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Can an Entrepreneurial Personality Compensate for a Boring Job? The Influence of Proactive Personality and Job Characteristics on Employee Engagement Levels¹

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Abstract

We examined the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and employee engagement by studying 101 Indian managers across three companies. In addition, we studied the moderating role of three job characteristics (autonomy, skill variety and task feedback) on the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and employee engagement. The results of this study show that individuals who score high on entrepreneurial orientation are likely to score high on employee engagement. In addition, we found that individuals high on entrepreneurial orientation experienced high engagement levels when their jobs were characterised by low levels of autonomy, low levels

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of skill variety and high levels of task feedback. The findings indicate that a proactive personality does compensate for some non-motivating elements of job design.

Keywords

entrepreneurial orientation, employee engagement, job characteristics

If one takes a brief look at the history of organisations, one will find that over the years there has been a shift in the way corporations have functioned. With Taylorism, individuals were given tightly defined job descriptions and the management was responsible for motivating employees and co-ordinating across specialised activities/jobs. Control, co-ordination and planning characterised corporations, so much so that employees were seen as replaceable parts rather than human resources. The 1980s saw a shift to a new way of thinking. Visionaries like Jack Welch focused on employees as sources of immense energy and creativity that need to be harnessed for the growth and success of a company. Creating an organisation that is flexible enough to exploit and nurture the unique abilities of each employee is termed as creating an 'Individualized Corporation' (Ghoshal & Bartlett, 1997). In today's scenario where organisations are striving to distinguish themselves from the rest and emerge as successful market players, employee creativity and initiative will prove to be sources of competitive advantage.

Today, we see a two-pronged approach being adopted by companies. First is the quest for recruiting innovative and entrepreneurial employees and the second is designing organisations and jobs to unleash the best in the employees. Do these two approaches (employee personality and job design) complement each other? How do they interact in order to ensure employee engagement? This study aims at understanding the comparative impact of employee personality and elements of job design in creating employee engagement.

Employee Engagement

Organisational attitudes such as job satisfaction and employee engagement are in some way related to retention of talent. These organisational

attitudes have attracted considerable amount of research and rightly so, considering retaining key talent in one's organisation is an important issue that managers need to focus on. Organisational commitment was found to relate to job satisfaction (Fletcher & Williams, 1996). Bringing in aspects of 'self employment' into a job may help increase job satisfaction. In managing the performance of employees, Fletcher and Williams (1996) found that awareness of organisation performance, perceiving a link between performance and reward and strategic relevance of one's goals are seen as variables strongly related to job satisfaction. Similarly, Harter, Schmidt and Hayes (2002) found positive correlations between employee engagement and composite business unit performance ($r = .38$ after correcting for performance variable measurement error and range restriction). Employee engagement was measured as an individual's involvement, satisfaction and enthusiasm for his or her work.

Even though some individuals may be largely committed, there are times when individuals do not feel completely one with the task, wherein they are giving it their maximum. In the words of Kahn (1990)—who introduced the concepts of 'personal engagement' and 'personal disengagement'—there are times when individuals experience certain leaps and there are times when individuals experience certain falls. These leaps are times of engagement and falls are times of disengagement. Personal engagement refers to behaviour wherein an individual is able to give physically, cognitively and emotionally while doing the job. Here an individual identifies with the job. Engagement results when an individual has a positive sense of 'meaning of work'. Kahn (1990: 718–719) states that individuals have a 'preferred self' that, when allowed to be enacted, provides an environment wherein individuals can 'keep themselves within a role, without sacrificing one for the other.' In disengagement, individuals withdraw physically, cognitively and emotionally when they have to perform work roles. The presence of psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability were found to be conducive for experiencing engagement.

Employee engagement as defined by Thomas (2007: 2) is:

[a] relatively stable psychological state influenced by interactions of individuals and their work environment. Engaged employees are characterized by a readiness and willingness to direct personal energies into physical,

cognitive, and emotional expressions associated with fulfilling required and discretionary work roles.

