กลยุทธ์การแสวงหาข้อมูลของพนักงานใหม่ในกระบวนการเข้าเป็นส่วนหนึ่งขององค์การ

NEW HIRE'S INFORMATION SEEKING STRATEGY IN THE PROCESS OF ORGANIZATIONAL ENTRY

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บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์ของการศึกษาครั้งนี้ต้องการศึกษาถึงกลยุทธ์การแสวงหาข้อมูลข่าวสารของพนักงาน ใหม่ในกระบวนการเข้าสู่องค์การ โดยกำหนดกลุ่มตัวอย่างเป็นพนักงานที่ร่วมเป็นอาสาสมัครทำกิจกรรม ขององค์การ มีจำนวนทั้งสิ้น 245 คน เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการศึกษาครั้งนี้คือ แบบสอบถาม และใช้ Repeated measures analysis ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลทางสถิติ ผลการศึกษา พบว่า สมมติฐานได้รับการสนับสนุน กลยุทธ์การแสวงหาข้อมูลข่าวสารที่พนักงานใหม่เลือกใช้ในการรับรู้ข้อมูลข่าวสารเพื่อลดความไม่แน่นอน ในการทำงานคือ การสอบถามโดยตรง และการสังเกต ซึ่งก็สอดคล้องกับระบบการทำงานในวัฒนธรรม ไทยแบบใหม่ที่พนักงานส่วนใหญ่มักจะแสวงหาข้อมูลหรือรูปแบบการปฏิบัติงานด้วยการสอบถามโดยตรง หลังจากนั้นก็ใช้วิธีการสังเกตถึงแบบแผนในการปฏิบัติงาน

คำสำคัญ: กลยุทธ์การแสวงหาข้อมูลข่าวสาร กระบวนการเข้าเป็นส่วนหนึ่งขององค์การ

Abstract

The objective of this study is to examinethe information-seeking strategy in the process of organizational entry. Participants in the study were 245 employees who participate in volunteer activities of the organization. Questionnaires were administered to all the employees to obtain the data for this study. Repeated measures analysis was used to analyze the data. The findings indicated that the hypothesis was supported. Direct inquiry and observation were information-seeking strategy that employees use to get the information in order to reduce their uncertainty in the organizational entry. These two strategies are in line with the system in new Thai culture where employees often seek the information or practical form with direct inquiry. After that, they used the strategy to observe operational schemes.

Keywords: Information-Seeking Strategy, The Process Of Organizational Entry

Introduction

There is substantial agreement among communication scholars that people often face situations in which they do not know how to act, either because they have no familiar response to enact or because they derive multiple meanings and interpretation from these circumstances. This encounter with the unfamiliar or ambiguous has received a number of different labels: gap (Dervin, 1983), uncertainty (Berger & Calabrese, 1975), equivocality (Weick, 1979), error or disconfirmation (Argyris & Schan, 1978), ambiguity (Norton, 1975), and situation anxiety (Argyle, Furnham, & Graham, 1981) are but a few.

The uncertainty construct is of particular interest to scholars concerned with understanding how new hires encounter the organization. Indeed, most organizational assimilation researchers would agree that new hires can experience heightened uncertainty on organizational entry (e.g., Jablin & Krone, 1987; Louis, 1980; Morrison, 1991, 1993b). "Reality Shock" (Hughes, 1958) comes about because "the entire organizationally-based physical and social world are changed" (Louis, 1980, p. 20) for the new hires. Typically, during early tenure, "there is no gradual exposure and no way to confront the situation a little at a time. Rather, the new hire's senses are simultaneously inundated with many unfamiliar cues" (Louis, 1980, p. 230). This experience will be both disconcerting and stressful for neophytes to the extent that a discrepancy exists between their expectations for life in the organization and organizational "reality" (Louis, 1980; Schein, 1968). Jablin (1987) points out that "if the newcomers has not accurately anticipated his or her new job and organization, this stage can be a very traumatic period" (p. 695).

