Chapter 13

Hiring in the Post-Reengineering Environment: A Study Using Situationally Conditioned Belief

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In today’s post-reengineering environment, jobs are often more complex on both operational and managerial levels. Employees must possess a greater range of skills and are often given more autonomy in decision making. Employers seeking to address the increased risks in hiring for these positions may seek more information about job candidates. Information technology can be used to create an infrastructure that supports greater access to employee information. Attitudes on the part of employers and job candidates must be studied before building infrastructures to support the hiring process. Hypotheses are presented to support exploration of these issues. A study using situationally conditioned belief (SCB) was conducted. Results indicate that employers are seeking more sensitive information about job candidates, especially for managerial jobs, that managerial candidates are willing to provide more sensitive information, and that a significant gap exists for both operational and managerial candidates between the amount of information candidates are willing to reveal and the amount of information desired by employers.

REENGINEERING CREATES MORE COMPLEX JOBS

In today’s post-reengineering environment, jobs are often more complex on both operational and managerial levels. Employees must possess a greater range of skills and are often given more autonomy in decision making (Hammer and Champy, 1993; Champy, 1995; Hammer, 1996; Gates, 1999). Employers seeking to address the increased risks in hiring for these positions may seek more information about job candidates.

The range and extent to which personal data about job candidates will be sought in pre-employment screening poses serious ethical and legal dilemmas. How do we balance a job candidate’s rights to privacy against the needs of organizations to have competent, trustworthy employees?

Legal safeguards such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act limit the questions employers can ask to those that directly relate to job performance. Human resource consultants encourage employers to define job requirements up front to help ensure that questions are tailored to fit the job. However, in reengineered firms with process-based work flows, job definition becomes more problematic:

Traditional task-based jobs were packaged into clusters of similar tasks and assigned to specialist workers. Today many firms have no reason to package work that way. Instead, they are unbundling tasks into broader chunks of work that change over time. Such shifting clusters of tasks make it difficult to define a “job,” at least in the traditional sense (Cascio, 1998).

Job requirements that continually evolve create an increasing gray area as to which questions are appropriate. Fearing charges of negligent hiring if employees are incompetent or dishonest, employers can feel pressured to gather more information. In a study of application forms used by more than 200 organizations, 95 percent of the forms included one or more legally indefensible questions (Cascio, 1998, p. 139).

The paper will present an analysis indicating that new job positions created by reengineering give rise to greater concerns about hiring competent and trustworthy employees. Five hypotheses regarding the likely beliefs of employers and job candidates regarding information privacy and information access were generated.

This paper will then present an empirical study of these hypotheses using a concept called situationally conditioned belief (SCB), developed by Lally (1996). The methodology involves a two-part survey involving a group where half the respondents answer questions from the perspective of the party on one side in a transaction and the other half answer questions from the perspective of the other
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