Research shows that employee engagement has a strong positive correlation with levels of job commitment and satisfaction and a negative correlation with turnover intentions (Thomas, 2007).

A number of studies have shown that a negative relationship exists between employee attitudes and turnover. According to Harter, Schmidt and Hayes (2002), the main drawback of these studies is a small sample size and therefore problems with generalisability. By using a meta-analytical technique, they attempt to overcome this drawback. It was found that overall satisfaction and employee engagement had a strong correlation with employee turnover ($-.36$ and $-.30$). The difference in correlation between overall satisfaction and employee engagement in relation to employee turnover may be due to factors that were not studied (such as pay, benefit and factors outside the manager's control) or could also be due to certain sampling errors.

Today the concept of an employee staying with the same company for a number of years is becoming outdated. With the latest trend of a fluid workforce, more than commitment to an organisation, commitment to one's job and the level of engagement that one feels with one's job is something that should concern employers. Work conditions are found to have an effect on employee engagement. When employees feel that they are doing something worthwhile, that is, when what they do is in tandem with what they hold as valuable and when they work in an environment where they feel safe to express their true selves, the management should feel encouraged, as job engagement is likely to be high (moments when employees experience 'leaps'). This has been supported by May, Gilson and Harter (2004) who found that psychological meaningfulness and psychological safety are significantly related to engagement. The same study also found that meaningfulness mediates the relationship between job enrichment (studied with respect to each of the five job related dimensions as given in Hackman and Oldham's (1974, 1975) model) and employee engagement.

Job Characteristics and Engagement

According to Hackman and Oldham (1975), the five core job dimensions are: *skill variety* which refers to the degree to which the job requires an individual to possess different skills and talents; *task identity*, which refers to doing a job from beginning to end; *task significance*, which refers to the degree to which the job has an impact on others; *autonomy*, or the degree to which the job provides the employee with sufficient freedom, independence and discretion; *feedback*, or the degree to which the employee receives feedback from the job itself and from other agents; and *dealing with others*, which refers to the degree to which individuals are required to work closely with others while carrying out the task. These core job dimensions are essential for the three critical psychological states of *experienced meaningfulness of work*, *experienced responsibility for the outcomes of work* and *knowledge of the results of the work activities*. These three critical psychological states will lead to positive outcomes of high internal motivation, high work satisfaction, high quality performance, low absenteeism and turnover. Perceived meaningfulness of a job depends on the presence of three core job-dimensions—skill variety, task identity and task significance (Hackman & Oldham, 1975).

According to Taber and Taylor (1990) the ‘job characteristics model’ studies the perceived and not the objective job characteristics and the affective response of the individual. Research, however, shows that objective changes in the job do change the perceptions of the job characteristics (Fried & Ferris, 1987). Review and analysis of the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) found that the JDS can provide important information about perceived job characteristics (Fried & Ferris, 1987; Taber & Taylor, 1990). Idaszak, Bottom and Drasgow (1988) revised the original JDS, to remove a measurement artifact. Another widely used survey to study job characteristics is the Job Characteristics Inventory (JCI) (Sims, Szilagyi & Keller, 1976). The JCI, while taking inputs from the JDS, aims at providing an improved job characteristics instrument. Research shows that outcomes such as job satisfaction, absenteeism and so on are related to the job characteristics (Glick, Jenkins & Gupta, 1986).

Hypothesis 1. Job characteristics such as autonomy, skill variety and task feedback will be related to employee engagement.

Entrepreneurial Orientation and Employee Engagement

Kahn (1990) says that the presence of the three psychological states allows individuals to either personally engage or disengage. Along with focusing on initiatives that aim at positively influencing attitudinal outcomes and job characteristics, managers today are also focusing on tapping the entrepreneurial spirit of employees, so that as they grow, they are able to provide superior value to customers. Brundin, Patzelt and Shepherd (2008) found that emotions displayed by managers had an effect on the employee's willingness to act entrepreneurially. Also, employees' willingness to work was higher when managers displayed confidence and satisfaction.