This project provides an examination of the ways that newcomers interact with various strategies of information-seeking through the process of organizational entry. During organizational entry process, newcomers seek information in order to adjust themselves to their organization's culture. New hires need information to reduce their uncertainties regarding organizational entry. Although most organizational researchers acknowledge that individual and situational factors have an effect on successful organizational entry, few have generated theories or researched assimilation as a process involving both influences. One notable exception has been the theory building and research by Jones (1983, 1986) who argued for an interactionist approach to explain the socialization experience. Falcione and Wilson (1988) suggest that the interactionist approach, which views the reciprocal impact of the new hire's psychological orientation and organizational influence as antecedents to successful socialization, best explains current notions of the organizational entry process. Although this approach effectively explains the impact of individual and situational elements, the interactionist perspective fails to clarify the function and outcome of communication in the entry process. Unless resulting communication behavior can be identified, explained, and based on an established communication theory, such as perspective remains incomplete and inadequate as a conceptualization of the dynamic process of organizational assimilation (Gorden, Mignerey, & Rubin, 1995). Commonly, explanations of the assimilation process have focused on those issue thought to influence the communication between a superior and subordinate.

There might be many problems that newcomers experience as they try to adjust themselves to an organization. The organizational entry process has a major influence on the performance of individuals, and thus affects group and organizational performance as well. Regardless of whether it is consciously planned and managed or whether it occurs informally, assimilation provides new hires with considerable information about appropriate roles and behaviors

In summary, as a result of entering a new organization, new hires are likely to seek information with a heightened sense of awareness or mindfulness. In an effort to reduce uncertainty, newcomers often seek information from their supervisors and co-workers (Miller & Jablin, 1991). Information-seeking activities are also likely to be simulated by the reception of role-related information from supervisor, co-worker, and others which might not provide sufficient clarity about newcomers' roles. In turn, the manner in which newcomers seek information is likely to be shaped by their level of uncertainty about organizational events, the social costs inherent in information seeking, differences among newcomers with respect to personality and past work experiences, and contextual factors associated with the organizational setting. It is anticipated that newcomers who are able to utilize a variety of information-seeking tactics to obtain role-related information will report lower levels of role ambiguity and/or conflict. In contrast, new hires who do not seek information as readily and who do not utilize a variety of tactics might experience higher levels of a role ambiguity and/or conflict. Thus, it is expected that the levels of role ambiguity and/or conflict experienced by newcomers during the organizational encounter period could depend on their information-seeking behavior.

The Objectives of Study

This research sought to identify the different information-seeking strategies that play a role during the employee assimilation process

Literature review
Information Seeking Strategy

The researchers have attempted to document the types of information-seeking strategies that employees rely on as they encounter the organization. Miller (1989) and later Miller and Jablin (1991) expand on active-passive coping designations (e.g., Ashford & Cummings, 1985; Asford, 1986; Comer, 1991; Morrison, 1993b; Petelle, Jorgesen, & Slaughter, 1991) by proposing seven information-seeking strategies: overt questions, indirect questions, third parties, testing limits, disguising conversations, observing, and surveillance. The first of these strategies involves "direct interaction with information targets" (Miller & Jablin, 1991, p. 103). Indirect information seeking is one of a series of more convert strategies new hires might resort to for obtaining information. Newcomers who use this strategy attempt to get targets to respond to "non-interrogative questions and hiring" (Miller & Jablin, 1991, p.105). Third party information seeking, according to Miller and Jablin (1991), consists of turning to individuals not involved in a particular issue or incident for information. Testing, perhaps the riskiest of all the strategies, has the employee deliberately "breaking..rules for the purpose of defining organizational or work group rules relationships or priorities" (Miller & Jablin, 1991, p.107). Disguising conversation involves "joking, object in the environment, verbal prompts, and self-disclosure" to subtly ease the information from the target (Miller & Jablin, 1991, p.108).

The sixth information-seeking strategy is observing. When using this strategy, employees watch others around them "to see how they perform the role" (Miller & Jablin, 1991, p.110). Finally, "surveillance" is based primarily on retrospective sense-making and is indiscriminate in the cues to which individuals pay attention" (Miller & Jablin, 1991, p.111). Miller (1989) collapsed these tactics into five categories following an exploratory factor analysis. The study revealed the

following employee information-seeking preference ranking: overt, observation, third party, indirect, and testing tactics. All strategies were found to be significantly different from each other in usage. Although Comer (1991) reported that newcomers are more likely to obtain information from peers through an "active explicit" channel than through other, less direct means is consistent with Miller's (1989) research, Morrison's (1993b) recent finding regarding employees' information-seeking strategy preferences appear to contradict Miller's (1989) work. Morrison's research suggests that, overall, employees rely on monitoring more than on overt inquiry. These apparent contradictions in employee information-seeking literature argue in favor of further investigation of this issue.

