Understanding Work Tolerance to Reduce Employee Turnover

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Have you ever asked anyone if they quit a job because they lacked the basic skills necessary to perform it? The answer tends to be – NO. Most often, employees do not quit because they lack the basic skills to do the work - they quit because they don’t like something about the job or its’ environment.

Generally, organizational turnover is a result of employee’s quitting because they don’t like the job or have the “will” to do it – not because they lack the basic skills to perform well. So what can be done about this issue?

One way to alleviate this problem is to leverage the talent acquisition process to screen-in individuals with the tolerance for the demands of a job. This reduces the likelihood of someone quitting because they don’t like something about the job! Thus, we want to focus the talent acquisition process to acquire individual’s that have the “will do” characteristics to successfully complete the tasks required within a given job context.¹

Generally, the “will do” aspects are overlooked within the talent acquisition process, as skills or the “can do” aspects of an applicant’s characteristics are emphasized. To further exemplify the difference between these, a general understanding of KSAO’s (Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Other characteristics) is helpful.

Knowledge refers to specific information needed to perform a job (e.g., an understanding of how to use email service for communication); Skills are the proficiencies needed to perform a task (e.g., typing an email); and Abilities are generally stable attributes (e.g., having an interpersonal nature enabling you to communicate effectively via email).

Although skills and abilities are often confused, or used interchangeably, they do provide valuable differences. Keeping with our example, an individual can have the natural ability to communicate well with others, but never gain the typing skills necessary to proficiently communicate with others via modern electronic mediums such as email and social networking. Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities are each examples of the “can do” aspects of applicants.

Finally, Other characteristics include all other important characteristics of the profile required for performing a job successfully, and most often include: capacity (or tolerance), values, and personality.² These Other characteristics are examples of the “will do” aspects of applicants, and are generally not used within the hiring process as often, or are not leveraged as effectively.

¹ “Can Do” vs. “Will Do”

² “Can Do” vs. “Will Do”
Understanding KSAO’s provides a baseline for the importance of profiling candidates against multiple criteria (e.g., “will do” AND “can do” aspects of the job), and establishes the foundation of staffing for work tolerance - which is particularly useful for reducing turnover.

Using work tolerance to reduce employee turnover requires profiling individuals to ensure that they match the demands of the job. For example, in the retail industry employees are required to have tolerance for the occasional irate customer. Simply put, not every employee will tolerate aggressive behavior from a customer – some will be unable to remain calm, have the determination to understand why the customer is upset, or find out how the customer’s dissatisfaction can be alleviated.

**Staffing for Work Tolerance to Optimize Fit**

To optimize functioning, it’s important to try to achieve alignment between the demands of the organization and the work tolerance of its’ employees. Staffing for work tolerance involves measuring job applicants’ work tolerance and using that information to help select employees whose tolerance best align with the demands required of employees on the job.

**Ultimately, the talent acquisition process can be leveraged to select candidates who tolerate the job demands they will face on a daily basis.** The *Fit Index System (FIS)™* was established to reduce turnover by profiling an applicant’s level of work tolerance associated with the “will do” aspects of the job.

**Assessing for Work Tolerance**

Through their responses, applicants indicate their relative degree of frustration with several Work Tolerance factors and create a profile of their compatibility for a specific occupation.

![Work Tolerance Factors](image)

**Assessment Impact**

The *Fit Index System (FIS)™* was designed specifically to reduce turnover. This impact has been confirmed on numerous accounts while providing implications for significant ROI; the following example highlights the utility of work tolerance assessments (i.e., FIS) for reducing turnover and increasing productivity.
Work Tolerance Assessment Impact for Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. (RCCL)*

The results demonstrated a significant impact for the FIS assessment. Overall turnover was reduced by 57%.

Return on Investment (ROI)

With a 57% reduction in employee turnover for Customer Service positions, RCCL hired 188 fewer people. Conservative estimates indicate that the organization lost approximately $5,000 with each employee who quit in terms of their investment in recruitment, selection, training and onboarding for each employee. Based on the impact of the assessment solution for reducing turnover, it is estimated that RCCL saved nearly one million dollars during the first year of use.

Productivity Improvement

Additionally, agents are now fielding more calls than ever, from between 80-90 per eight hour day. That represents an additional 1,100 calls per day, or roughly an extra 300,000 calls per year.

*For more detail see the Case Study “Royal Caribbean Cuts Turnover and Increases Productivity”
Summary and Conclusions

Understanding Work Tolerance creates the opportunity to leverage the talent acquisition process to ensure optimal alignment of applicants to the demands of a given job to ensure better Fit, while reducing turnover, to improve the talent acquisition process and impact the bottom line.

The focus of DeGarmo Group’s research, product development, and service delivery is the application of psychological science in human resource (HR) and employment assessment and selection. We provide our clients with web-based HR testing and training services that support their talent acquisition and employee development processes.

For more information about the Fit Index System (FIS), or any information or data relating to this report, please contact DeGarmo Group using the information below.

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