

Chapter 3

Attitudes and job satisfaction

Learning objectives

After studying this chapter, students should be able to:

1. Contrast the three components of an attitude.
2. Understand the relationship between attitudes and behaviour.
3. Compare and contrast the major job attitudes.
4. Define *job satisfaction* and show how we can measure it.
5. Summarise the main causes of job satisfaction.
6. Identify four employee responses to dissatisfaction.

TEACHING NOTES

Managers should be interested in their employees' attitudes because attitudes give warnings of potential problems and influence behaviour. Creating a satisfied workforce is hardly a guarantee of successful organisational performance, but evidence strongly suggests that whatever managers can do to improve employee attitudes will likely result in heightened organisational effectiveness all the way to high customer satisfaction—and profits.

Satisfied and committed employees, for instance, have lower rates of turnover, absenteeism and withdrawal behaviours. They also perform better on the job. Given that managers want to keep resignations and absences down—especially among their most productive employees—they'll want to do things that generate positive job attitudes.

The most important thing managers can do to raise employee satisfaction is to focus on the intrinsic parts of the job, such as making the work challenging and interesting. Although paying employees poorly is not likely to attract high-quality

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employees to the organisation, or to retain high performers, managers should realise that high pay alone is unlikely to create a satisfying work environment. Creating a satisfied workforce is hardly a guarantee of successful organisational performance, but evidence strongly suggests that whatever managers can do to improve employee attitudes will likely result in heightened organisational effectiveness.

POINT/COUNTERPOINT

Point

The word *loyalty* is horribly outdated. Long gone are the days when an employer would keep an employee for life, as are the days when an employee would work for a single company for his or her entire career. Workplace guru Linda Gratton says, 'Loyalty is dead—killed off through shortening contracts, outsourcing, automation and multiple careers. Faced with what could be 50 years of work, who honestly wants to spend that much time with one company? Serial monogamy is the order of the day.' Everyone agrees; in a recent study, only 59% of employers reported they felt very loyal to their employees, while a mere 32% believed their employees were loyal to them.

The commitment on each side of the equation is weak. For example, Renault ended the 31-year career of employee Michel Balthazard (and two others) on false charges of espionage. When the wrongness of the charges became public, Renault half-heartedly offered the employees their jobs back and a lame apology: 'Renault thanks them for the quality of their work at the group and wishes them every success in the future.'

As for employees' loyalty to their employers, that is worth little nowadays. One manager with Deloitte says the current employee attitude is, 'I'm leaving, I had a great experience, and I'm taking that with me.' There just isn't an expectation of loyalty. In fact, only 9% of recent college graduates would stay with an employer for more than a year if they didn't like the job, research showed. The sooner we see the employment experience for what it is (mostly transactional, mostly short to medium term), the better off we'll be. The workplace is no place for fantasies.

Counterpoint

There are employers and employees who show little regard for each other. That each side can be uncaring or cavalier is hardly a revelation. No doubt such cynical attitudes are as old as the employment relationship itself.

But is that the norm? And is it desirable? The answer to both these questions is 'no'.

Says management guru Tom Peters, 'Bottom line: loyalty matters. A lot. Yesterday. Today. Tomorrow.' Human resource management expert Dave Ulrich says, 'Leaders who encourage loyalty want employees who are not only committed to and engaged in their work but who also find meaning from it.'

It is true that the employer–employee relationship has changed. For example, (largely) gone are the days when employers provide guaranteed payout pensions

to which employees contribute nothing. But is that such a bad thing? There is a big difference between asking employees to contribute to their pension plans and abandoning plans altogether (or firing without cause). Moreover, it's not that loyalty is dead, but rather that employers are loyal to a different kind of employee. An employer would no longer refuse to fire a long-tenured but incompetent employee.

But is that the kind of loyalty most employees expect today anyway? Companies are loyal to employees who do their jobs well, and that too is as it should be. Constantly training new employees wears down morale and profitability.

In short, employees still expect certain standards of decency and loyalty from their employers, and employers want engaged, committed employees in return. That is a good thing—and not so different from yesterday. Says workplace psychologist Binna Kandola, 'Workplaces may have changed but loyalty is not dead—the bonds between people are too strong.'

SOURCES: 'If you started a job and you didn't like it, how long would you stay?', *USA Today*, 11 June 2012, p. 1B; O. Gough and S. Arkani, 'The impact of the shifting pensions landscape on the psychological contract', *Personnel Review* 40, no. 2, 2011, pp. 173–84; 'Loyalty gap widens', *USA Today*, 16 May 2012, p. 1B; P. Korkki, 'The shifting definition of worker loyalty', *The New York Times*, 24 April 2011, p. BU8; and 'Is workplace loyalty an outmoded concept?', *Financial Times*, 8 March 2011.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. What are the main components of attitudes? Are these components related or unrelated?

