Transitioning Ageing Healthcare Workers From Paid To Unpaid Work Through Social Exchange

Transitioning Ageing Workers From Paid To Unpaid Work In Non-Profits

WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?

There has been much discussion about the dwindling pools of knowledge workers and of volunteers. Most notably in the non-profit sector, the reliance on the knowledge and contribution of both paid employees and volunteers has challenged human resource professionals as they compete with other organisations to retain both paid and unpaid knowledge workers. Resource constraints and retention issues associated with an ageing workforce have challenged non-profit institutions.

Volunteerism is becoming increasingly important to the cash-strapped non-profit sector in Canada. However, according to Statistics Canada, only 7 per cent of all Canadians have actually volunteered. Recent North American research has described the importance of recruiting older adults before they retire and retaining older volunteers because older volunteers tend to give significantly more time to the organization. This indicates that organisations must consider attracting and retaining ageing volunteers, shaping the need for Human Resource Management (HRM) professionals to help ageing employees transition from paid work to volunteer opportunities.

This research investigates the question: How can HRM professionals develop stronger social exchanges with paid employees and volunteers that will prompt paid employees to volunteer with the organisation upon retirement, particularly when an individual’s interests and abilities are aligned with their work environment?

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS DO?

The researchers, Francine Schlosser and Deborah Zinni from the University of Windsor and Brock University, build upon current volunteer literature to shape a model of post-employment volunteer intentions. They propose how the social exchange processes among the employer, paid employees, volunteers and clients will influence how individuals perceive their interest and ability congruence with the environment, and specifically, with respect to the elements of person–organisation fit, person–group fit and person–vocation fit.

The researchers developed a model that described how ageing workers may evaluate and connect the quality of the relationships they build at work through social exchanges to their fit with the organisation, workgroup and vocation. Alignment of fit may create an intention to volunteer upon retirement, although they argue that this will be strengthened if the organisation is perceived to value volunteering activities. This value is also shaped through social exchange and might include attitudes toward the extra-role activities of both employees and volunteers in the current organisation.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?
• Building strong relationships amongst workers, managers, clients and volunteers encourages a lasting volunteer base. The volunteer’s social exchange with the institution is connected to previous work and volunteer experience, thus, providing a basis for effective volunteer work for the same employer.
• Workers may be inclined to source out new opportunities in volunteerism to satisfy career aspirations not previously available to them during their tenure in their respective institutions.
• Ageing volunteers can benefit greatly from training opportunities to help them perform their tasks effectively.
• Volunteers must be seen as a necessary resource to the effective operations of the institution, with their work valued by everyone.

In summary, the researchers were able to identify the importance of building strong social exchanges and perceptions of fit with employees on the cusp of retirement, in order to attract them to return as volunteers. In so doing, employers can utilise their knowledge of the norms and routines of the institution to provide better client care and manage relationships with paid employees.

HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?

This research can be used by non-profit organizations in order to increase their pool of volunteers and additionally provide better client care and manage relationships with paid employees. Furthermore, by utilizing the information presented in this paper, non-profit managers can introduce better human resource programmes and volunteerism can be enhanced for the betterment and effectiveness of better client service.

CITATION


KEYWORDS

Transitioning, Ageing Workers, Paid to Unpaid Work, Volunteering, Non-Profits, Human Resources, Social Exchange

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Human resource management professionals in non-profits can stem the loss of organisational learning by developing strong social exchanges that encourage employees to pursue post-retirement volunteering.