The simplest form of entrepreneurship is self-employment. Evidence suggests that given a choice, individuals would like to be entrepreneurs (Blanchflower & Oswald, 1998). The International Social Survey Programme of 1989 posed the following question to samples from 11 countries. 'Suppose you were working and could choose between different kinds of jobs; which of the following would you choose (i) being an employee, (ii) being self-employed, (iii) can't choose. While a large number of respondents (above 40 per cent of respondents in America, Britain and Germany) stated choice (ii) as their option, the actual proportion of self-employed in these countries was only 15 per cent. Research shows that one of the main reasons for this is liquidity constraints faced by individuals. Blanchflower and Oswald (1998) found that self employment positively influenced reported job satisfaction—46 per cent of the self employed said that they were 'very satisfied' while the figure was only 29 per cent for employees.

Entrepreneurial orientation has been largely studied at the firm level. When leaders of an organisation create an environment that encourages innovation and risk taking, the organisation can be characterised as having *corporate entrepreneurship*. Dess and Lumpkin (2005) suggest five dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation of a firm: innovativeness,

proactivity, risk taking, competitive aggressiveness and autonomy. While earlier studies have put forth entrepreneurial orientation as a unidimensional construct, Dess and Lumpkin further suggest that the relationships between the individual dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation and performance should be explored.

According to Krauss, Frese, Friedrich and Unger (2005) entrepreneurial orientation at the individual level includes: learning orientation, achievement orientation, autonomy orientation, competitiveness orientation, innovative orientation, risk-taking orientation and personal initiative. We thus hypothesise:

Hypothesis 2. Individuals high on entrepreneurial orientation will report high job engagement levels.

Entrepreneurial Orientation and Job Characteristics

Autonomy

Innovation, creativity, risk taking and personal initiative seem to be important aspects of individual entrepreneurial orientation. Each of the above attributes instinctively point toward the need for some amount of autonomy. Thus, individuals who are high on entrepreneurial orientation will seek situations which allow for a certain amount of free hand.

Skill-variety

Research has found that opportunity recognition is an important aspect of entrepreneurial ability. Baron (2006) defines opportunity recognition as the cognitive process (or processes) through which individuals conclude that they have identified an opportunity; an opportunity, being defined as a perceived means of generating economic value that previously has not been exploited and is not currently being exploited by others. Active or passive search, alertness and prior knowledge together influence opportunity recognition. For a company to stay competitive it is necessary that its employees are able to recognise opportunity areas that

the company/organisation can capitalise on. Evidence shows that information gathered through rich and varied life experiences helps an individual spot and recognise possible business opportunities (Shane, 2000). Having a broad base of experience and knowledge seems to be positively related to entrepreneurial ability. Lazear's (2005) study using data from business school graduates found that those who end up being entrepreneurs are more likely to be sufficiently skilled in a variety of areas to be able to put together a successful project. The study shows that an entrepreneur is one who is likely to have had varied backgrounds in school and on the job. An entrepreneur may not necessarily be a specialist but is one who has sufficient knowledge in a variety of areas to design and create a successful business. Thus, the entrepreneur naturally uses a variety of skills in his or her work.

Task Feedback

A number of studies have been done to identify the psychological traits related to entrepreneurship. Blanchflower and Oswald (1998) studied National Child Development Study (NCDS) data, which recorded results of psychological tests done during childhood. The only correlation that they observed was that those who were anxious for acceptance when children were less likely to run their own business at age 33. In addition, it has been found that individuals who have a risk taking ability; for example those who have chosen risky jobs in the past, are more likely to become entrepreneurs (Lazear, 2005). Barbosa, Kickul and Liao-Troth (2007) found that perceiving risk as either opportunity or threat influences perceived behaviour control and thus affects entrepreneurial intentions. Perceived behaviour control refers to the perceived controllability of behaviour which was measured through items such as: 'There are very few circumstances outside my control that prevent me from starting and running a business' and 'I would have complete control over the situation if I start and run a business'. Entrepreneurial intention was measured by recording responses on a seven-point scale to a single item: 'It is likely that I will start and run my own business in a near future.' Behaviour control implies a certain amount of autonomy. Perceiving risk as either opportunity or control would involve seeking some amount of feedback from the job task and environment.