Answer: Cognitive component, the opinion or belief of an attitude; affective component, the emotional or feeling segment of an attitude; behavioural component, an intention to behave in a certain way towards someone or something. These are closely related, particularly cognition and affect. As a manager, you need to understand how attitudes are formed and the relationship to actual job behaviour.

2. Does behaviour always follow from attitudes? Why or why not? Discuss the factors that affect whether behaviour follows from attitudes.

Answer: No. According to Leon Festinger, sometimes the reverse is true. Cognitive dissonance is any incompatibility between two or more attitudes or between behaviour and attitudes. Individuals seek to reduce this uncomfortable gap, or dissonance, in order to reach stability and consistency. Consistency is achieved by changing the attitudes or modifying the behaviours or through rationalisation. The desire to reduce dissonance depends on:

- a. importance of elements
- b. degree of individual influence
- c. rewards involved in dissonance.

3. What are the major job attitudes? In what ways are these attitudes alike? What is unique about each?

Answer:

Job satisfaction – A positive feeling about the job resulting from an evaluation of its characteristics.

Job involvement – Degree of psychological identification with the job where perceived performance is important to self-worth. Psychological empowerment is another closely related concept that is the belief in the degree of influence over the job, competence, job meaningfulness and autonomy.

Organisational commitment – Identifying with a particular organisation and its goals, while wishing to maintain membership in the organisation. Organisational commitment has a modest relationship to productivity. Research indicates that employees who feel their employers fail to keep promises to them feel less committed, and these reductions in commitment, in turn, lead to lower levels of creative performance.

Additional job attitudes include perceived organisational support and employee engagement. These are work-related attitudes that also need to be understood by managers. Overall, there is some distinction but a lot of overlap.

4. How do we measure job satisfaction?

Answer: Job satisfaction is a positive feeling about a job resulting from an evaluation of its characteristics. There are two widely used approaches to measure job satisfaction that are considered to be okay: a single global rating (one question, one answer), which is considered the best measure and a summation score (many questions, one average).

5. What causes job satisfaction? For most people, is pay more important or the work itself?

Answer: Pay and personality are the two main factors that seem to influence job satisfaction. Pay influences job satisfaction only to a point. After about \$65 000 a year (in Australia), there is no relationship between amounts of pay and job satisfaction. Money may bring happiness but not necessarily job satisfaction. Personality can influence job satisfaction. Negative people are usually not satisfied with their jobs. Overall, those with positive core self-evaluation are more satisfied with their jobs.

6. What outcomes does job satisfaction influence? What implications does this have for management?

Answer:

Job performance – Satisfied workers are more productive and make the organisation more effective.

Organisational citizenship behaviours (OCB) – Satisfaction influences OCB through perceptions of fairness.

Customer satisfaction – Satisfied frontline employees increase customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Absenteeism – Satisfied employees are moderately less likely to miss work.

Turnover – Satisfied employees are less likely to quit. There are many moderating variables in this relationship, such as job opportunities and alternatives.

Workplace deviance – Dissatisfied workers are more likely to unionise, abuse substances, steal, be tardy and withdraw.

Although there is overwhelming evidence about the impact of job satisfaction on the bottom line, most managers are either unconcerned about it or overestimate worker satisfaction. Despite this, it would better serve managers to pay attention to worker and job satisfaction elements.

CASE STUDY: Long hours, hundreds of emails, no sleep: does this sound like a satisfying job?

1. Why do you think many people are in jobs that they do not find satisfying? Do organisations help people craft satisfying and motivating jobs, and if not, why not?

Answer: For Fatima, she's consistently making her required benchmarks and goals, she has built successful relationships with colleagues, and senior management has identified her as having 'high potential'. But she isn't happy with her work. She'd be much more interested in understanding how her organisation can use social media in marketing efforts at all levels of the organisation. Ideally, she'd like to quit and find something that better suits her passions, but in the current economic environment this may not be an option. So, she has decided to proactively reconfigure her current job.

Fatima's employer never would have helped her craft a better job had she not sought help and that her proactivity is responsible for her success. To the extent possible, then, all employees should feel encouraged to be proactive in creating their best work situations.

2. Think about how you might reorient yourself to your own job. Are the principles of job crafting described here relevant to your work? Why or why not?