The use of a particular information-seeking strategy could vary with the type of uncertainty a employee faces. Comer (1991), Morrison (1991, 1993b) and Miller (1989) found information-seeking use to be related to the types of information employees report needing. Specifically, Comer (1991) posits that employees are more likely to rely on active-explicit than on passive-explicit or implicit information-seeking strategies when needing technical information. Similarly, Morrison (1991, 1993b) reported that employees seek information directly through inquiry when procuring technical information butthey engage in monitoring behavior when seeking referent, performance, normative, and social information. Some of these findings are consistent with those reported by Miller (1989) whereas others directly contradict that study. Like Morrison (1991), Miller (1989) found that employees relied on observation or monitoring when seeking relational or social information. However, in contrast to Morrison's (1991, 1993b) findings, Miller (1989) found overt information seeking to be the strategy of choice for employees needing appraisal information.

In Morrison's (1991, 1993b) study, employees preferred monitoring to inquiry for performance feedback and for appraisal information. Miller (1989) also found that employees are likely to use indirect tactics when procuring relational information. Morrison (1991, 1993b) found monitoring to be the strategy of choice for seeking relational information. This contradiction alone strengthens any argument for a move from the simplistic active-passive information seeking dichotomy to a typology more sensitive to the range of coping strategies new hire resort to during organizational encounters. Finally, Miller (1989) reports that new hires prefer an overt strategy when seeking referent information. This finding also suggests a potential contradiction among studies. Unfortunately, the slightly different operationalization of referent information used by Miller (1989), Comer (1991), and Morrison (1991, 1993b) prevent us from drawing any definitive conclusions regarding new hires coping strategy preferences for referent information.

Of the proactive new hires coping taxonomies offered to date, Miller (1989) extends the active-passive coping typology inquiry vs. monitoring developed by Ashford and Cumming (1983), and adopted by Morrison, (1993b), as well as the three-type taxonomy (i.e. active explicit, passive explicit, and passive) suggested by Comer (1991), by proposing that newcomers can seek information in seven different ways.

Overt information-seeking consists of "asking for information in a direct manner" (Miller, 1989, P. 3). All of the remaining six strategies are covert in nature. Indirect information seeking is deployed to get targets "to respond to non-interrogative questions, hinting, references, and the like" (Miller, 1989, p. 3). While third party information-seeking consists of turning to an individual not involved in a particular issue or event for information. Testing is a risky strategy, for it involves "getting on the information-target's nerves or breaking a rule and observing the target's reaction" (Miller, 1989, p. 3). On the other hand, disguising conversation involves using

"nonverbal prompts, self-disclosure, and jokes to ease the information from the sources without the source's awareness" (Miller, 1989, p. 3).

Newcomers also engage in observation. Here, newcomers watch others around them to "model a behavior or to discern the meaning in events" The last strategy, surveillance involves "indiscriminately gathering information to which meaning can be retrospectively attributed" (Miller, 1989, p. 3). Following a factor analysis, Miller (1989) collapsed "indirect" with "disguising conversation" and "observation" with "surveillance." He then identified the following newcomer information-seeking strategy preference patterns: overt, observation, third party, indirect, and testing. Other typologies both support and contradict Miller's (1989) results. For example, Comer (1991) found that organizational newcomers tend to seek information from peers through "active-explicit" processes more than other means is consistent with Miller's (1989) research.

A recent study by Teboul (1994) lends further support to Miller's (1989) work. Using a different research design and a modified version of Miller's (1989) information-seeking strategy scale, Teboul (1994) uncovered coping patterns that were virtually identical to Miller's. Specially, Teboul kept the original seven information-seeking to all other strategies. Newcomers are next most likely to resort to surveillance but relied upon more than three other strategies: indirect, third party, and disguising conversation. Finally, Teboul found that neophytes deploy these three strategies more than the testing tactic.