In other words, individuals who are high on entrepreneurial orientation and whose jobs have a high amount of autonomy woven into their job show higher levels of employee engagement. This may be so because jobs characterised by a high amount of autonomy provide entrepreneurial individuals with opportunities that require personal initiative. Thus, such jobs allow employees to act according to their 'preferred self' (Kahn, 1990) and this then leads to higher engagement levels. Autonomy on the job also allows individuals a certain amount of free hand to run their work the way they would do if they were self-employed and this aspect of autonomy and authority to make one's own decisions and take initiative leads to greater levels of employee engagement.

Similarly, individuals high on entrepreneurial orientation may show higher employee engagement levels when there is high level of task feedback that characterises the job. Task feedback, given either by colleagues, subordinates or superiors, or through the job itself, can help individuals benchmark their performance and identify areas for improvement. Feedback from the job will help entrepreneurial individuals identify gaps, which again can stir them on to identifying and working on new initiatives.

Thus, we find that employees who are high on entrepreneurial orientation seek out experiences which provide autonomy, skill-variety and task feedback. Hence, it is expected that when provided with these in their job environment, individuals will be happy.

Hypothesis 3a. Employees high on entrepreneurial orientation will report high engagement levels when the job has high levels of job autonomy, skill variety and task feedback.

However, how much of these three is just enough for engagement? What if a combination of the individual's temperament and the job requirements results in too much autonomy, skill-variety and task-feedback? Surely too much of these three ingredients would be as detrimental as a complete absence of these. Warr's vitamin model (Warr 1987 cited in Glomb, Kammeyer-Mueller & Rotundo, 2004) suggests that certain job characteristics are useful only when they lie within designated levels. Numerous studies have supported Warr's vitamin model (De Jonge & Schaufeli, 1998; Glomb, Kammeyer-Mueller & Rotundo, 2004; Jeurissen & Nyklicek, 2001) and have shown that just as absence of certain job characteristics can be stressful, the existence of too much of those job characteristics can also be stressful to the employee. In other

words, too much of autonomy, skill-variety and task feedback may be as disengaging to an employee as the absence of these in the job. Hence, we propose a competing hypothesis to the earlier hypothesised relationship (Hypothesis 3a).

Hypothesis 3b. Employees high on entrepreneurial orientation will report high engagement levels when the job has low levels of job autonomy, skill variety and task feedback.

Method

Sample

A sample size of 101 respondents provided data for this study. Sixty nine per cent of the sample was male, 67 per cent of the sample had completed a post graduation course and the average age of the respondents was 34.83 years. Respondents were taken from four companies; the industries that the companies were part of were: retail, construction, telecom and air conditioning and refrigeration. As one of the variables being studied was job characteristics, it was essential that there were differences in perceived job characteristics among the respondents. Therefore even within a single company, while studying the managerial cadre, employees were taken from across grades; from the supervisor level upto the vice president level. Respondents were in the current job profile from a minimum of 1 month to a maximum of 24 years (Median = 14.5 months). All subjects completed the same survey.

Measures

1. *Entrepreneurial Orientation.* Crant (1996) found that a proactive orientation is strongly related to entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial intention was studied by conducting a study using a sample of 181 students. While entrepreneurial intention was found to be related to variables such as gender, education, having an entrepreneurial parent and so on, the strongest relationship was found between

