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HAPPILY EVER AFTER?

How the use of temporary employees
affect standard and nonstandard employees' attitude
and behavior towards organizations

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ABSTRACT

The evolution towards increased use of temporary employment has resulted in concerns regarding the impact of blended workforces on the individual and its effects on organizational performance. Numerous scholars have in different ways examined the field by trying to examine how temporary employment agreements affect different aspects of organizing, such as cost structures, employee behaviors, knowledge creation, and competitive advantage. This report aims at shedding some light on how the use of temporary employees affect both standard and nonstandard employees' attitude and behavior towards the organization and how this might affect organizational performance. It concludes that temporary employment agreements do affect employee attitude and behavior but given previous research it is yet unclear how. Thus it is suggested that future scholars take the issue further by bringing new elements to the analysis by taking in new fields or combining existing knowledge in different ways. In terms of managerial relevance the report presents some guidelines on how to manage a blended workforce.

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THE HETEROGENEOUS WORKFORCE IS HERE TO STAY

Scholars have identified the growth in temporary employment, starting in the 1980s and stretching into the mid-1990s, as one of the most spectacular and important evolutions in Western working life (De Cyuper et. al., 2008). According to forecasts this trend will further continue although at a more moderate pace (OECD, 2002; Guest, 2004; Campbell & Burgess, 2001a). The growth in temporary employment is mainly driven by employers' demand for more flexibility and innovation, and by wishes to reduce labor costs and administrative complexity (Burgess & Connell, 2006; Kalleberg et al. 2003; Matusik & Hill, 1998; Brewster et. al., 1997). "Employers know that the economy could change at any time [...] so by hiring somebody temporarily, companies have staffing for their peak needs but can let them go when they are no longer needed" (Fortune, 2011). Use of nonstandard workers – employees who do not posit a permanent contract with an organization – has created a so-called blended workforce, in which permanent and temporary workers work side-by-side with the same jobs and are integrated into work teams (Pearce, 1993; Smith, 2001a).

The fact that the evolution towards increased use of temporary employment was not initiated or desired by employees has resulted in concerns regarding the impact of blended workforces on the individual. This has fuelled organizational and psychological research aimed at understanding and comparing temporary and permanent employees: how different contract forms affect employees' attitudes, well-being and behavior (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2006), and firms' ability to create value and establish competitive advantage (Matusik & Hill, 1998). On one side researchers argue that use of temporary employees threatens the psychological contracts of standard employees, limiting coordination, learning, and shared values among the workforce (Rousseau, 1995). These issues are however seen as minor by other academics when put in relation to the strategic flexibility, reduced costs and adaption to changing market conditions that the firm can obtain by using temporary employees (Matusik & Hill, 1998).

Irrespective of using contingent employees being good or bad the heterogeneous workforce is undoubtedly here to stay. The questions is thus not if temporary employees, consultants, interim management, subcontractors and outsourcing should be used or not, but rather how a blended workforce is best managed. If workforce blending can cause deterioration in work environments it is important to understand how employees are affected by such deterioration, and consequently its effects on firm performance. With this as a point of departure this report aims at shedding some light on how the use of temporary employees affect both standard and nonstandard employees' attitude and behavior towards the organization and how this might affect organizational performance.

DEFINING TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT

International research on the growth of temporary employment and its potential impact on the individual have been undermined by the absence of a commonly accepted vocabulary and definition (Gallagher & McLean Parks, 2001; Kalleberg, 2000). The term contingent employment is used most frequent in Canadian and US research, whilst temporary, fixed-term and non-permanent employment are used interchangeably in European literature (Connelly & Gallagher 2004; De Cuyper et. al., 2005a). In scholars from Australia and New Zealand the term casual employment is most likely the best available equivalent to temporary employment even though it is also distinct in some respects (Burgess et. al., 2005; Campbell, 2004; Campbell & Burgess 2001a,b). A widely accepted definition of standard employment is “work done on a fixed schedule – usually full-time – at the employer’s place of business, under the employer’s control, and with the mutual expectation of continued employment” (Kalleberg, Reskin & Hudson, 2000: 258). Standard employment agreements (SEA) differ from nonstandard employment arrangements by the latter departing from SEA on three or, in the US four dimensions (Campbell, 2004; Cranford et. al., 2003; Burgess & Strachan, 1999)

