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Newcomers information seeking: exploring types, modes, sources and outcomes

Summary

Every newcomer comes to organizations will learn the behaviors and attitude for being a role. Newcomers have to seek more information in order to assuming roles. Research has focused increasingly on the proactive and self-managing potential of organizational newcomers in recent years. Using Elizabeth Wolfe Morrison’s article Newcomer information seeking: exploring types, modes, sources and outcomes as a primary guide, I would like to describe the different types of information seeking, the different forms, and the changes over time, and the outcomes.

Comparing with “Information seeking during organizational entry: Influences, tactics, and a model of the process” (miller &Jablin, 1991), the study contributes to make sure to understand both of the newcomer socialization process and information-seeking processes in organizations.
Why information seeking is so important?

Information seeking is so important for newcomers, when they entry a new organization. There are two primary reasons: firstly, when the newcomers obtain information, this will reduce some uncertainly. Base on research, I found many of the newcomers has been experienced “effort-behavior uncertainty" (do I have what it takes) and "behavior-outcome uncertainty" (exactly what should I do). Information will help you to obtain and understand more precise answers and control the unknown environment to perform better. . Secondly, from seeking information, newcomers will make sure they will know the fact that they are often not provided, which they need to master their jobs and join into the organization. Information seeking will much helpful for the newcomers to feel comfortable and integrate in a new environment.
Type of information the newcomers seek

Within the text the author states out five type of the information seeking. Those five main types will organised as follow:

- **Technical information (information about how to perform required job tasks):** the very important for newcomers’ learning to perform the jobs is that they need to acquire skills and knowledge in the area. Newcomers should get much more job-related technical information such as if you are an accountant, you have to know the policy in the organization, the knowledge about accounting, and the organization-specific.

- **Referent information (information about the role demands and expectations):** as a newcomer, he or she should be able to know the exactly what others expect them. They need such information to let them know that what their roles are most likely the expectations of the organization, and what is required for success on job.

- **Normative information (information about the expected behaviours and attitude):** every organization has it own standards (normative). Different organization has different culture and policy. Base on research, I found that if newcomers want to integrate an organization as soon as possible, the better way is get more normative information about this organization they are in.

- **Performance feedback (information about how others are perceiving and evaluating their jobs):** feedback is the best way to individually evaluate the newcomers’ performance. Those feedbacks are considered as appraisal, telling worker if they are functioning successfully on the job.

- **Social feedback (information about the acceptability of their non task behaviors):** for such information seeking, newcomers will be carefully examining their behaviors.

In addition basic on the research, I found there is another type of information which the newcomers should be looking for, Relational -- information about the nature of his relationship with another. Form those information, newcomers will enhances the interpersonal relationship and help to develop their career.
Forms of newcomer information seeking

There are several of forms the behaviors take and how it varies for different types of information.

- Monitoring versus inquiry: on the feedback seeking behaviors, there are two modes, inquiry means to directly asking someone else for obtaining information; monitoring means to entail attending to a situation or behaviors of others. There are some different of them, especially in cost. Based on research, newcomers should look for referent information, normative information, performance feedback, and social feedback through monitoring more than inquiry. On the other hands, newcomers will seek technical information through inquiry more than monitoring.

- Selecting an information source: in this form, there are several person they could ask, such as, direct supervisors, experienced co-workers, other newcomers, supervisors support personnel or people outside of their organization. Base on the research, experienced peers and direct supervisors are the most important source of information. Those are all very important, but newcomers would like to ask some type of information to peers, such as technical information, normative information, and social feedback. Because peers has the similar with newcomers, viewing the organization. And on the other side, supervisor looks at the organization as different positions and level. Newcomers would like to seek referent information and performance feedback from supervisor. Base the research, I found during the information seeking, they will ask both peers and supervisors more questions. This tactic is more efficiently, provide opportunities to clarify ubiquitous in answers received, and may ease access in future requests. There is another finding is that newcomers think asking questions tells supervisors they are doing a good job. But on the other hand, I found with the lower self-confidence, such newcomers do not like to seek information form supervisor. From this point we can see, sometimes the newcomers ‘self-confidence will affect their ways to seeking information.
● Obtaining information from impersonal sources: newcomers can seek information from written, electronic, or task-generated source. The advantage of the impersonal sources is that providing information is more clear and useful than by providing by other person. The disadvantage is that is not subjective and can not obtaining complex information form impersonal source. Base on research, I found newcomers will ask other people for information more frequently than using impersonal sources.

The changes over time

In fact, in the first few moths, they focus on developing their skills and relationship with others. Over time, the newcomers have been integrated in the organization. So newcomers will change the type of information that they need. At the later, they think more about referent information and performance feedback.

Outcome of seeking behaviors

Such those seeking behaviors, will make newcomers more satisfaction and lead higher performance. They will became socialized and experienced less uncertain issues. They will know what they need to do, how to do more effectively, and how to perform the jobs better in environment. But some newcomers may experience role ambiguity or conflict as a result of:

● Lack of clarity or unanimity of other's expectations
● mixed feedback about job performance
● Not being able to negotiate informal agreements on role definition
● Other breaking or neglecting to fulfill contracts or negotiated functions
Review

The article provides a good amount of detail and research within the field providing some good reference and point. This author has survey over 205 new accountants in several months. These patterns were stable over time. Overall the article is informative and the authors do get their point across and allowing a whole section to be used for further discussion.
Reference


Miller & Jablin, 1991 “Information seeking during organizational entry: Influences, tactics, and a model of the process”