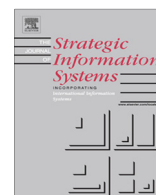




Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Strategic Information Systems

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jsis

A communicative-tension model of change-induced collective voluntary turnover in IT

Rennie Naidoo

School of Information Technology, Department of Informatics, University of Pretoria, South Africa

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 4 February 2015

Received in revised form 26 September 2016

Accepted 26 September 2016

Available online xxxx

Keywords:

Case study

Collective voluntary turnover

Communicative tensions

Employee retention

IS organizational change

Relational dialectical theory

ABSTRACT

Losing talented IT employees, the most critical strategic resource in IT, during a major organizational change can be catastrophic to the overall performance of the IS organization. This paper develops a multi-layered communicative-tension model of change-induced collective voluntary turnover from a historical case study analysis. A major organizational change at a healthcare insurance firm's IT unit reveals the presence of three primary communicative tensions: alignment-autonomy, stability-change and expression-suppression. A group of employees, dissatisfied with the negative communicative practices employed by their managers in the midst of these communicative tensions, left the organization. A communicative-tension model of change-induced collective voluntary turnover complements and extends upon prior collective voluntary turnover research by accounting for the organizational change context and broader relational dynamics. This study offers practitioners important insights on how to manage communicative tensions during an IS organizational change to improve IT talent retention.

© 2016 Published by Elsevier B.V.

Introduction

Google Now staff quit as tensions flares.¹

Clinkle implodes as employees quit.²

At Zappos, some employees find offer to leave too good to refuse.³

[Recent headlines from *Online Media*]

Despite the economic downturn, recent media stories indicate that multiple IT employees sometimes voluntarily leave their employer at the same time. The headlines cited above are evidence of change-induced collective turnover in IT organizations. A group of disenchanted engineers from the Google Now team objected to a transfer from the Android to the Search department. The change created tension within the Now team and many team members left. Several Clinkle employees simultaneously left the payment rewards start-up. Tensions increased when their CEO withheld information about acquisition talks with Apple. About 14% (210) of roughly 1500 employees left Zappos, an independent subsidiary of Amazon.com, Inc., amid tensions about a change to a self-management structure called a holacracy. Employees who left were apparently dissatisfied about the new model which implied no traditional career path, no traditional bosses and no

E-mail address: rennie.naidoo@up.ac.za

¹ <https://www.androidpit.com/google-now-staff-quit-as-tensions-flare-for-ceo-sundar-pichai>.

² <http://techcrunch.com/2015/05/15/clunk/>.

³ http://www.wsj.com/articles/at-zappos-some-employees-find-offer-to-leave-too-good-to-refuse-1431047917?mod=rss_Technology.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jsis.2016.09.002>

0963-8687/© 2016 Published by Elsevier B.V.

job titles. These examples illustrate both the prevalence of communicative tensions in IT organizational change-induced collective turnover and, in particular, the communication challenges leaders face in managing dissatisfied groups of employees. This is a serious problem for IT leaders, given the war for talent and the strategic benefits of retaining the knowledge, skills and abilities of talented employees (Ready et al., 2008; Nayar, 2010).

The strategic information system literature acknowledges the value of IT employee talent in a range of strategizing processes (Peppard et al., 2014) from strategic planning (Earl, 1993; Baker, 1995), alignment (Henderson and Venkatraman, 1993; Reich and Benbasat, 2000), competitive advantage (Galliers, 1993; Ross et al., 1996), capabilities (Peppard and Ward, 2004), agility (Sambamurthy et al., 2003), implementation (Lederer and Sethi, 1988), digital business strategy (Bharadwaj et al., 2013), knowledge management (Galliers and Newell, 2003), to outsourcing (Lacity and Hirschheim, 1993). While important contributions have been made about IT employee talent in strategizing (Peppard et al., 2014), some of the prevailing conceptions that emphasise capabilities and competencies informed by theories such as the resource-based view (Rivard et al., 2006) and social capital theory (Wasko and Faraj, 2005) offer a relatively sterile view of communicative practices and its constitutive role in strategizing. In contrast, recent conceptual advancements by IS strategy-as-practice researchers view successful strategizing as a social process that relies on the communicative competence of IT practitioners (Whittington, 2014; Marabelli and Galliers, forthcoming). Although this study focuses on specific communicative practices that can account for the loss of talented IT employees, it also extends the general understanding of IS strategizing by framing IT practitioners as part of a dynamic social process driven by communicative practices.