First, a SEA is characterized by permanency and continuity of employment, as opposed to a temporary employment agreement where the notion of ongoing employment is absent. A temporary employment is instead limited to a certain period and often includes a fixed end date. Second, employees under a SEA work at the employer’s workplace, on the employer’s premise and under the employer’s supervision. Temporary employment arrangements are in contrast often market mediated as for example in the case of temporary agency workers. Third, SEA is associated with extensive statutory benefits and entitlements – minimum wage, unemployment insurance, protection against unfair dismissal and paid leave – as compared to temporary employment agreements in most countries. The fourth dimension, which is US specific, regards the association between SEA and waged work. Meaning that, in the US, self-employment, as for instance in the case of independent contracting (Connelly & Gallagher, 2006), is categorized as temporary employment. Scholars on temporary employment, particularly from Australia and Europe, however argue for exclusion self-employment from temporary employment (Bernesak and Kinnear 1999; Campbell 2004; Guest 2004), as it is regulated differently by law. This classification is in parallel with the OECD (2002: 170) definition that temporary employment is “dependent employment of limited duration” and thus also adopted within the realm of this report.

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACTS AS BASIS FOR UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYEE ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOR

Employees' attitudes and behaviors towards the organization for whom they work differ depending on the type of psychological contract that exists between the employee and the employer. The definition of a psychological contract is "the idiosyncratic set of reciprocal expectations held by employees concerning their obligations and their entitlements" (McLean, Parks, Kidder, & Gallagher, 1998: 698), and their content has proved to be vital in affecting employee attitude and behavior, and in predicting employee well-being (Anderson & Schalk, 1998). Psychological contracts are mainly divided into transactional and relational psychological contracts (Rousseau, 1995; Millward & Brewerton, 2000). Relational psychological contracts are dynamic and subjective, long term in duration and centered around socio-emotional exchange, where job security in exchange for loyalty are core elements. Transactional psychological contracts have a precisely defined content, a finite and short-term time frame, and centered around economic exchange of benefits and contributions, with pay for attendance as prototypical elements.

In general the formal employment contract gives the framework for, and outlines the negotiability zone of, the psychological contract (Rousseau & Schalk, 2000). More precisely, contract duration and the job security associated with the contract are fundamental in distinguishing relational psychological contracts from transactional (Rousseau, 1995). To this each type of psychological contract can be linked to a different type of employee: transactional psychological contracts dominating among temporary employees and relational psychological contracts dominating among standard employees (McLean Parks et. al., 1998). Studies show that temporary employees perceive their psychological contract to be narrower (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2002; Van Dyne & Ang, 1998) and more transactional rather than relational (Millward & Brewerton, 1999; Millward & Hopkins, 1998) than those of standard employees. The fact that employees have different psychological contract affect how they perceive their workplace in terms of perceived work stress and fairness among employees, which in turn affects their attitudes and behaviors towards the organization.

DETERMINANTS OF EMPLOYEE ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOR

The type of psychological contract that employees establish towards their employer affect how they perceive different factors related to their working environment. There are several factors that can be linked to perception of work place environment and in this study the ones that have proved most valuable – work stress, and social

comparison and exchange – in explaining employee attitude and behavior are used as determinants for describing what employees' experience in different scenarios.

Work stress

Several studies focused on SEA have recognized a number of possible determinants of work stress that in particular are exacerbated in temporary employment contracts. Three main job stressors have been identified and used to predict unfavorable attitudes, poor well-being and undesirable behaviors among employees.

First, theories of labour market use – Flexible Firm (Atkinson, 1984), Internal Labour Market Theory (Doeringer & Piore, 1971), Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993) and Segmentation Theory (Amuedo-Dorantes, 2000) – put forward that employees considered peripheral to the organization are less likely to be invest in as typically done to nurture long-term organizational commitment and loyalty among employees (Zeytinoglu & Cooke, 2005; Zeytinoglu & Mutheshi, 2001). Lack of such investments in terms of wages (Bhandari & Hesmati 2006), fringe benefits (Kalleberg et. al., 2000), promotion (Zeytinoglu et. al., 2004) and training opportunities (Connelly and Gallagher 2004; Forrier and Sels 2003; Aronsson et. al., 2002) can contribute to work stress, which can result into poor well-being.

