Beyond the call of duty

Effective diversity management motivates employees to support their organisations in ways that go beyond job requirements.

Associate Professor Jie Shen from the School of Management’s Centre for Human Resource Management recently completed a research project in collaboration with Professor Brian D’Netto from the Australian Catholic University and Dr Jiong Tang from Fujing Normal University in China. The research team surveyed over 500 employees in 10 Chinese firms about their organisations’ diversity management practices.

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Beyond the call of duty
Effective diversity management motivates employees

Most diversity research has focused on race or gender differences between employees, but the Chinese organisations studied in this research had a unique diversity challenge – integrating into their workforces the approximately 200 million rural peasants who migrate to China’s urban areas every year. ‘Not all employers are managing this influx effectively, so the mingong (farmer workers) are sometimes treated like second class citizens’ Associate Professor Shen said.

The research team asked employees to describe their organisations’ diversity management practices in four HRM areas: recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, and compensation. For example, employees reported whether their organisation was advertising its jobs to both rural migrants and urban residents, offering training to both groups, applying objective performance criteria to both groups, and equitably compensating both groups.

The employees also reported how often they engaged in organisational citizenship behaviour in their organisations. What is organisational citizenship behaviour? Associate Professor Shen offered this definition: ‘Organisational citizenship encompasses all the helpful and supportive behaviours that employees display at work. Managers can’t demand citizenship behaviours, and they are not written into employees’ job descriptions, but they make the organisation a better and more effective workplace.’

The research results showed that employees engaged in more citizenship behaviour when their organisations’ recruitment and selection practices supported diversity. But diversity-supportive compensation management practices were an even stronger predictor of citizenship behaviour. ‘Employees in organisations with equitable compensation practices were more likely to help their co-workers, to encourage their co-workers to perform better, and to assist co-workers in resolving conflicts’ Associate Professor Shen elaborated. ‘Overall, employees working in diversity-supportive organisations were more willing to go the extra mile’.

However, the organisations’ training and development and performance appraisal practices did not impact organisational citizenship. ‘Chinese employees are accustomed to rigorous performance appraisal systems and do not usually receive much organisational training’ Associate Professor Shen said. ‘Job insecurity and inadequate wages are their main concerns, so selection and compensation practices have the biggest impact on their behaviour.’

‘Employees working in diversity-supportive organisations were more willing to go the extra mile.’

The research team’s findings suggest that diversity management can play an important role in encouraging employees to support their co-workers. ‘Workforce diversity is a double edged sword’ explained Associate Professor Shen. ‘A diverse workforce can increase organisational creativity and provide access to diverse clients, but diversity can also make employees feel less connected to the organisation and to one another. This puts a lot of pressure on organisations to manage diversity effectively’.

Would Australian organisations benefit from diversity management? Associate Professor Shen believes they would. ‘Most organisations -- in China and in Australia -- only engage in the minimum diversity management practices required by law’ he said. ‘But if organisations really want to experience benefits from workforce diversity they need to go beyond the legal requirements. They need to design HRM practices that support workforce diversity’.


If you would like to learn more about the project and its results, contact: Associate Professor Jie Shen jie.shen@unisa.edu.au
What’s New at CHRM?

One of CHRM’s major strategic goals is to develop and maintain strong relationships with the business community. In line with this strategic objective, CHRM has now formed an Advisory Group with the following external members:

- Ms Jacq Bateman (IGA Distribution Pty Ltd)
- Ms Diane Hart (formerly Australia Post)
- Mr Grant Honeyman (SAAB Systems)
- Ms Danielle Jiranek (SA Water)
- Ms Lorraine Johnston (Health Workforce Australia)
- Ms Natasha Markovic (Coffey International)
- Ms Erma Ranieri (Primary Industries & Resources South Australia)
- Ms Vanessa Walker (Australia Post)
- Ms Samantha Wilkinson (Australian Human Resources Institute / Samantha Wilkinson Human Resource Consulting)

The primary purpose of the Group is to act as a sounding board and to provide guidance for CHRM’s research activities. We thank the members of the Group for their support.

In February 2011 we welcomed two new researchers Professor Peter Chen and Dr Anthony McDonnell (more details about them on page 4). We congratulate Peter, who will be awarded with the Presidential Celebration Coin for Research and Practice at the April 2011 meeting of the Society for Industrial and Organisational Psychology in Chicago, USA. This award recognises Society members who exhibit exemplary and extraordinary behaviour in support of science and practice.

