Hiring and Developing Person-Organization Fit: An Academic and Practitioner’s Point of View

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Fit Matters

“Fish out of water”

“Right person...wrong place”

“A square peg in a round hole”

“You cannot teach a crab to walk straight”

“If you live in the river you should make friends with the crocodile”

“Human beings, like plants, grow in the soil of acceptance, not in the atmosphere of rejection”  
Sir John Powell

“Adaptability is not imitation. It means power of resistance and assimilation”  
Mahatma Gandhi
Agenda

- The Academic Perspective:
  - The foundational literature
  - Theory of the case: Person-organization fit model, definition and concepts

- The Practitioner Perspective:
  - Model: Hiring and developing for person-organization fit
  - Discussion
  - Summary

- Questions
## The Foundational Literature: Person-Environment Construct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academician / Theorist</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parsons</td>
<td>1909</td>
<td>Congruence concept in vocational guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Explorations in personality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hay</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Sizing up applicants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argyris</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Assessment of organizational climates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pervin</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Performance and satisfaction as a function of individual environment fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mischel</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Situation is primarily responsible for individual behaviors. Personality and assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>The role of personality in organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Von Bertalanffy</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>PE-fit modeled in general systems theory. GST purports that the whole is greater than the sum of the individual components.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rokeach</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>The nature of human values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hackman &amp; Oldham</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Motivation through the design of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawis &amp; Lofquist</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Theory of work adjustment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schein</td>
<td>1985, 1992</td>
<td>Defines culture as what an organization has versus what an organization is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schneider</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Attraction-selection-attrition model. Suggests that individuals are attracted to each other based on similar values &amp; goals. Environment is a function of people behaving, E=f(P,B)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Mutual Matching Process

Organization & job analysis = recruitment & selection

Individual & organization / job analysis = interest & acceptance
Individuals develop a sense of fit during their career within an organization, which impacts their attitudes, behavior and retention.

Source: LIMRA international
Chatman (1991) showed that person-organization fit is important. It can predict higher job satisfaction 1 year later, greater organizational commitment and intent to stay with the organization 1 year later, and lower turnover.

Person-organization fit can be defined as the compatibility between people and organization that occurs when at least one entity provides what the other needs or they share similar fundamental characteristics. (Kristof, 1996)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High person-organization fit</th>
<th>Low person-organization fit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sense of involvement and strong bond</td>
<td>Negative affect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification with the organization</td>
<td>Feelings of incompetence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive perception of organizational support</td>
<td>Anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision to stay in the organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Chapman, 1991; Kristof, 1996; Navy Personnel Research, Studies & Technology
Link to Attraction-Selection-Attrition Model

• Schneider (1987) developed a model that suggests the effects of attraction, selection and attrition is to produce an organization where the people are relatively homogeneous.

• Kurt Lewin (1951) said behavior is a function of a person and an environment, \( B = f(P, E) \)

• Schneider said the environment is a function of people behaving, \( E = f(P, B) \)

Schneider posits:
“The people make the place”
**Attraction:** An individual is attracted to an organization when their preferences, personality and values are perceived as congruent with the structure, processes, culture and values of an organization.

**Selection:** An organization recruits and hires individuals who can contribute to its effectiveness; organizations choose people with varying competencies but similar values and personalities.

**Attrition:** People leave organizations when they “don’t fit in”

People leave organizations when they don’t “fit in”
The Practitioners Perspective: Common P-O Fit Threads

- Defined company culture influences type of person hired
- Person-organization fit conceptualized in many organizations as the match with a candidate’s leadership style within the current organization (supplementary fit)
- Organizations have “rejected” those that do “not fit in” or cannot adopt their ways of doing things (tissue rejection)
- Newly hired employees most often fail for person-organization fit reasons vs. knowledge/skills or cognitive ability
- Diversity (broadly defined) is often times culturally challenged by the traditional organizational norms and values
Hiring & Developing Person-Organization Fit

Conceptualization of Organizational Culture

Organizational Values

The Way Work Gets Done

Leadership Competencies

Assessing & Developing for Fit: Assessments, Behavioral Interviews 70-20-10 development

Person-Organization Fit: Leadership Attributes & Style To Match Organization

Outcomes of Poor Person-Organization Fit

Candidate Failure “Tissue Rejection Concept”

