



Aligning Facility Management *with an* Organization's Core Business:

*Added Value as it Relates to Recruitment,
Selection, and Employee Retention*

By Jerome Roberson, Ph.D.

This article summarizes the results of a report prepared as a doctoral dissertation and peer-reviewed by APPA's Center for Facilities Research (CFaR), entitled "Aligning Facility Management with an Organization's Core Business." The purpose of this study was to compare the alignment between facility management services and an organization's core business from the perspective of strategic alignment.

OBJECTIVE

Four research questions and eight hypotheses were used to compare the relationship between facility management and an organization's core business. A quantitative nonexperimental, comparative, cross-sectional survey research design was also used to investigate that relationship. The rationale for selecting these approaches was fourfold: First, the research questions sought to compare the relationship between facility management alignment and an organization's core business. Second, the hypotheses were used to test the comparisons between facility management and an organization's core business. Third, a nonexperimental, comparative design may be used to identify the differences between variables without implying a causal relationship. Fourth, a nonexperimental, comparative design is the most appropriate approach for data collected from study participants.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Based on an examination of the null and alternative hypotheses, the overall findings of the study seem to suggest there is no existing alignment relationship between facility management and an organization’s core business.

- Research Question 1 found that facility management professionals believe a difference exists between facility management services and the strategic alignment of a university’s core business.
- Research Question 2 found that facility professionals believe facility management services are not essential to a university’s core business.
- Research Question 3 found that facility management professionals believe facility management services do not add value to their university’s core business.
- Finally, Research Question 4 found that facility management professionals believe facility management’s reputation plays a role in the alignment of facility management services and a university’s core business.

BACKGROUND

Facility management has not achieved the status and recognition of other management disciplines, such as leadership management, organizational management, or financial management. Lack of empirical research, lack of publications in peer-reviewed and scholarly management journals, and lack of interest by leading management scholars to conduct research in facility management have contributed to the current scarcity of scholarly research in this field; another contributing factor is the absence of facility management educational programs at most major research universities.

In the next section, we operationalize the findings of Research Question 3, which suggests that facility management professionals believe facility management services do not add value to their university’s core business. The following topics will be discussed from the perspective of added value: workforce, human resources management (HRM), recruitment, selection, and employee retention.

WORKFORCE AS ADDED VALUE

As described in my research study, the value of facility management was one of the four major research questions and variables I investigated. The intent of my research at the time was not to provide solutions to the questions proposed in the study, but to leave those questions open to interpretation in regards to what the value of facility management represents to your organization. In this article, I discuss the effectiveness of workforce recruitment, selection, and retention strategies as they pertain to the value of facility management.

In my study, I defined the value of facility management services as the perception by the customer that facility services have contributed to the organization based on the cost and risk associated with that service. Similarly, the added value of the workforce is the perception by the customer that the workforce has or is contributing to the organization based on the cost and risk associated with the workforce.

An organization must understand the characteristics and job trends of local and national workforces before the value of their workforce can be translated into recruitment and retention strategies. The transition to a more service-oriented and information-based economy has increased the need for a more educated workforce. Some see the lack of a workforce where the majority of workers have some form of postsecondary education as a national security issue. The sentiment was echoed by other researchers that a more educated workforce is needed to ensure that the United States remains competitive. A common answer shared by several researchers to the question of why the workforce has a shortage of college-educated workers is that there is a misalignment between workforce demand and the ability of colleges at all levels to meet that demand.

Carnevale and Desrochers (2002) believe that this misalignment is occurring at a period in the educational process that they call the “missing middle.” The missing middle they describe typically happens for young adults with some form of





education, as they are having their first experience of real work and independence, and may begin in the freshman year of high school. According to Carnevale and Desrochers, the missing middle has three characteristics: First, for high schoolers, the curricula needed to bridge the gap between education and careers after graduation are missing. Second, these young adults are also missing the relationships that help to bridge those gaps. Third, the funds to acquire a college education after high school will also restrict many high school graduates from pursuing a postsecondary education.

Altstadt (2011) believes this misalignment occurs for a fundamental and practical reason, which is the inability of postsecondary schools to prepare graduates for jobs that are in demand and to identify those jobs. Community colleges are especially challenged, because they are faced with increased competition from online programs and four-year colleges as well as dwindling state support. Community colleges also lack the administrative structure to identify the type of jobs employers need.

While high school and postsecondary education do not align with workforce demands, we cannot point all the blame at educators; we also suggest that employers have not played a significant role in informing educators of their employment demands.

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AS AN ADDED VALUE

The preceding paragraphs attempted to lay out the reasons why there has been misalignment between workforce demands and organizations. This section will examine how organizations can effectively align human resource management (HRM) with their business as a value-added resource. Human resources is the function that manages the people within an organization in pursuit of its objectives. The next several paragraphs will compare and contrast three concepts used to effectively align an organization's HRM function: the **resource-based** view; the **person-organization fit** approach; and the **person-job fit** approach.

The resource-based view is an approach in which strategic HRM is based on effectively aligning the recruitment and selection process within an organization. The person-organization fit approach may be described as an agreement approach between the person and the organization to meet their respective needs (Agarwal, 2012). The person-job fit is how the employee perceives the internal environment of the organization.

RESOURCE-BASED VIEW AND HRM

The resource-based view and the person organization-fit approach are concepts that may be used to explain the link between HRM and an organization. The resource-based view as it relates to human resources affords a means by which human resources can be viewed from an economic perspective. As such, human resources add to the competitive advantages of an

organization, such as physical and organizational resources.

In their study on the resource-based view, which tested the effectiveness of technical and strategic HRM, Hustled, Jackson, and Schuler (1997) surveyed 293 publicly held U.S. firms. Their survey measured categorical questions pertaining to HRM effectiveness, HRM capabilities, and firm performance. The results show a competitive investment for the organization when investing in human resources.

