

Leisure activities, job crafting can make company 'mistfits' more productive

October 20 2016

Finding meaning outside of work and proactively tailoring duties on the job may help people who fail to gel with a company's culture stay engaged and become more productive workers, according to researchers.

In a recent study, [employees](#) who were not a good fit with their company's culture could remain engaged and productive through job crafting and enhanced [leisure activities](#), according to Ryan Vogel, assistant professor of management, Penn State Erie, who worked with Jessica Rodell, associate professor of management and John Lynch, doctoral candidate in management, both of the University of Georgia.

Vogel said that this is good news for many employees who may not be working in their ideal [jobs](#) or organizations. Prior to this, employees were commonly thought to be passive recipients of their work situations, he added.

"Most of the books and information you see in the popular press are oriented around the idea of companies hiring to achieve a good fit with company values, and there are some benefits to that, but, unfortunately, there are some drawbacks, too," said Vogel. "If you have too many people who are exactly the same in an organization, it can make the organization stagnant and resistant to change."

Employees who have different values—or misfits—may struggle in the organization, said Vogel.

"For the individual, if you don't fit in, it can be a bad work situation," said Vogel. "You don't feel like you belong, your work has less meaning, and you may have trouble maintaining performance in that workplace."

Job crafting allows workers to modify their job duties to better match personal abilities and interests, said Vogel. It can also allow employees to interact with colleagues who are more supportive, or who might be easier to get along with.

Misfits on the job may not dress or act different from other workers, according to Vogel. Misfit status is more about what the worker values, he added.

"These might be people who are under-the-radar misfits," said Vogel. "These are people who may, to others, be doing just fine but who show up to work every day and just feel out of place. Perhaps they highly value giving back to society, but work for a tobacco company, or they may highly value autonomy and making their own decisions, but they work for a highly bureaucratic organization."

Vogel said organizations should be aware of how critical meaning and value are to new workers.

"What is even more concerning is the next generation of workers for whom meaning and values may be even more critical," Vogel said. "I think that for millennials and young people coming up in the workforce today having a job that has personal meaning is becoming more important."

The researchers, who report their findings in the current issue of the *Academy of Management Journal*, recruited 193 employees and their supervisors from a variety of industries using Craigslist. They then sent the employees a questionnaire designed to measure individual and work

values, job crafting, leisure activities and engagement. The researchers sent a questionnaire to the employees' supervisors to measure the employees' job performance and behavior.

Misfit employees who reported in the survey that they engaged in more job crafting—for instance, they more regularly take new approaches to tasks or change minor procedures—were significantly less likely to suffer low engagement and performance. Misfits with higher levels of leisure activity were also less likely to suffer these negative effects.

"While not hypothesized, the pattern of results further suggests that leisure activity not only mitigates the negative effect of value incongruence on job engagement, but could also positively impact job engagement for some misfits," added the researchers.

Future research may focus on the experience of misfits based on specific values, such as whether employees are labeled as misfits by other [workers](#) and the consequences of that label.

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

Citation: Leisure activities, job crafting can make company 'mistfits' more productive (2016, October 20) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-10-leisure-job-crafting-company-mistfits.html>

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