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Employee innovativeness in organizations: A review

This article presents a review of recent research on factors that influence employee innovativeness at the workplace. Based on a literature search on 15 peer-reviewed journals published during the period 2000-2005 and other relevant materials, it summarizes and discusses individual, job, team and organizational level factors that have been found to influence innovativeness in organizations.

Although the knowledge base of the factors that influence employee innovativeness has

grown, in our view, most studies have focused on isolated factors, and a holistic perspective is lacking. At the same time, increasing emphasis is placed on the individual's creative abilities and their use in organizations, and at both societal and national levels. Consequently, we argue that a review of the factors that influence employee innovativeness is now due in order to advance our understanding of how to better support and foster innovative efforts in the workplace.

The purpose of this article is hence to review existing research on the factors that influence employee innovativeness, with the aim of providing an integrated view of the knowledge we have. We specifically address the question of what is known about the factors that influence employee innovativeness at individual, job, team and organizational levels, and outline directions for future research.

Our findings indicate that a relatively large part of research on individual level factors to innovativeness has focused on examining the influence of person-related factors on innovativeness. Although this is a natural tendency given the emphasis on micro-level factors in recent innovation research, it is worth reminding ourselves that the job, team and organizational context provide the boundaries for employee innovativeness.

To summarize research on job level factors to innovativeness, the job level factors of autonomy, clear goals combined with a sufficient level of challenge, and time emerge as the key attributes of jobs in which employee creativity has the best chance to flourish.

Team-related factors are particularly important in providing support for innovativeness. It is crucial to ensure that team members have complementing skills and knowledge, and that

their profiles match the requirements of the challenges they face. The quality of the relationships and shared goals is particularly important when diversity among team members is high.

To conclude, organizational factors contributing to innovativeness are complex and often directly influenced by uncontrollable outside pressures. They are different to the factors that influence innovativeness at individual, job and team levels. An explicit organizational strategy emphasizing innovativeness, a structure that matches the strategy, context and size of the organization, leadership and culture that foster innovative sub-climates are important yet broad and often difficult-to-change organizational elements, which lay the foundations for an organization's ability to benefit from employees' innovative efforts.

While it is important to consider the different factors that influence innovativeness, we highlight the danger of thinking about innovativeness too mechanically: in order to gain a holistic understanding of innovativeness, we need to see the interdependences between different factors and levels. Individuals are members of teams, and teams are nested within organizations. The article concludes with an evaluation of the current state of innovativeness research. ■