entrepreneurial intention and the proactive personality scale ($r = 0.48, p < .01$). Proactive personality orientation is defined as being able to affect environmental change by overcoming various situational impediments or constraints (Bateman & Crant, 1993). In an 'entrepreneur' role, when the individual starts something new, an inseparable part of the journey is to tide over various obstacles and impediments. The definition by Lazear (2005: 651) is: 'An entrepreneur is one who responds positively to the statement "I am among those who initially established the business."' It is only when one is able to deal with the situational impediments and overcome them that one can successfully start a new venture. Bateman and Crant (1993) further state that individuals with a proactive personality 'scan for initiatives, show initiative, take action and persevere until they reach closure by bringing about change' (p. 105). This shows that a proactive personality is closely related to an entrepreneurial personality. Research also shows how proactivity is an important variable in understanding entrepreneurial behaviour (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Becherer & Maurer, 1999; Crant, 1996). In this study, entrepreneurial orientation was measured using the Bateman and Crant's (1993) 17 item measure of proactivity disposition.

A five point rating scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree' was used to measure each of the variables: entrepreneurial orientation, job characteristics and employee engagement.

2. *Job Characteristics*. Three core dimensions of skill variety, autonomy and feedback were used using items from the JDS (Hackman & Oldham, 1974) and the revised items of the JDS (Idaszak, Bottom & Drasgow, 1988).
3. *Employee Engagement*. Employee engagement was studied using the 'Scale for Employee Engagement (alpha value of .89 with replication sample; Thomas, 2007).

The survey also included questions seeking information about the respondent's age, sex, maximum level of qualification, total number of years of work experience and number of months of work experience in the current job profile.

Results

The reliability (Cronbach alphas) of each of the scales were found to be .78, .71, .43, .62, and .83 for the scales measuring employee engagement, perceived autonomy, perceived feedback, perceived skill variety and entrepreneurial orientation (proactivity).

As shown in Table 1, correlation between entrepreneurial orientation and employee engagement is high. It is also interesting to note that employee engagement correlates highly with all the moderating variables—autonomy, feedback and skill variety—such that increasing levels of autonomy, feedback and skill variety enhance employee engagement.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Zero-Order Intercorrelations

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Entrepreneurial orientation	4.02	.49	(.83)				
2. Employee engagement	4.57	.33	.48**	(.78)			
3. Autonomy	3.96	.58	.24*	.33**	(.71)		
4. Task feedback	3.63	.55	.31**	.34**	.55**	(.43)	
5. Skill variety	3.81	.68	.22*	.39**	.61**	.41**	(.62)

Note: Coefficients alphas are in parenthesis along the diagonal. $N = 101$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

A regression analysis studying the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation, job characteristics and employee engagement shows that entrepreneurial orientation is significantly related to employee engagement. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is supported. Among the job characteristics, only skill variety is significantly related to employee engagement. Thus, Hypothesis 1 is only partly supported. Results of this regression are reported in Table 2.

A regression analysis was conducted to study the effect of the moderating variables on the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and employee engagement. The facets of entrepreneurial orientation, autonomy, feedback and skill variety were centred (that is, subtracting the mean from each score). The interaction terms were based on these centred scores. However, none of the interaction terms was significant; hence, an alternative method was used to test the moderation effect. A median split of the sample was done on autonomy, feedback and skill

Table 2. Impact of Entrepreneurial Orientation on Employee Engagement

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables	B	SE B
Employee engagement	Entrepreneurial orientation	.27**	.06
	Autonomy	.02	.07
	Task feedback	.06	.06
	Skill variety	.11*	.05

Notes: $N = 101$, $F = 11.46^{**}$, $\text{Adj. } R^2 = .30$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

variety. Thus, the data was split into three pairs—first, high autonomy and low autonomy; second, high feedback and low feedback; and third, high variety and low variety. The correlation results are shown in Table 3. The correlation of entrepreneurial orientation and employee engagement was checked separately for each of the six groups and it was found that the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and employee engagement is higher for employees whose jobs have low autonomy and low skill variety. Hence, Hypothesis 3 is partly supported.