Second, the probability of employees experiencing work stress increases as a result of poor job characteristics, predominantly reduced control, limited support and role stress. Employees that experience low level of autonomy through highly monotonous task assignments with few possibilities for skill utilization (Hall, 2006), have a low amount of influence on workplace decisions (Aronsson et. al., 2002; Parker et. al., 2002), or receive little support from their co-workers (Byoung-Hoo & Frenkel, 2004) are more prone to experience work stress. Role related stressors may arise through feelings of low acquaintance with organizational procedures, which is common among newcomers, or as a result of little time and support being invested to understand role responsibilities (McLean Parks et. al., 1998; Sverke et. al., 2000). These unfavorable circumstances of low control, lack of support and role stress, and the difficulties in adjusting to these circumstances, create overall negative psychological outcomes resulting in negative attitudes and behaviors among employees.

Thrid, employees can experience work stress related to employment strain (Lewchuk et. al., 2005). Employment strain is a combination of high demands and low control and is shaped by the employment relationship rather than by the job itself. High demands in this case are related to the constant search for new employment, effort to keep employment, need to ensure a positive employer assessment of work performance and, for some workers, the effort to balance demands from multiple

jobs and multiple employers (Lewchuk et. al., 2005). Low control relates to increased uncertainty with regards to the terms and conditions of employment and one's future job. More specifically this relates to the amount of control over the design, implementation and nature of ones work (Krausz, 2000; Beard & Edwards, 1995). Such conditions generate job insecurity (Bernhard-Oettel et. al., 2005; Felstead & Gallie, 2004; De Witte & Näswall, 2003) which can generate unfavorable attitudes, behaviors and well-being.

Social comparison and social exchange

Theories on social comparison and social exchange hypothesize that employees' reactions to some extent are governed by perceptions of fairness. Through social comparison processes employees evaluate how the outcomes they receive relate and compare to the outcomes received by referent others (Feldman & Turnley, 2004; Thorsteinson, 2003). In cases where such evaluation leads employees to feel that they are not obtaining the outcomes they deserve for their work, and where they perceive that others do for the same work, employees can come to feel a sense of deprivation. These feelings can easily generate negative psychological outcomes among employees experiencing unfairness.

Theories on social exchange furthermore highlight the norm of reciprocity where outcomes are compared with input in forms of psychological contracts. Narrow psychological contracts in terms of number and quality of content items (Rousseau & Schalk, 2000), alongside asymmetrical psychological contracts (Beard and Edwards 1995) – contracts monitored by the employer – can hamper the establishment of trust relationship between employee and employer, and thus lead to undesirable behavior. Employees' responses can be contingent upon their perception of underinvestment, calculated investment (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2002; Koh & Yer, 2000) or inadequate treatment by employers (Davis-Blake & Uzzi, 1993), causing employees' to react to such inequity through unfavorable attitudes and by performing poorly.

PERMANENTS CONTRA TEMPORARIES ATTITUDES, BEHAVIORS AND WELL-BEING

Employees' attitudes and behaviors towards the organization in which they are employed are to large extent, as presented, affected by the type of psychological contract that exists and its affects on determinant factors such as works tress, social comparison and social exchange. A comprehensive coverage grouping psychological outcome variables that are evoked and that dominate literature on the implication of a changing work life is a two by two dichotomy (Sverke et. al., 2002). The first dichotomy differentiates between proximal outcomes – those that are

affected directly, such as attitudes – and distal outcomes – those that are affected indirectly, either because they develop over time or because they are conditional upon other processes. The second dichotomy differentiates between variables that have direct consequences for the individual and probably indirect effects on the organization, and variables that are predominantly relevant for the organization. Below, following De Cuyper et. al., (2008), variables, for each combination, that have been used extensively in relation to research on temporary employment are used to discuss how permanents differ from their counterpart's temporaries in terms of attitudes, behaviors and well-being as a result of temporary employment. These variables are job satisfaction for the combination proximal-individual, organizational commitment for the combination proximal-organization, well-being for the combination distal-individual, and productive behavior for the combination distal-organization.

