Examines IT professionals emotional conflict relating to what is felt and what is displayed.	EE
'Cocreating Understanding And Value In Distributed Work: How Members Of Onsite And Offshore Vendor Teams Give, Make, Demand, And Break Sense'	Vlaar, P.; van Fenema, P.; Tiwari, V Jun 2008, Vol. 32 Issue 2:227-255	Considers how distributed workers can develop shared meanings and knowledge to be able to make sense of tasks and the environment.	EE
'Outsourcing To An Unknown Workforce: Exploring Opensourcing As A Global Sourcing Strategy'	Ågerfalk, P.; Fitzgerald, B Jun 2008, Vol. 32 Issue 2:385-409	The process of collaborating and utilising open source software by software developers in a global context.	EE
'Transformational Technologies And The Creation Of New Work Practices: Making Implicit Knowledge Explicit In Task-Based Offshoring'	Leonardi, P.; Bailey, D Jun 2008, Vol. 32 Issue 2:411-436	Investigates how implicit knowledge is used by employees in global teams and how this relates to work practices.	JD, TD
'The Interaction Of Institutionally Triggered And Technology-Triggered Social Structure Change: An Investigation Of Computerized Physician Order Entry'	Davidson, E.; Chismar, W Dec2007, Vol. 31 Issue 4: 739-758	Considers alignment of the technology and work practices.	JD
'The Impact Of Knowledge Coordination On Virtual Team Performance Over Time'	Kanawattanachai, P; Yoo, Y Dec2007, Vol. 31 Issue 4: 783-808	A model is developed to assess virtual team performance over time.	EE
'Turnover Of Information Technology Professionals: A Narrative Review, Meta-Analytic Structural Equation Modeling, And Model Development'	Joseph, D; Kok-Yee Ng; Koh, C; Soon Ang Sep2007, Vol. 31 Issue 3:547-577	Reviews the turnover intentions of IT professionals	RT
'The Contingent Effects Of Training, Technical Complexity, And Task Interdependence On Successful Information Systems Implementation'	Sharma, R; Yetton, P. Jun2007, Vol. 31 Issue 2: 219-238	Proposes a model to look at the effect of training on the successful implementation of IS.	TD
'Fighting Against Windmills: Strategic Information Systems And Organizational Deep Structures'	Silva, L; Hirschheim, R Jun 2007, Vol. 31 Issue 2: 327-354	Considers the social aspects as well as the technical aspects in implementing strategic information systems.	EE

Table 9: Articles relevant to employee management in MIS Quarterly

The following table summarises the number of papers in each journal by the years analysed:

Year	EJIS	ISJ	ISR	JAIS	JMIS	MISQ
2009	1	3	1	0	1	1
2008	3	2	5	0	1	5
2007	6	1	1	1	1	4
Total	10	6	7	1	3	10

Table 10: Articles across journals and time (year)

EJIS and MISQ had the most papers relating to employee management (each had 10), followed by ISR (7), ISJ (6), JMIS (3) and JAIS with one. Some papers related to more than one theme. The one paper in JAIS that related to employee management was in the category of employee engagement. There does not appear to be a clear reason for this because the journal states that it is multidisciplinary in scope and accepts non traditional

approaches (<http://aisel.aisnet.org/jais/about.html>). It may relate to the theoretical focus of the journal and this may preclude some empirical research relating to employee management. As with all the journals analysed, it may be that IS scholars are not submitting their manuscripts to these specific journals. That is, it is difficult to publish papers if they are not submitted.

In 2009, across the journals there were seven papers relating to employee management. These papers were largely related to the category of employee engagement (six), with two papers relating to recruitment and selection and one paper with a job design theme. In 2008, MISQ and ISR published the most papers (5), followed by EJIS (3). ISR (2) and JMIS (1). There were eleven papers referring to employee engagement, five to training and development and three that had links to job design. In 2007, EJIS published the most papers (6), followed by MISQ (4), and each of the others had one each. The largest category was employee engagement with 7 articles, followed by job design with 6 articles. Retention and training and development had three articles each and performance management had one.