Discussion

This study investigates the individual and joint impact of personality characteristics and job characteristics on an individual's engagement at work. First, we find that individual personality characteristics are related

Table 3. Correlation Analysis/Median Split: To Test the Moderating Role of Job Characteristics

Moderator Level = Low	Moderator Level = High
Low autonomy ($N = 47$; autonomy < 4.00) $r = .52^{**}$	High autonomy ($N = 54$; autonomy ≥ 4) $r = .42^{**}$
Low task feedback ($N = 50$; task feedback < 3.75) $r = .42^{**}$	High task feedback ($N = 51$; task feedback ≥ 3.75) $r = .46^{**}$
Low skill variety ($N = 50$; skill variety < 4.00) $r = .69^{**}$	High skill variety ($N = 51$; skill variety ≥ 4.00) $r = .30^*$

Notes: † $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.
 $N = 101$.

to an individual's level of engagement on the job. Those who were high on entrepreneurial orientation reported higher engagement. This has implications for recruitment and selection. In other words, an organisation can be assured of a certain level of engagement simply by hiring the right type of individuals.

Second, we investigated the effect of three characteristics of the job—autonomy, skill-variety, and task feedback—on employee engagement and found that only skill-variety significantly affected employee engagement. Jobs which provide for using a range of skills are likely to be more engaging than those that utilise only a narrow range of an employee's abilities. Contrary to our expectation, we did not find support for our hypothesis that autonomy and task feedback in the job would enhance engagement. There could be two reasons for this. First, the small sample size could be responsible to our inability to discern a significant relationship. Indeed, the value of the coefficients (the order of magnitude) for autonomy and task feedback is not very different from skill-variety. Another, likely reason for our lack of strong findings for autonomy and task feedback could be the cultural make up of the respondents in our population. Some studies have shown that Asians do not value choice and autonomy to the extent that Americans do and in fact sometimes Asians may even find too much of choice as stressful (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999). Having said this, given the small sample size, the first reason (statistical significance) is a better explanation for our findings than the second (cultural factors).

Finally, when we investigated the interactive effect of individual and job characteristics on engagement, we suggested two competing hypotheses. Hypothesis 3a suggested that employees who are high on entrepreneurial orientation are likely to be *more* engaged when their jobs provide them with high autonomy, skill variety and task feedback. This hypothesis received only limited support. The other competing hypothesis, Hypothesis 3b, suggested that employees who are high on entrepreneurial orientation are likely to be *less* engaged when their jobs provide them with high autonomy, skill variety and task feedback. This hypothesis received some support in that the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and engagement was higher for jobs which had low autonomy and low skill variety. Our results were consistent with other studies

showing support for Warr's vitamin model (De Jonge & Schaufeli, 1998; Glomb, Kammeyer-Mueller & Rotundo, 2004; Jeurissen & Nyklicek, 2001).

Limitations

The study does have a few limitations that must be taken into account. About 22 per cent of the sample consisted of individuals who had spent six months or less in their current job. These individuals may not have experienced the job situation long enough to provide well considered ratings on job characteristics that were being studied. The main method of data collection was through the usage of self-report scales. This again is a limitation. The items in the scales were worded in such a way that there is a high possibility that individuals would want to respond to them in a socially desirable manner (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). As is the case with many self-reporting instruments, the scales used in the study too showed subjects' inclination to mark socially desirable answers.

In addition, since a single source, a questionnaire was used to get information on the all the variables, there is a change of common method bias. It is likely that individuals scored items in a manner that shows consistency.

Another limitation is that the scales measuring job characteristics like autonomy, skill variety and task feedback may not have been able to objectively measure the variables. Individuals were asked to self-report the level of autonomy, skill variety and task feedback present in their job. It may be possible that for moderate levels of skill variety, individuals high on entrepreneurial orientation perceived their job as having low autonomy, task feedback and skill variety, while individuals low on entrepreneurial orientation perceived their jobs as having higher autonomy, task feedback and skill variety. A better way of measuring job characteristics would be to have independent raters rating the level of these characteristics in each job. This way, an objective assessment would be possible. Another reason that may have contributed to the reported absence of a relationship could be that the sample consisted of employees from the managerial level only. Although respondents were taken across

all grades of the managerial cadre, it is possible that individuals within the managerial cadre do not necessarily differ in their perception of characteristics present in the job (despite there being differences). Since respondents were asked to self-report the level of job characteristics on the job, this method may not have been sensitive to the differences in job characteristics present. Another way to test the relationship between the variables would have been to make the sample more inclusive by taking respondents from across the organisation so that the differences in job characteristics are well pronounced, for example, a receptionist, marketing manager and so on.