Job satisfaction

Extensive research has been conducted on temporary employment and its effects on job satisfaction, as low job satisfaction is believed to evoke unfavorable attitudes and behaviors. In general results are however inconclusive. On one side some studies find higher job satisfaction among standard employees as compared to temporary employees (Hall 2006; Forde & Slater, 2006), while other establish the opposite pattern (De Cuyper & De Witte 2005, 2007a; Mauno et. al., 2005; Wooden. 2004). In some cases no significant differences between standard and temporary employees in terms of job satisfaction (Van Breukelen & Allegro, 2000).

Organizational commitment

Employees that feel high organizational commitment are believed to have more favorable attitude and behavior than those with low commitment. What concerns this line of research results are scattered. There is considerable support for temporary contracts being negatively related to organizational commitment (Forde & Slater, 2006; De Gilder, 2003; Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2002). In comparison to this other studies do not find any significant difference between temporary and standard employees (De Witte & Näswall, 2003). In some cases lower commitment among standard employees than among temporary ones is found (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2005, 2007a; McDonald & Makin, 2000).

Well-being

Well-being is linked to perceived uncertainty, in this case evoked by contract type, and believed to be high when uncertainty is low. Most research on well-being does however not give any greater evidence for any major conclusions to be drawn. What regards general health results show that temporary employees report better (Liukkonen et. al., 2004) or comparable health compared to standard employees (Virtanen et. al., 2003b). In terms of mental health it has been reported that

temporary employees indicate better (Liukkonen et. al., 2004) or poorer (Virtanen et. al., 2002) mental health than standard employees. The inconclusive evidence is further illustrated by some studies not finding any significant difference between temporary and standard employees' well-being (Artazcoz et. al., 2005; Bernhard-Oettel et. al., 2005; Claes et al., 2002), whilst others find support for poorer health among standard employees (Martens et. al., 1999), or among temporary employees (Isaksson et. al., 2001; Benavides et. al., 2000)

Productive behaviors

Productive behaviors are believed to be favorable in cases of high level of job security, organizational commitment and well-being. No firm conclusions can however be drawn in regards to employees' productive behaviors from research. On one hand standard employees engage in more organizational citizenship behaviors than temporary employees (De Gilder, 2003; Guest et. al., 2003; Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2002). The opposite pattern is however also found (Engelandt & Riphahn, 2005). In regards to performance some have found that productivity can be lower for temporary employees, (Kalleberg, 2000), this possibly because they are newcomers and so need to learn work processes (Nollen & Axel, 1996; Van Dyne & Ang, 1998). Contrary to this other studies find no significant differences between temporary and standard workers' performance (De Cuyper & De Witte 2005; Ellingson et. al., 1998). Some even conclude that managers are more satisfied with the performance of temporary employees than with their counterparts (Van Breukelen & Allegro, 2000).

GROUP HETEROGENEITY FOR UNDERSTANDING WHEN EMPLOYEE PSYCHOLOGICAL OUTCOMES SURFACE

The research evidence presented above clearly underline that results on the psychological impact of temporary employment on employee' attitude and behavior towards the organization and its effects organizational performance is rather scattered and often contradictory. However, it can be concluded that both temporary and standard employees undoubtedly are affected by nonstandard employee agreements in some way, as indicated by the number of different psychological outcomes studies have found. The question is thus under which circumstances these psychological outcomes, in terms of attitude, behavior and well-being, surface? A plausible answer could be found in work group heterogeneity studies.