The Conceptualization of Information-Seeking Strategies

Given the importance of uncertainty reduction to maintain a relationship with a partner, it is necessary to understand information-seeking strategies that individuals employ to reduce uncertainty. Fundamentally, information-seeking has been studied in the context of individuals networks of interpersonal relationships. Berger and Calabrese (1975) originally proposed that Uncertainty Reduction Theory can explain all initial interaction. When individuals have uncertainty that comes from having interactions with other people, they usually want to reduce uncertainty to keep the relationship with their partners. Seeking more information from a partner can help people reduce uncertainty.

Berger and Bradac (1982) postulated that there are three plausible reasons for activating the reduction of uncertainty. First, individuals tend to be involved with uncertainty reduction when they have high incentive; that means they perceive the reward that they will gain from keeping a relationship. Second, when the behaviors of partners deviate from normal behaviors, individuals will engage in uncertainty reduction processes in order to explain the others behaviors. Third, if individuals perceive the probability of future interaction increases, they will make their efforts to decrease uncertainty. We can observe that the uncertainty-reduction process is important for maintaining the relationship. However, in the original version of Uncertainty Reduction Theory, Berger and Calabrese (1975) was not focused on investigating the strategies for reducing uncertainty. Given such deficiency in exploring strategies, the researchers have paid direct attention toward the knowledge regarding information acquisition to reduce uncertainty (Berger, 1979; Berger & Bradac, 1982; Berger, Gardner, Parks, Schulman, & Miller, 1976)

In brief, organizational entry consists of attempts by organizational agents to teach new employees, as well as the attempts of those employees to learn about the organization and their roles in that organization, thus becoming integrated into the organization (Jablin, 1982). This process is typically viewed as taking place during the first weeks and months of a newcomer's organizational experience. The process of assimilation occurs as employees become part of, or are absorbed into, the culture of an organization.

Hypothesis: Overt question and observation strategies will be assessed as more useful than indirect question, third party, and testing strategies that new hires employed during the assimilation process.

Sample

The sample in this research was obtained through systematic random sampling procedures. The researcher obtained a list of employees who involved in volunteer program in the organization from the Personnel Department of PTT Public Company Limited and selected 245 respondents. The researcher asked for assistance from the Head of the Personnel Department of PTT in identifying eligible employees and in distributing the questionnaires. The respondents for this study were all considered permanent employees of PTT.

Data Gathering Instrument

The questionnaire concerned information-seeking strategies that new hires employed during assimilation process via information-seeking strategies scale. The scale ranges from 1 to 5, by which 1 means "very little", 2 means "little", 3 means "some", 4 means "great", 5 means "greatly." Means score of "low level" ranges from 1-2, "moderate level" is 3, and "high level" 4 to 5.

The Results

The hypothesis predicted that overt questionand observation strategies will be assessed as more useful than indirect question, third party, and testing information-seeking strategies which new hires employed during the assimilation process. Repeated measures analyses revealed that new hires do make significant distinctions with respect to the perceived usefulness of the various information-seeking strategies (overt question and observation). The multivariate analysis presented in Table 1 reveals that new hires draw significant distinction among information-seeking strategies ($F_{(4, 241)}$ = 24.120, $p < .001$) (see Table 1). The mean value (see Table 2) of each variable indicated that overt question is the most useful information-seeking strategy ($\overline{X}$ = 4.2055), followed by observation ($\overline{X}$ = 4.1610), indirect question ($\overline{X}$ = 4.0577), third party ($\overline{X}$ = 3.8970), and testing ($\overline{X}$ = 3.8800). Essentially, overt question, observation, and indirect question strategies were evaluated by new hires as highly useful, while third party and testing strategies were rate as moderately useful.