PERSON-ORGANIZATION FIT AND HRM

On the other hand, the person-organization fit approach stands in stark contrast to the resource-based view in its relationship to HRM. The changing nature of human resources and the expectation of individuals within organizations point to the rise of the person-organization fit concept. The attitudes of a new and emerging workforce are the driving force behind this change.

There was a time prior to the early 1980s, perhaps earlier, where employees had the expectation of coming to an organization, working for 30 or more years, and then retiring. This is no longer the expectation by employees in an environment where change is the norm and where the companies that employ them are constantly seeking the competitive edge. The emerging workforce is looking to work in organizations that have enriching environments and share and welcome their values and ideas. As a result, human resources has had to adapt to this new workforce.

The concept of the person-organization fit as it relates to human resources affords a means by which the individual can be compared at the organizational level. As such, HRM adds to the organization's competitive advantage. In their study on person-organization fit, which tested posthire HRM practices, Autry and Wheeler (2005) surveyed 469 warehouse workers located in Pennsylvania, Georgia, Oklahoma, and Texas. The results showed a positive relationship between new hires with supervisors and coworkers as time passed.

PERSON-JOB FIT AND HRM

Person-job fit represents the continuing theme of the changing attitudes of employees and the ability of HRM to adapt to those changing attitudes. From the perspective of person-job fit, the change is occurring at the individual level of the organization.

There are two factors to consider when analyzing person-job fit at the individual organizational level: structure and culture. Structure at the individual level of the organization accounts for knowledge, skills, and ability, while culture accounts for employee attitudes.

Recruitment, Selection, and Employee Retention as Added Value

This section will examine how organizations can effectively align recruitment, selection, and employee retention as value-added resources. Recruitment is a set of tools and methods used to attract talented people to an organization for hiring

purposes. Selection is the process used by organizations to identify if the new people attracted to the organization have the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to be invited to join the organization.

Employee retention is probably more challenging than either recruitment or selection, because it involves the methods by which an organization will commit time and resources encouraging employees not to leave the organization but stick with it.

Recruitment and Selection as Added Value

To understand the process of recruitment and selection as an added value, the principle of person-organization fit must be considered. The principle of person-organization fit allows the organization to consider the norms and values of the applicant, but at same time allowing the organization to find a qualified applicant. Therefore, the organization should develop recruitment and selection criteria from the perspective of the applicant. Several studies have been conducted that seem to support the use of person-organization fit as a basis of applicant selection; two of those studies are discussed here.

In their longitudinal study of person-organization fit, Cable and Judge (1996) looked at 96 active job seekers. They attempted to test eight factors: job seekers' values, demographics, job choice, job opportunities, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, intent to leave, and willingness to recommend the organization. The results of their study showed that when the selection process is based on person-organization fit, applicants demonstrate a favorable attraction to the organization.

Another study by Cable and Judge (1994) analyzed pay preferences. In this study the researchers investigated pay as a motivating factor for attracting job seekers to an organization from the perspective of person-organization fit. The dimensions analyzed included

pay level, flexible benefits, individual or group rewards, and pay stability. Again, the study results showed that when the selection process is based on person-organization fit, applicants demonstrate a favorable attraction to the organization.

Employee Retention as an Added Value

A proven employee-retention strategy that helps an organization hold on to highly skilled workers is key to its

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success, and a well-thought out plan makes this possible. For example, Hamid and Yahya (2010) studied person-job fit from the perspective of work engagement. They surveyed 271 engineers, measuring the influence of person-organization and person-job fit on work engagement. The results showed that person-organization fit and person-job fit had a positive impact on work engagement.

For an employee retention strategy to be truly effective in holding on to skilled workers, it must promote an internal environment with a culture that matches the values of employees. Person-job fit is a key approach to supporting a culture capable of retaining highly skilled workers and influencing employee turnover. In their study on person-organization fit to affect employee retention, McCulloch and Turban (2007) surveyed 228 call-center workers located in Canada, examining how person-organization fit influenced job performance, employee retention, and job satisfaction as they related to high employee turnover, in a challenging job setting. The study showed that person-organization fit had no influence on job performance as a means of reducing employee turnover. However, it did show that person-organization fit influenced job

satisfaction, and that it did affect employee retention as a means of reducing employee turnover.

CONCLUSION

Although in my research study, facility managers did not find that added value aligned with the core objectives of their organization, the concept of added value is a useful concept that management should use to learn more about their organization at the individual, group, and organizational level. I attempted to operationalize added value from the perspective of resource-based view, person-organization fit, and person-job fit. Each of these concepts displays five common themes that can be useful in adding value to an organization. Themes common to resource-based view, person-organization fit, and person-job fit include the following:

- An organization's human capital has the potential to be a source of competitive advantage.
- Sources of human potential exist in the knowledge, skills, abilities, norms, and values that individuals bring to an organization.
- Human capital has the potential to become a source of competitive advantage if the fit between the individual and the organization is aligned.
- Attracting exceptional talent to an organization can be a source of competitive advantage if the applicant perceives the organization as having similar norms and values.
- Retaining exceptional talent can be a source of competitive advantage if there is a mutual understanding between the individual and the organization that they share similar norms and values. ☺

Jerome Roberson is facilities director at the Howard University School of Law, Washington, DC; he can be reached at jroberson100@gmail.com. This article, his first for *Facilities Manager*, stems from his doctoral dissertation for his Ph.D. in organization and management, with a specialization in leadership, from Capella University, and his peer-reviewed research completed under the auspices of APPA's Center for Facilities Research (project CFaR028-13). For a more extensive version of this research report, including all citations, visit www.appa.org/research/cfar/completed.cfm.

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