Answer: Fatima performed a core self-evaluation when she first noticed that she was spending too much of her time monitoring her team's performance and answering team questions and not enough time working on the creative projects that inspire her. She then considered how to modify her relationship with the team so that these activities incorporated her passion for social media strategies, with team activities more centred around developing new marketing. She also identified members of her team who might be able to help her implement these new strategies, and directed her interactions with these individuals towards her new goals. As a result, not only has her engagement in her work increased, but she has also developed

new ideas that are being recognised and advanced within the organisation. In sum, she has found that by actively and creatively examining her work, she has been able to craft her current job into one that is truly satisfying.

3. Are there any potential drawbacks to the job crafting approach? How can these concerns be minimised?

Answer: Enabling Fatima to reorganise her position through job ‘crafting’, which is the process of deliberately reorganising her job so that it better fits her motives, strengths and passions. Employees who exhibit a proactive personality are eager to develop their own options and find their own resources. Proactive individuals are often self-empowered and are, therefore, more open to seeking workable solutions when they are not satisfied.

EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE: What factors are most important to your job satisfaction?

Most of us probably want a job that we think will satisfy us. But because no job is perfect, we often have to trade off job attributes. One job may pay well but provide limited opportunities for advancement or skill development. Another may offer work we enjoy but have poor benefits. The following is a list of 21 job factors or attributes:

Autonomy and independence
Benefits
Career advancement opportunities
Career development opportunities
Compensation/pay
Communication between employees and management
Contribution of work to the organisation’s business goals
Feeling safe in the workplace
Flexibility to balance life and work issues
Job security
Job-specific training
Management recognition of employee job performance

Meaningfulness of job
Networking
Opportunities to use skills/abilities
Organisation's commitment to professional development
Overall corporate culture
Relationships with colleagues
Relationship with immediate supervisor
The work itself
The variety of work

On a sheet of paper, rank-order these job factors from top to bottom, so that number 1 is the job factor you think is most important to your job satisfaction, number 2 is the second most important factor, and so on.

Now gather in teams of three or four people and try the following:

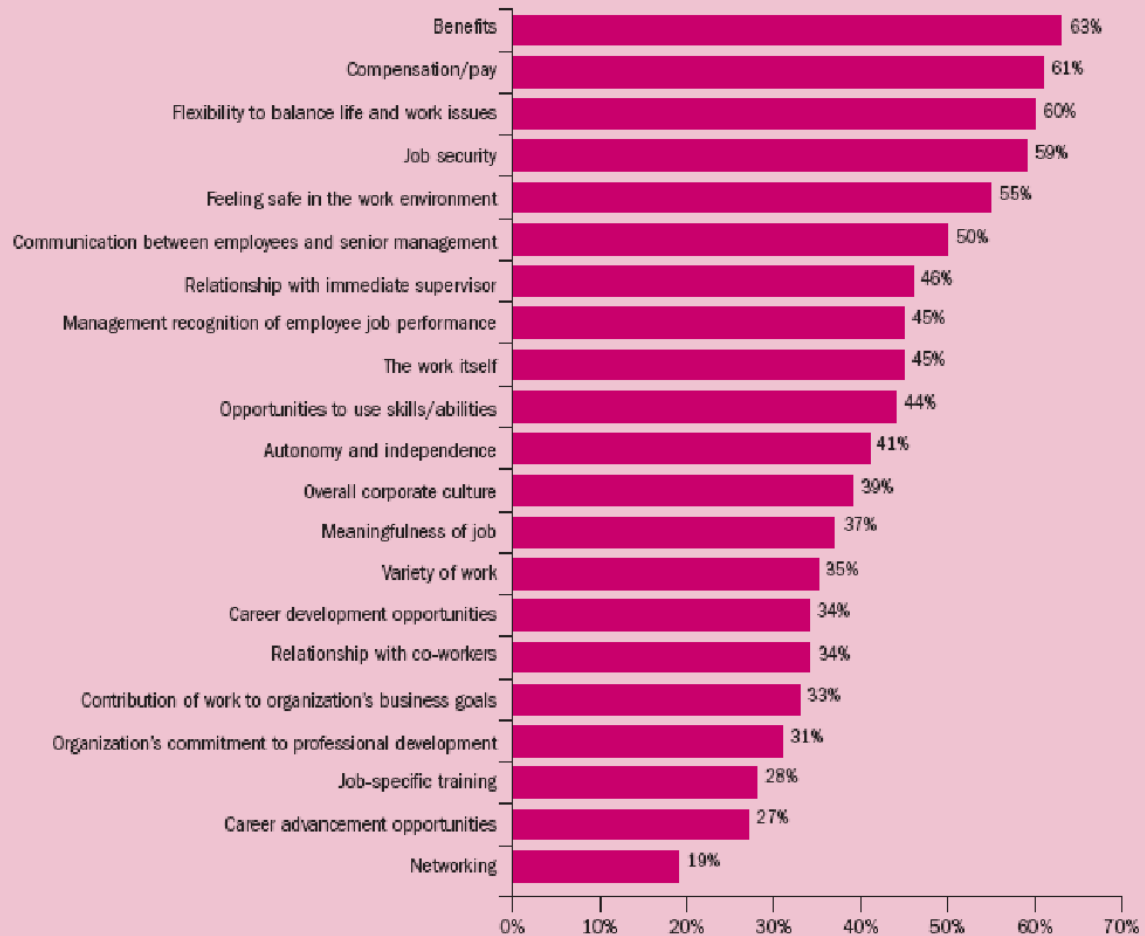
1. Appoint a spokesperson who, on behalf of your group, will take notes and report the answers to the following questions back to the class.
2. Averaging across all members in your group, generate a list of the top-five job factors.
3. Did most people in your group seem to value the same job factors? Why or why not?
4. Your instructor will provide you with the results of a study of a random sample of 600 employees conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). How do your group's rankings compare to the SHRM results?
5. The chapter says that pay doesn't correlate particularly well with job satisfaction, but in the SHRM survey, people say it is relatively important. Can your group suggest a reason for the apparent discrepancy?
6. Now examine your own list again. Does your list agree with the group list? Does your list agree with the SHRM study?