Table 1: Multivariate Tests for Types of Information Seeking Strategies

Effect	F	Hypothesis df	Error Df	Sig.	Observed Power
INFOSST					
Pillai's Trace	24.120	4.000	241.000	.000	1.000
Wilk's Lamba	24.120	4.000	241.000	.000	1.000
Hoteling's Trace	24.120	4.000	241.000	.000	1.000

Note: INFOSST = Type of Information Seeking Strategies

Table 2: Means for Types of Information Seeking Strategies

Types of Information Seeking Strategies	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	N
Overt question	4.2055	.6770	245
Observation	4.1610	.5100	245
Indirect question	4.0577	.6168	245
Third party	3.8970	.6200	245
Testing	3.8800	.5178	245

Even though the mean suggested that new hires find all strategies of information-seeking useful, repeated contrasts revealed that new hires did find some strategies of information-seeking to be significantly more useful than other strategies of information-seeking. Observation was evaluated as significantly more useful for new hires than indirect question strategy ($F_{(1,244)}$=7.117, p <.05). Observation is also perceived to be significantly more useful for new hires than testing strategy ($F_{(1,244)}$=8.898, p <.05), and third party strategy ($F_{(1,244)}$=63.963, p <.001). Indirect question was evaluated as significantly more useful for new hires than third party strategy ($F_{(1,244)}$= 17.935, p <.001). Overt and observation strategies were equally useful ($F_{(1,244)}$ = 1.922, p >.05), while third party and testing strategies were also found to be equally useful ($F_{(1,244)}$ = .338, p >.05). Repeated contrasts for new hires assessments of the usefulness of overt as more useful than indirect strategy ($F_{(1,244)}$= 11.805, p <.05), overt versus testing strategy ($F_{(1,244)}$= 9.366, p <.05), and overt versus third party strategy ($F_{(1,244)}$= 7.190, p <.05) (see Table 3)

Table 3: Tests of Within-Subjects Repeated Contrasts for Types of Information Seeking Strategies

Source	Transformed Variable	df	F	Sig.	Observed Power
INFOSST	INFOSST1	1	1.922	.164	.280
	INFOSST2	1	7.117	.003	.760
	INFOSST3	1	17.935	.000	.988
	INFOSST4	1	.338	.562	.090
	INFOSST5	1	11.805	.001	.928
	INFOSST6	1	63.963	.000	1.000
	INFOSST7	1	8.898	.003	.844
	INFOSST8	1	9.366	.002	.862
	INFOSST9	1	7.190	.008	.764
Error (INFOSST)	INFOSST1	244			
	INFOSST2	244			
	INFOSST3	244			
	INFOSST4	244			
	INFOSST5	244			
	INFOSST6	244			
	INFOSST7	244			
	INFOSST8	244			
	INFOSST9	244			

Note: Transformed Variable Mean Differences of Usefulness between Two Types of Information Seeking Strategies

INFOT1=Mean Difference between Overt question and Observation Strategy
INFOT2=Mean Difference between Observation and Indirect question Strategy
INFOT3=Mean Difference between Indirect question and Third party Strategy
INFOT4=Mean Difference between Third party and Testing Strategy
INFOT5=Mean Difference between Overt question and Indirect Strategy
INFOT6=Mean Difference between Observation and Third party Strategy
INFOT7=Mean Difference between Observation and Testing Strategy
INFOT6=Mean Difference between Overt question and Testing Strategy
INFOT6=Mean Difference between Overt question and Third party Strategy

Discussion

The study attempts to examine new hires assessment of the information-seeking strategies made available to them during assimilation process. The hypothesis predicted that the overt question and observation strategies will be assessed as more useful than indirect question, third party, and testing strategies that new hires employed for seeking the information during the assimilation process.

Hypothesis was supported. New hires indicated finding all strategies of information-seeking useful but were most positive in their assessments of overt question. Due to the collectivistic nature of Thai society, it seems reasonable to expect that new hires will want to have their own network (Miller, 1989), especially when they first enter to a new organization. Overt question and Observation are useful information-seeking strategy in reducing uncertainty and anxiety during the assimilation process. Interestingly, indirect question has not been generally recognized in the literature much. Yet the results of this research suggest that an important priority for Thai organizational new hires is to learn about indirect question strategy. Indirect question seeking is one of a series of more convert strategies new hires might resort to for obtaining information. New hires who use this strategy attempt to get targets to respond to "non-interrogative questions and hiring" (Miller & Jablin, 1991, p.105).

Future Research

The organizational assimilation literature suggests that newcomers need several types of information from a variety of sources during the process of organizational entry. It seems reasonable to study further that information-seeking strategy which individuals employ to perceive information.

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