The papers across the journals did not explicitly address the employee management issues, rather they were implied. Work practices were mentioned as part of the research findings, for example in virtual team research, however there was no reference to job design specifically. Research into technostress referred to job satisfaction but did not link this to job design, recruitment and selection or retention explicitly. Training and development research considered the effectiveness of online training but did not explicitly link this to HRM policies. Papers in the employee engagement category were for the most part about how users engaged with technology to do their work, for example using collaborative technologies in virtual teams. This work was not explicitly associated with employee engagement at the organisational or strategic level.

DISCUSSION AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE IS RESEARCH RELATED TO EMPLOYEE MANAGEMENT

The employee management perspective was not strongly featured, even when a very inclusive reading was undertaken of the research articles. The analysis involved considering the implicit implications for employee management as outlined above to obtain a sense of the research directions in the IS discipline. The limited emphasis is disproportionate to the importance of employees in the workplace. Employees, particularly those in the service sector, utilise technology to interact with customers.

The customer issues are more comprehensively and explicitly addressed. The customer emphasis is important because privacy and security, B2C e-commerce, online marketing amongst other topics provide researchers and practitioners with ways to innovate and engage customers in the digital economy.

The issues relating to employee management have been overlooked or neglected. Employee management and employee issues are a fruitful area for research both in practical terms and theoretical terms. In practical terms, we need to both understand and address the issues in IS and ICT as they relate to employee management. In theoretical terms, technology and the social implications is an important area of research.

From this initial analysis, there appears to be a gap in the IS literature for research that explicitly examines the employee management implications of ICT and IS technologies. Across the six journals, research associated with employee management was identified in only 39 articles or 8%. This is a particularly 'generous' reading as some of the papers have only tenuous links to employee management but were included to maximise the identification of relevant research. This quantum of current research is not commensurate with the importance of the issue. However, the fact that there is research in related areas demonstrates that there are scholars working in areas that touch on the topics relating to employee management although they have not made this central and have not significantly engaged with the professional and academic literature on Human Resource Management, Industrial Relations or Organisational Behaviour.

The analysis is at an early stage, however beginning with the most highly respected mainstream journals in the field is the first step to establishing whether this area has been a key topic of investigation for the IS discipline. It requires further exploration to establish if employee management has been identified as a major theme in more specialised journals.

If, as the strategic management literature suggests, the work force is a key area of competitive advantage then IS scholars would make a valuable contribution by addressing employee management implications of ICT. The work that has been undertaken in this area to date has been narrow in focus and associated with project management skills and capabilities, IT competencies and use adoption of technology. This is clearly a fertile area for research that has been under developed and unexplored by IS researchers.

It appears that most IS researchers may be unaware of the rich tradition of empirical research and theoretical work in HRM, IR and organisational dynamics. But this is not a view shared by practitioners in other fields of

management where HRM and employee issues are recognised as critical to an organisation's success. For example, service organisations continue to invest in information systems, particularly those that relate to e-commerce and customer interaction, which are considered an important area of competitive advantage (Bragge and Merisalo-Rantanen 2009; Turel et al. 2008). What these information systems mean for how employees are managed will become increasingly important for both researchers and practitioners, particularly as it relates to customer interactions to achieve competitive advantage.

CONCLUSION

The recent IS literature in the "basket" of six journals top journals in the IS discipline shows that scant attention has been paid to the human resource management dimensions of IS and ICT. There are many reasons as to why not many papers have been published in the areas of human resource management, organisational behaviour and management and as yet are unstudied. Some employee aspects are considered, however as the analysis shows, it has not been a key area of research for the IS discipline. Yet the ubiquitous use of ICT in and between organisations and the development of new applications and work activities based in ICT will raise new questions as will the impact of recent technological developments such as social networking applications. This is an important and promising area for the development of IS research.

This paper reports the first stage of a program for mapping and understanding why IS has paid little attention to the employee perspective and employee management. This is the beginning of a research project and will involve a systematic analysis of articles in other journals in the IS discipline (for example, Information, Technology and People) as well as other journals that are more inter-disciplinary in nature. Subsequently, a framework for employee-focused research in IS will be developed to assist in the understanding why this important component of organisational life is not addressed more explicitly in the mainstream IS literature.

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