The Three Types of Organizational Commitment of Employees

Employee involvement in the missions and visions of an organization, and the types of employee commitments towards an organization remain at the center of designing any management strategy. Business leaders have led through the centuries by understanding employee psychology, employee emotions, and employee expectations, and by catering to employee needs in a manner that resulted in a win-win situation for both employer and employee. This situation guaranteed organizational commitment of the employee and in turn helped the organization realize its goals.

The term *organizational commitment* has become so much a part of management jargon today, that many of us use it every day without clearly visualizing the norms and parameters associated with it. Failure to understand the nature of organizational commitment leads to a lack of understanding of employee attachment to the organization and in turn leads to deficient management strategies that fail to reach their goals. In this article, we will briefly describe the three types of organizational commitment observed and accepted by research.

**What is organizational commitment?**

In simple words, it is the strength of the attachment an employee feels towards an organization. It may be measured by the degree to which an individual is ready to adopt organizational values and goals. It may be measured by the degree to which an employee fulfills his/her job responsibilities. And it may also be measured by behavior observed in the workplace.

In the 90s, Allen and Meyer proposed an analytic view of organizational commitment, splitting it into three definable components – affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Affective commitment is the emotional attachment of an employee to organizational values – how much an employee likes the organization. Continuance commitment is a measure of the willingness of an employee to continue working for the same organization. Normative commitment deals with the feelings of obligation, or sense of responsibility an employee feels towards the organization. Though each component of organizational commitment may affect other components, for the purpose of designing management strategies, it is easier to segment and visualize the three types of organizational commitments in order to bolster them according to need.

**Affective commitment towards an organization**

Affective commitment, or how much an employee actually *likes* or feels part of an organization has a tremendous effect on employee and organizational performance. High levels of affective commitment in employees will not only affect continuance commitment, but also encourages the employee to try to bring...
others into the talent pool of the organization. An employee with high levels of affective commitment acts as a brand ambassador of the organization. On the other hand, an employee with high continuance commitment (due to lack of alternatives), but poor affective commitment may harm the organization by criticizing it in his/her social circles.

Affective commitment of an employee is directly proportional to positive work experience. So, management policies and strategies that make proper strength and weakness assessments of employees and create situations and workflows where the maximum number of employees individually experience positive work experiences, help to build a successful organization.

The great emphasis placed by recruiting managers upon person-organization-fit is also to ensure a high level of affective commitment in employees. Affective commitment is higher when the gap between individual values and organizational values is minimal.

However, the congruence between individual values and organizational values in employees can also be built and enhanced by strategies and programs to enhance employee understanding and recognition of organizational values.

**Continuance commitment**

When continuance commitment is not completely driven by affective commitment, it usually boils down to the costs that an employee associates with leaving the organization. Continuance commitment is also driven to a great extent by organizational culture, and when an employee finds an organization to be positive and supportive, he/she will have a higher degree of continuance commitment. Important organizational factors like employee loyalty and employee retention are components of continuance commitment.

**Normative commitment**

Normative commitment builds upon duties and values, and the degree to which an employee stays in an organization out of a sense of obligation. There are times in small companies, when payments are delayed, and the employees have to suffer pay cuts or deferred pay, but they stay on, because they do not want to leave an employer during bad times. Normative commitment comes from a sense of moral duty and the value system of an individual. It can be a result of affective commitment, or an outcome of socialization within the workplace and commitment to co-workers.

Normative commitment is higher in organizations that value loyalty and systematically communicate the fact to employees with rewards, incentives and other strategies. Normative commitment in employees is also high where employees regularly see visible examples of the employer being committed to employee well-being.

An employee with greater organizational commitment has a greater chance of contributing to organizational success and will also experience higher levels of job satisfaction. High levels of job satisfaction, in turn, reduces employee turnover and increases the organization’s ability to recruit and retain talent.

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