

Volume 22
Number 1
February 2008

The Academy of Management

P E R S P E C T I V E S

Formerly the Academy of Management Executive

Exchange

Business School Rankings

The Rain Man Cometh—Again 5
Robert Zemsky

Rain, Snow, and Sleet Are Just Different Types of Precipitation 15
Angelo S. DeNisi

Rain Man or Pied Piper? Moving Business Schools Beyond Media Rankings
with Mass Customization and Stakeholder Education 18
William H. Glick

Articles

The Mismatched Worker: When People Don't Fit Their Jobs 24
Arne L. Kalleberg

Navigating Shareholder Influence: Compensation Plans and the
Shareholder Approval Process 41
Pamela Brandes, Maria Goranova, and Steven Hall

Departments

Research Briefs

The Product Innovation Process: Are Managing Information Flows and Cross-Functional
Collaboration Key? 58
Rebecca M. J. Wells

Do CEOs Worry About Being Fired When Making Investment Decisions? 60
James A. Largay III and Ran Zhang

Do Lucrative Executive Pensions Make Management More Conservative? 61
Rose M. Prasad

How Do Corporate Boards Evolve? 63
Kathleen Reibem

Can Goal Setting and Performance Feedback Enhance Organizational Citizenship Behavior? 65
Domingo Ribeiro Soriano

Political Skills in Organizations: Do Personality and Reputation Play a Role? 66
Domingo Ribeiro Soriano



Can Goal Setting and Performance Feedback Enhance Organizational Citizenship Behavior?

Research Brief by Domingo Ribeiro Soriano, Professor of Management, University of Valencia, Spain

At some point in our work lives, most of us have had the feeling that we are striving for the good of the organization in ways that go beyond the job at hand. We are the standard bearers for organizational altruism and positive attitudes. But what do we get in return? The usual answer, many of us feel, is zilch. Perhaps not even a simple thank you from the boss in a casual conversation by the coffee machine. Yet the willingness to strive on behalf of the common good, to display outstanding *organizational citizenship behavior* (OCB), needs to be nurtured and fostered. So how can we create a climate that encourages citizenship behaviors in organizations?

According to some, the answer involves the same factors often believed to be fundamental for maximizing productivity: setting goals and providing feedback. Research on goal setting has its roots in the Aristotelian idea that action is caused by purpose. An individual's conscious intentions regulate his or her actions; a goal is simply what the individual is consciously trying to accomplish. Accordingly, goal setting improves performance by (a) narrowing the field of vision and keeping employees and managers focused on a particular set of relevant tasks, (b) providing a minimum expectation for tasks that go beyond the generic "do your best" advice, and (c) minimizing the impact of unexpected problems.

Management scholars have suggested that goals are also important for establishing organizational behavior conducive to a positive climate. Goals can help enhance team spirit, social support, job attachment, and performance. A recent study by Eran Vigoda-Gadot and Larisa Angert, both of the University of Haifa, sheds light on the relationship between goals and performance in organizations. Their work focused on formal job duties as

well as the psychological contracts employees have with the organization and the connection those contracts have to pro-social citizenship behavior.

In previous studies, researchers have examined the effects of goal setting on the performance of individuals. Since employees have finite amounts of time and energy to devote to their formal job duties, goals can help enhance performance by mobilizing effort, directing attention, and encouraging persistence. But Vigoda-Gadot and Angert wondered how much energy remains for altruistic citizenship behaviors that go beyond formal job requirements when ambitious goals are in place. Moreover, do ambitious, clear goals also affect the psychological contract with the organization or employees' informal performance in the organization (i.e., their citizenship behavior)? If goals establish the performance that is expected from employees, do they also indirectly define employees' psychological contract and affect their citizenship behavior?

To investigate these questions, Vigoda-Gadot and Angert conducted a longitudinal study. Participants were students employed in a social service project under a short-term contract (between 12 and 36 months) as well as the managers who supervised them. Vigoda-Gadot and Angert explored whether goal setting helps both employees and managers distinguish between the formal and the informal aspects of work (which includes the willingness to be a good organizational citizen). Indeed, the need to build more awareness of the informal side of the organizational environment turned out to be one of their recommendations. They note that while goals can help organizations improve productivity, those positive effects may not last if the more intangible aspects of the working environment are left unattended. Those more intangible aspects include job satisfaction, job commitment, willingness to engage in organizational citizenship behavior, and a belief that justice exists in the workplace—all of which can be undermined by transitory events in the organizational environment.

In the first stage of their research, Vigoda-Gadot and Angert examined employees' responses and supervisors' evaluations. They differentiated

between altruistic behavior (goodwill toward co-workers) and compliance behavior (attitude toward the firm and its regulations, mission, etc.). It turned out that job satisfaction was related to formal performance and compliance behavior, but not to altruistic behavior. Job commitment was also related to formal performance. Finally, goal setting was related to formal performance and altruistic behavior but was not connected to compliance behavior.

In the second stage of the study, supervisors who had participated in earlier evaluations reassessed employees' performance and feedback. The feedback included information about formal goal attainment as well as informal behaviors such as supporting others and going beyond what was formally required. Several key results emerged. First, job feedback had a relationship with formal performance, altruistic behavior, and compliance behavior. Interestingly, no relationship was found between goal setting and either type of citizenship behavior in the second stage of the study.

Vigoda-Gadot and Angert's research has interesting implications for managers. They argue that we need to be aware that goal setting can help us understand employee citizenship behaviors. In particular, when employees are provided with performance feedback by their managers, they may put more effort into increasing their formal performance and engage in positive social behaviors in the workplace. Clearer goals and more challenging tasks at work enhance formal performance and increase organizational productivity and effectiveness at various levels. This contradicts earlier concerns that increasing citizenship behaviors hurts formal performance. Finally, managers should consider that feedback can have a positive impact on both formal performance and informal work behaviors.

These findings have several limitations, principally the size of the sample and its homogeneous nature. For instance, how generalizable are these findings given that the study examined students working in temporary jobs? Future researchers should consider this and the potential impact of the type of organization involved (e.g., private versus nonprofit), the nature of tasks or working environments, and personality factors. Indeed,

more research is needed before firm conclusions can be drawn about the relationships among goals, feedback, performance, and altruism in the workplace. Put simply, there is still much we don't understand about how we can encourage employees to be outstanding citizens and go the extra mile for their organizations.

Source: Vigoda-Gadot, E., & Angert, L. (2007). Goal setting theory, job feedback, and OCB: Lessons from a longitudinal study. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 29(2), 119-128.

Political Skills in Organizations: Do Personality and Reputation Play a Role?

Research Brief by Domingo Ribeiro Soriano, Professor of Management, University of Valencia, Spain

Most executives believe that organizations are, at least to an extent, political arenas. Consequently, individuals must possess both political will and political skill to survive, much less be successful, in their organizational roles. But are they right? In previous studies, researchers have suggested that politically skilled individuals inspire greater trust and confidence in others. Moreover, such individuals wield effective influence and control through behavior that is appropriate to the situation. In doing so, they transmit signals of effectiveness to others—which in turn may result in higher assessments of reputation and job performance. Yet many unanswered questions remain. For instance, what factors, individual or otherwise, make for excellent political skills? And does having political skill actually predict job performance? Furthermore, where does reputation fit into the equation?

These are some of the questions that Yongmei Liu (University of Texas at Arlington), Gerald Ferris (Florida State University), Pamela Perrewé (Florida State University), Robert Zinko (East Carolina University), Bart Weitz (University of Florida), and Jun Xu (University of Florida) sought to answer in their recent research. In a series of studies, they examined whether person-