SEEKING RESOURCES: PREDICTING RETIREES RETURN TO THEIR WORKPLACE

WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?

Unretirement, or the decision of retired people to return to the labor force, is a growing trend in developed countries such as Canada. There are many motives for this return relating to: financial, social, personal fulfillment and generative opportunities.

Most of the existing empirical research on post-retirement employment has focused on identifying the factors that predict retirees' decision to return to the labour force in general, and not explicitly to their former workplace. Many older workers retire and then contract back with their former employer, which this research investigates. Therefore, the focus of this research is on retirees' interest in returning to retirees' former organization and not the labor force in general.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS DO?

Francine Schlosser, Deborah Zinni and Marjorie Armstrong-Stassen employed a resource-oriented theoretical perspective to examine retirees' desire to return to their former organization.

The researchers used a cross-sectional field study design to collect data from 243 retirees under 65 years of age who had been retired from a career job less than ten years. Participants were given questionnaires online and by mail. These questionnaires contained response categories featuring 5-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). This questionnaire asked retirees questions relating to retirement-related losses (financial, responsibility), retirement-related gains (freedom, satisfaction), organizational-related resource gains (mentorship opportunities, roles) and interest in returning to the workplace.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?

- Financial loss and pervasive role loss resulted in greater interest in returning to one's former organization.
- Job role loss was not a significant predictor of interest in returning to one's former organization.
- Both gains in leaving work and gains in life satisfaction resulted in less interest to returning to one's former organization.
- Person-organization fit, characterized by satisfaction with one's former organization, and person-job fit, embodied by the availability of job role options, were significantly positively related to interest in returning to one's former organization.
- Although retirees often have an interest in returning to his or her former organization, it does not necessarily mean that they desire to return to their former job. Instead, the findings indicate retirees are looking for available job role options, such as mentoring opportunities and modified work role demands, which better fit their current needs.
In summary, retirees who had experienced financial and pervasive role loss as well as retirees who perceived a higher fit with their former organization and the availability of desired job role options expressed significantly greater interest in returning. Retirees who experienced gains in leaving work as well as gains in their life satisfaction following retirement reported significantly less interest in returning to their former organization.

**HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?**

Employers may find this research particularly useful. This research indicates that programs should focus on creating an environment that values older workers, and provides them with opportunities such as mentoring other workers. This is useful for employers to know and thereby implement.

Human Resource Managers can also stand to benefit from this research. They should be aware that strengthening ties with individuals who have already invested themselves in the organization is more manageable through human resource policies than recruiting external strangers. Retirees will be more likely want to return to work for their former employer, particularly when they have the ability to work in jobs that are meaningful, with mentoring opportunities, and with a modified work role.

Governments may also find this research useful. Policy changes are needed to ensure that returning to work following retirement results in resource gains and not resource losses. Policies that currently act to discourage retirees from returning to the labor force, including pension regulations and tax laws, need to be replaced with policies that encourage unretirement by allowing the accrual of resource gains and limiting resource losses that may be incurred when a retiree returns to paid employment.

**CITATION**


**KEYWORDS**


**WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**

Human resource programs should focus on creating an environment that values older workers, and provides them with opportunities such as mentoring other workers and working in jobs that are meaningful.