Inability to Hire for Diversity

Good Fit (Leadership Attributes)

Bad Fit (Leadership Attributes)

Source: Wolf Dissertation Research
## Conceptualization of Organizational Culture

- **Defined (published) Company Values:**
  - Integrity
  - Results Orientation
  - Ethics
  - Customer Service Orientation
  - Teamwork
  - Adaptability

- **Defined Leadership Competencies:**
  - High Energy
  - Pragmatism
  - Assertiveness
  - Self-awareness
  - Resilience
  - Confidence
  - Global Orientation
  - Adaptability
  - Collaboration Skills
  - Communications skills

- **Defined and unwritten “rules”, systems/artifacts/history:**
  - How work gets done in the organization
  - Unwritten, yet common practices
  - How success and failures are defined
Definitions of Person-Organization Fit

- **General Definition of “Good” Person-Organization Fit**
  - Candidate characteristics match with the organization’s culture
  - Other general attributes used to describe “good” person-organization fit:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Style</th>
<th>Communication Skills</th>
<th>Energy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>Assertiveness</td>
<td>Prior Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Awareness</td>
<td>Prior Track Record</td>
<td>Technical Expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration Skills</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collegiality</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>Directive</td>
<td>Organizational Savvy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Values congruence with the candidate and organization is generally not used when selecting for fit*
Definitions of Person-Organization Fit

- **General Definition of “Bad” Person-Organization Fit**
  - Candidate characteristics are the antithesis of a good match with the organization’s culture
  - Other general attributes used to describe “bad” person-organization fit:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individualistic</th>
<th>Lacks Analytical Skills</th>
<th>No Energy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past Failures</td>
<td>Overly Ambitious</td>
<td>Poor Communication Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Oriented</td>
<td>Lacks Teamwork Skills</td>
<td>Pushes Change too Quickly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacks Problem Solving Skills</td>
<td>Lacks Strategic Agility Skills</td>
<td>Too Aggressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrogance / High Ego</td>
<td>Lacks Self-Awareness</td>
<td>Too Passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot Manage the Details</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Majority of “bad” fit characteristics are leadership skills and attributes*
Assessing for Person-Organization Fit

Potential Interview Assessment Tools

Behavioral Interviewing (Include value congruency questions)
Industrial Psychologist Testing/Simulations (DDI, PDI, etc.)
Personality Test
Cognitive Test
Cultural Assessment (developed in-house)

*Companies can develop a series of assessment tools to assess for “fit”*
Hiring for P-O Fit and Supporting Diversity

- Paradox exists in hiring for organizational fit and hiring for diversity

- Diversity broadly defined as diversity of thought, bringing change into the organization, all EEOC protected classes, etc.

- Research shows that it is difficult to bring someone in different than the culture (or themselves) due to the “tissue rejection concept”

- Tendency still exists today to hire candidates more often that “look like themselves” … thus hard balancing need for diversity of thought, etc.

*Recognized need, but difficult to achieve both person-organization fit and diversity*
Developing P-O Fit

- Deploy the 70-20-10 development concept with heavier reliance on the relationship/mentoring aspects
- Define and develop what success and failure looks like; assign projects/coach to assist when negative behaviors begin to surface
- Assess for learning agility - the ability and willingness to learn, change and gain from experiences; use failures, successes, and feedback to existing or new situations*
- Develop core learning agility factors (mental, people, change and results)
- Develop and coach attributes and competencies to support organization fit
- Mapping of organizational members’ own sense of fit
- Socialization tactics for new hires to ensure greater person-organization fit and organizational acceptance

*Korn Ferry Lominger Learning Agility tools
Summary

- Organizational culture conceptualized with Company values, how work gets done, unwritten “rules” and leadership competencies/attributes; however construct remains vague and elusive for most (hard to define/hard to align)

- Generally we hire for supplementary fit reasons (general style and leadership skills) versus values congruence between the candidate and the organization culture; but we fire for person-organization fit reasons

- Members of the organization are a powerful entity and will reject those that do not fit into their way of doing things….otherwise called “organizational tissue rejection”

- Difficult to hire for person-organization fit and support diversity due to “tissue rejection” concept and past practice (directly or indirectly) in the hiring of candidates “like ourselves” (paradox)

- To improve retention – hire for fit (values congruence) and develop further once hired