

What drives the modern workplace? New factors show what motivates us and how we perform

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Credit: Flickr/Daniel Paixão Fontes

An international study on workplace performance and motivation has found a competitive attitude to work, a willingness to serve and working speed do not strongly drive workers in Western countries, but do explain performance in Asian workplaces.

The study sampled 4000 respondents from eight countries including the US, UK, China, Japan and Korea, and combined established behavioural theory with three new factors anticipated to be most relevant to workplaces in Asia: competitive attitude, willingness to serve and speed – as 'competitive drivers' of workforce performance.

The study, published in International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, concluded that these three factors fully explained workplace performance in Asian countries, specifically Indonesia and India as emerging markets, and, taken together explained the significant majority (roughly 90 per cent) of performance in the 'Confucian Orbit', a term introduced by the authors to capture the common cultural denominator for China, Japan and Korea.

In contrast, these factors did not explain performance in Western countries, specifically the United States, the UK and Germany, where the predictors explained only 20-30 per cent of performance.

"There are many factors that explain the motivation of workers to perform their roles, and overall workplace performance and competition. Why these drivers do not strongly explain Western workplaces could be cultural or historical, particularly as these countries are firmly established markets," said study lead author, Associate Professor Chris Baumann.

Importantly, this study addresses for the first time the anomaly between [economic growth](#) and development experienced by Asian countries and their relatively low rankings in global competitiveness indexes.

"Asian countries such as China, India and Korea have experienced economic growth and development over the past few decades beyond that of Western economies and yet, global rankings of economic indicators rank them behind Western economies," said Associate Professor Baumann.

"These findings have implications on both the micro level, informing workforce performance, recruitment and management, to the macro-level on the best location for business, outsourcing and the economic [performance](#) of [countries](#) into the future."

More information: Chris Baumann et al. Competitiveness and workforce performance: Asiath "West", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* (2016). [DOI: 10.1108/IJCHM-12-2014-0617](#)

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