Several theorists have claimed that the consequences of group heterogeneity depend on the relative proportions of majority and minority sub group members (Allport, 1954; Blalock, 1967; Blau, 1977; Kanter, 1977). In spite there being some disagreements among theorists about the effects of minority proportions on group

relations, Blalock (1967) presents interesting findings where it is argued that greater portions of minority members will evoke increasingly negative psychological and social reactions among members of the majority. This theory has also been supported with regards to temporary employment where temporary employees are seen as a minority group affecting psychological reactions among group members toward their supervisors, peers, and work groups (Broschak & Davis-Blake, 2006). The reason for this is believed to be majority and minority members often having unequal social status, and contact between parties of unequal status is prone to threaten majority members status and by that evoke negative reactions toward minority members (Blalock, 1967). This implies that greater portions of minority members increase the probability of contact between group members of unequal social status, resulting in poorer intragroup relations. Blalock (ibid.) further argues that the larger the size of minority groups, the greater the perceived economic and social competition between majority and minority members, competition that may provoke discriminatory behaviors and result in poor intragroup relations. The surfacing of poor intragroup relations due to factors elaborated on above then lead to unfavorable attitudes and behaviors that in turn affect the organization and its performance.

Following the above reasoning, the proportion of minority members relative to majority members is then an important determiner in what affects the attitudes and behaviors of group members. This means that in order to understand how the usage of temporary employees affect standard and nonstandard employees' attitudes and behaviors it does not suffice to only study parameters related to psychological contracts and their effects on factors – such as work stress, social comparison and social exchange – determining employee attitude, behavior and well-being. Instead more elements need to be added to the analysis to fine-tune it. Such an approach is clearly supported by Broschak and Davis-Blake's (2006) findings which demonstrate how group heterogeneity in employment arrangements evoke negative social and psychological reactions among group members toward their supervisors, peers, and work groups. By adding the element of majority-minority group relations presented by Blalock (1967) to the analysis of temporary employment agreements' effects on standard and nonstandard employees' attitudes and behavior the authors were able to show that higher proportions of nonstandard employees were associated with less favorable attitudes toward supervisors and peers, increased turnover intentions, and decreased work related helping behaviors among group members.

In other words it can be concluded that temporary employment agreements do affect both standard and nonstandard employees' attitude and behavior towards the organization and by that the organizations performance. Academics just need to go

further in their attempts, by adding and combining elements from different fields, when trying to explain and understand exactly when and why certain employee attitudes and behaviors surface.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

In spite it being settled that using temporary employment agreements does affect both standard and nonstandard employees' attitude and behavior towards the organization, questions regarding how a blended workforce is best managed remain. Some general advice on how its done do however exist.

Contingent work must fit into the organization's overall business strategy if it is to be successful. Every organization using temporary employment agreements needs to have a staffing strategy developed by management and carefully designed to take into account the risks and responsibilities of temporary employment, as well as the effect on the organization's core workers, its overall productivity, and its long-term goals. The strategy should ensure that the organization has the appropriate number and type of contingent workers and is using them productively. Having clear directions and aims makes it easier for management to steer and gives employees, independent of their type, clear directives which may help offset the negative effects of using contingent work.

Transparency behind the aims of using contingent work towards all parties is key if capitalization is to be optimal. There is no need to try to 'hide' that contingent work is being used and try to protect standard employees from it. Instead management needs to inform and be honest about why temporary staff is being contracted and how they believe that it is going to elevate the performance of the organization. Using temporaries can easily elicit emotions in standard employees of that they are not doing a good enough job, or that they do not posit enough intellect to solve the problem that the organizations is tackling, which can crate negative group effects. Management needs to make sure that such feelings do not arise by being transparent and involving standard employees. By showing standard employees that contingent workers are used to support current workforce, not supplement it, management can better capitalize on the recourses that a blended workforce entails.

Employees need to feel as, and be, one team if high productivity and good results are to be obtained. Independent of employees being temporary or not bottom line is that they work for the same organizations and thus should aim at fulfilling the same goals. This means that contingent workers cannot be treated differently and separated as it divides the workforce and can result in negative group dynamics affecting both employees and firm performance. On the other side attention to

temporaries cannot eclipse efforts to maximize the engagement and output of the regular workforce. In other words management needs to find ways to show 'love' to both groups to create team spirit, but not 'love' them the same way so to avoid hurting anybody's feelings and by that negative group effects. Invite everybody to social gatherings, communicate with all on the same basis and give recognition to everybody, temporary or not. At the end of the day standard employees are still on the upside as they know they have their job secured and will be with the organizations even when the temporaries leave. By treating all employees well the organizations brand and reputation is strengthened as the organization becomes more attractive, making it easier to retaining current workforce and attracting new.

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