The loss of critical strategic resources – that is, multiple talented IT employees – during the same period as a major IS organizational change can be catastrophic to the overall performance of the IS organization, however, studies focusing on this phenomenon have been sparse (Baron et al., 2001). The majority of IT turnover research aims at explaining individual employee turnover decisions (Ghapanchi and Aurum, 2011; Joseph et al., 2007). In recent years, IT turnover researchers have suggested a shift from focusing solely on the experiences of individuals towards broader relational experiences (Joseph et al., 2007). Furthermore, common approaches used in prior research to study IT turnover have generally been divorced from the organizational context (Ghapanchi and Aurum, 2011; Joseph et al., 2007). Although press accounts, such as those noted above, have reported on a number of occasions that an organizational change somehow led to the collective turnover of IT employees, prior turnover research has been prone to omitting theorising about the role of the changing organizational context. Prior theorising has also omitted relational processes associated with the turnover of multiple employees during the context of a major organizational change. This study draws upon a wide range of literature from IS, human resource management, organizational change and communication studies, and comparing and theorising from empirical data to propose a *communicative-tension model of change-induced collective turnover*.

Change-induced collective turnover is defined as the turnover of multiple employees, during the same period they collectively experience a major organizational change, where the decision to leave the organization is based on shared communicative and negotiation processes. This paper argues that employees, who leave en masse during an organizational change, communicatively construct their relationships with other organizational actors at the interpersonal, group, intergroup, organizational and interdivisional levels – that is, a multi-level analytical approach should be applied to improve extant understanding of change-induced collective turnover. A dialectical perspective is used as an analytical tool in this paper to uncover the communicative tensions over opposing discourses at work during an organizational change and to explore how such tensions contributed to shaping a collective turnover pattern for a group of employees.

The study of change-induced collective turnover in IT is not easily examinable using conventional research approaches. Researchers, therefore, tend to rely on scandals, the popular media, and whistle-blowers to peek into this cloaked world. The study performs a historical analysis of a collective turnover pattern that occurred during an organizational change at an IT unit of a multinational healthcare insurance firm headquartered in South Africa. This study is based on rare access to sensitive data from this organization during a crucial period. It investigates the events that culminated in a collective turnover of staff between 2000 and 2005, when many IT units responsible for e-commerce throughout the globe were facing increasing scrutiny and were being subjected to change.

The research objective is to understand how a group of employees' decision to leave the organization during a major organizational change to their IT unit involved shared communicative tensions. The key contribution of this paper is the proposal of the communicative-tension model of change-induced collective turnover, which improves upon extant understanding of communicative and negotiation processes present in change-induced collective turnover, beyond the individual and interpersonal level. In addition, this paper addresses two weaknesses in the extant literature: First, collective turnover in the context of an IS organizational change has been under-researched and second, there have been calls for IT turnover research to move beyond the individual or psychological level of analysis to reflect on broader relational processes at work. This study has important practical applications as it is currently difficult for managers and practitioners to implement IS organizational change effectively in the absence of information on how to manage communicative tensions to mitigate the risk of collective turnover.

The remainder of the argument is structured as follows. The next section presents the conceptual foundation for the study by reviewing the literature of voluntary employee turnover and the use of a communicative tensions approach to understand organizational change. After a discussion of the historical method followed in the case study and the data collection process, the study continues with a multilevel communicative tension analysis to understand the unfolding of collective voluntary turnover during this period, followed by a discussion of the contribution of this research and its implication for both research and practice. The paper concludes with a summary of the contribution and acknowledgments of limitations as well as potential directions for future research.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4973100>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/4973100>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)