When employees were asked how important the following factors were to their job satisfaction, the figure below represents the percentage who listed the factor as 'very important' (as opposed to 'important', 'neither important nor unimportant', 'unimportant', or 'very unimportant').

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Figure 1 "Very Important" Aspects of Employee Job Satisfaction (Employees)

(n = 600)



Source: 2005 Job Satisfaction Survey Report

Source: Esen, SHRM Job Satisfaction Series: 2005 Job Satisfaction (Alexandria, VA: Society for Human Resource Management, 2005).

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

In-class activities and discussions

Ask students to consider their hobbies and what sort of jobs they have done (unpaid) in pursuit of their hobbies. Compile a list of tasks they have done between them. Ask students if they found any satisfaction in doing the tasks.

Lead a conversation with the class about how their interests will influence their enjoyment of the job. For example, those who love horses will happily clean out the stables to spend time with their horses; or think about the children who are ball kids for the Australian Open. These are unpaid roles done happily for the experience because it is something they love. What would happen if the role offered a nominal fee? Would it make the 'job' more enjoyable? Why? The answer is actually about the fact that the task does not become more enjoyable if people are paid.

Considering the list of tasks, ask students to think of ways to make the following jobs satisfying:

- garbage collecting
- horse stable cleaning
- fruit picking
- ironing.

Does money make the task more interesting?

Students will often say 'yes' immediately; however, this is because it is an interesting exercise for them. Get a bottle of water. Start screwing the lid on and off. After about a minute ask them, 'Is this an interesting job?' Now say, 'What if I paid you \$1000 a week, is it an interesting job then?' Some will say yes but most will say no. This is often the first time students will have considered that money will not make a task interesting. Conclude this discussion with the need to consider what makes a job satisfying being critical when choosing a job.

Industry-related practical applications

Ask the students to research Google, HP and another organisation they are interested in working at. Ask them to look at the list provided in the experiential exercise and rate each of the job satisfaction items in relation to these organisations.

This is an opportunity for the students to recognise that in looking for a job, they should look towards what may satisfy them in their work beyond the work alone.

ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES:

1. Visit the Aon Hewitt site to learn how many Australian organisations rank among the best employers. <https://www.aonhewitt.com.au/Home/Aon-Hewitt-Best-Employers/>
2. Ethics are widely discussed in business – access this piece about Cadbury as a starting piece: <http://businesscasestudies.co.uk/cadbury-schweppes/ethical-business-practices/the-importance-of-ethics-in-business.html#axzz2hfgqf67L>.
3. How satisfied are you with your job (or a job you had in the past)? Take a job satisfaction quiz at: https://www.welcoa.org/freeresources/pdf/job_satisfaction_survey.pdf.
4. Job satisfaction – what are people saying about their job satisfaction? Find out more about what American workers are saying: <http://www.inc.com/magazine/19980601/946.html>.

Are you surprised at what you read? Write a paragraph or two on the three most important facts you learnt from these websites. Bring your work to class for further discussion.

5. Organisations often conduct attitude surveys of their employees. What is it that they want to know? Go to: <http://www.hr-survey.com/EmployeeAttitude.htm> to learn more about employee attitude surveys. Write a paragraph or two on what you think would be the three most important topics to include in an attitude survey, and why.