Can Managers Use Handheld Technologies to Support Salespeople?

WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?

The availability of mobile technologies is changing the nature of the supervisor-employee relationship. Sales managers can now communicate via wireless handheld devices because they often include “always on” data and voice messaging capabilities.

Recent technological advances have enabled sales managers to change the ways in which they interact with their sales people. As a result of societal and demographic developments, this interaction has become less face-to-face and more mobile in nature. These communication differences may influence the ways that both parties feel about each other by either enhancing the supervisor-employee relationship or creating an impression of unfair scrutiny.

This paper examines how salesperson perceptions of supervisor monitoring using mobile technology may influence their perceptions of the supervisor-employee relationship. It asks, do sales managers really use mobile technologies in the working environment to communicate and supportively monitor sales person performance?

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS DO?

Francine Schlosser from the Odette School of Business, University of Windsor, conceptualized a model of supervisor monitoring using mobile technologies. This model specifies the types of behaviours that promote high-quality working relationships, how mobile technologies increase the likelihood of work-to-nonwork role spillover that may damage the relationship and why perceptions of supervisor fairness are critical.

The model and hypotheses ultimately connect supervisor monitoring using mobile technology to employee perceptions of interactional justice and the supervisor-employee relationship. The researcher also presents strategies for testing hypotheses and for researching mobile technology use by sales managers using qualitative and quantitative methods.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?

- The more sales managers are perceived to engage in supportive monitoring using mobile technologies, the higher the perceived quality of the supervisor-employee relationship
- Perceptions of interactional justice will strengthen the relationship between employee perceptions of supportive supervisory monitoring using mobile technologies and a high-quality supervisor-employee relationship
- Perceptions of work-to-nonwork spillover will weaken the relationship between employee perceptions of supportive supervisory monitoring and a high-quality supervisor-employee relationship

In summary, mobile technology use, supervisory monitoring, and relationship development co-exist in the current workplace. This research finds that work-to-nonwork spillover may influence
important outcomes of mobile technology usage. Perceptions of quality supervisor-employee relationships are important so the aforementioned findings may aid in retaining and motivating employees.

HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?

The findings from this study may be used by managers as it provides a framework to model and test effective use of mobile technologies. As the workforce ages and skilled workers become more scarce, the researchers expect this theoretical examination and ensuing future research to be interesting and important to the twenty-first century manager.

CITATION


KEYWORDS

Mobile communication systems, Sales force, Sales management, Performance monitoring

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Perceptions of quality supervisor-employee relationships are important to retaining and motivating employees. As the workforce ages and skilled workers become more scarce, it is expected that this theoretical examination will be interesting and important to the twenty-first century manager.