Practical Implications

The main contribution of this study is that high level of autonomy and skill-variety on a job negatively moderate the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and employee engagement. This finding has important implications for managers today especially when there is a war of talent in the corporate arena. Harter, Schmidt and Hayes (2002) found that employee engagement is negatively correlated with employee turnover. In an era where retaining even an above-average employee is posing to be a challenge, the findings of this study offer some direction to managers in terms of involving entrepreneurial employees and keeping them engaged.

Knowledge of the employee's level of entrepreneurial orientation can also assist managers in making decisions related to succession planning. The entrepreneurial orientation level will help managers identify possible candidates to be groomed for a particular job. Once the characteristics of a job are known, the entrepreneurial orientation level of an individual will give managers and decision makers an indication whether the employee will be suited for a job and therefore engaged in the job.

In this age of mergers and acquisitions, when restructuring is an exercise many companies are forced to undertake, the findings of the study hold special importance. Organisations may want to categorise jobs based on job characteristics. Knowledge of the employee's entrepreneurial orientation level can help managers match employees to job roles.

Thus, information on entrepreneurial orientation levels of employees can assist managers in creating pools of talent from which individuals may be selected for certain positions.

In an era wherein ‘innovation’ is the key word and businesses are forced to re-look and reinvent themselves, emergence of employees as ‘free agents’ is going to become popular. In scanning for talent to fill these important positions, looking for and recruiting individuals high on entrepreneurial orientation leads to greater probability of them being engaged and satisfied in the job, thus feeling a sense of oneness with the job profile. When this happens, employees bring into their job their talents and skills and thus a lot of positive constructive energy.

From an employee/job seeker point of view, the study helps employees make decisions regarding the type of jobs they apply to and choose. In today’s scenario, it is a well-known fact that the industry has a dearth of employable talent. The current employment market is a favourable market for job seekers. The relationship between an organisation and the job seeker is now changing—today both are seen as equals and discussions (interviews) are held to see how good the ‘fit’ will be. In such a scenario, knowledge of one’s entrepreneurial orientation will be one of the important pieces of information that will help a job seeker make her/his decision. Knowledge of one’s level of entrepreneurial orientation and the job characteristics that positively influence employee engagement will help job seekers to ask the right questions when gaining information about the job.

Conclusion

This study investigates the individual and combined impact of personality characteristics and job characteristics on employee engagement. We find some support for the suggestion that entrepreneurial employees are likely to be more engaged on the job. In addition, we find evidence to show that jobs which are high on skill-variety foster high employee engagement. The most interesting contribution of this study is in investigating the combined impact of entrepreneurial orientation and job characteristics on employee engagement. Two competing hypotheses were proposed: one suggesting that highly entrepreneurial individuals should

be fitted to highly challenging jobs in order to ensure high engagement and the other suggesting that highly entrepreneurial individuals when placed in highly challenging jobs may suffer from low engagement. There was some support for the vitamin model, which suggested that a combination of high entrepreneurial orientation combined with a high autonomy and skill-variety on the job may actually reduce employee engagement. The implications of the study hold value for job seekers, managers in supervisory and leadership roles and the corporate sector in general. This study also gives direction to future research wherein different job characteristics may be studied to identify how they affect employee engagement.

Note

1. This article is based on the first author's master's dissertation at Prin. L.N. Welingkar Institute of Management Development and Research, Mumbai. An earlier version of this article was presented at The Sixth Asia Academy of Management Conference held at Taipei, Taiwan on 14–16 December, 2008.

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