CHRM forums

Since 2008, CHRM has been the South Australian research partner for ASHRR – the Australian Senior Human Resources Roundtable. ASHRR is a network of senior HR executives whose aim is to facilitate a more effective dialogue between HR practice and research. The CHRM-ASHRR partnership sponsors twice-yearly events, forums in which local senior HR practitioners and HR academics can network and debate emerging HR issues.

The 23rd March CHRM-ASHRR Forum will focus on the impact of an influential human resource function on organisational performance. We welcome a panel of presenters: Dr Cathy Sheehan (Monash University), Professor Helen De Cieri (Monash University) and Mr Ashley Winnett (GM Holden Ltd).

CHRM also sponsors occasional HRM Workshops designed to provide professional development to HRM researchers. On 18th March CHRM is hosting a Workshop on ‘From Publication to Impact’ facilitated by Professor Anne-Wil Harzing (University of Melbourne). Professor Harzing has been studying research performance metrics and will discuss how academic researchers can monitor these metrics and use them to greater advantage.

If your organisation would like more information about upcoming CHRM events, please contact sanjee.perera@unisa.edu.au

CHRM seminars

The CHRM Practitioner Seminars, coordinated by Dr Gerry Treuren, showcase industry best practice exemplars and provide an opportunity to forge links between practitioners and the CHRM community. The seminars attract students from the undergraduate and postgraduate HRM programs, past students and interested practitioners.

Ms Libby Frankish (Manager, Human Resources, ParaQuad) and Ms Michelle Drake (Manager, Human Resources, Southern Cross Care) conducted the seminar ‘The challenges of providing quality disability and aged care services: HR perspectives’, in early March. Upcoming seminars include:

- A practitioner’s impressions of the direction of human resource practice (Ms Samantha Wilkinson, Australian Human Resources Institute / Samantha Wilkinson Human Resource Consulting)
- HR management in partnerships: The complicated world of people management in law and accounting firms (Ms Glynis Rosser, HR Manager, Wallmans Lawyers and Ms Jenni Osborn, HR Co-ordinator, William Buck)

If you would like to join us at a future seminar, please visit our website for full details and updates www.unisa.edu.au/chrm

Professor Carol T. Kulik
Director, CHRM

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Director, CHRM

www.unisa.edu.au/chrm
Introducing our new researchers
The Centre for Human Resource Management welcomes two new staff members – Professor Peter Chen and Dr Anthony McDonnell.

Peter Chen, Professor, School of Management
peter.chen@unisa.edu.au

Peter completed his PhD at the University of South Florida, USA with a major in Industrial-Organisational Psychology and a minor in Psychometrics. His research program focuses on improving individual well-being and building workplaces that enhance the safety and health of workers and their families. Peter has 7 years of industry and military experience and more than 20 years of academic experience. During his career, Peter has worked collaboratively with federal, state and municipal agencies, private sector employers, and unions on topics including organisational diagnosis, program evaluation, unemployment, career assessment, personnel selection, discrimination, injury prevention, safety management, and leadership development.

Anthony McDonnell, Lecturer, School of Management
anthony.mcdonnell@unisa.edu.au

Prior to joining UniSA, Anthony was a Research Fellow at the University of Newcastle. He has a PhD from the University of Limerick, Ireland and is a previous Government of Ireland, Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences Scholar. His primary teaching and research interests focus on international HRM. His research on talent management, global staffing and HRM in multinational enterprises has been published in Human Resource Management, Journal of World Business and Human Relations. Anthony is currently working on an international study exploring HRM in multinational enterprises.

What CHRM is working on

Graceful exits
A team of CHRM researchers is studying the way employees and their managers say goodbye to one another.

Every year in Australia, more than 1 million full-time workers change jobs. More than 70% of these workers are voluntary leavers – employees who are moving on to different, sometimes better, career opportunities.

These ex-employees can be organisational ambassadors spreading positive word of mouth about their former employer to potential customers, referring high-quality applicants for employment, or even ‘boomeranging’ back to the same organisation at a later career stage.

Unfortunately, many exits are not handled effectively. Some managers are caught by surprise and stumble over the opportunity to maintain a connection with the exiting employee. Some managers feel betrayed and try to sever the relationship as quickly as possible. But some managers do manage the exit well and nurture positive relationships with their former employees.

If you know an organisation that would like to participate in this research, or if you would like to learn more about how employers can effectively manage the exit process, please contact:

Professor Carol T. Kulik
carol.kulik@unisa.edu.au

Would you like to receive future copies of our newsletter and updates on CHRM’s activities? Please join our mailing list by emailing sanjee.perera@unisa.edu.au