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Information Seeking through Assimilation Process in Thai Organization

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***Abstract*—**The purpose of this study is to examine employee assessments of the usefulness/value of different types of information available to those employees during the process of organizational assimilation. Participants in the study were 247 "new" employees at Bangkok Bank. Bangkok Bank considers employees whose length of stay with the bank has been less than 18 months as new employees. Questionnaires were administered to all of the Bank's new employees to obtain the data for this study. Repeated measures analysis was used to analyze the data. The data were summed and coded by using Statistical Package for Social Science. Newcomers indicate that social information is the most useful information, followed by job (technical, referent, and appraisal information), political, normative, and organizational information. Essentially, social, job, and political information are evaluated by newcomers as highly useful, while normative and organizational information are rated as moderately useful.

***Keywords*—**Information seeking, organization assimilation.

I. Introduction

At the present, people begin with new jobs and assume new organizational roles, yet very little is known about the process by which new role incumbents become assimilated into an organization. Curiously, although the efforts of newcomers to proactively reduce uncertainty in their work environments are of obvious importance to their successful organizational assimilation, the means by which newcomers seek information has received scant research attention.

This study provides an examination of the ways that newcomers interact with various types of information as those newcomers progress through the process of organizational assimilation. During an assimilation process, newcomers seek information in order to adjust themselves to their organization's culture. Newcomers need information to reduce their uncertainties regarding organizational entry.

During the past several years, there has been growing interest in how newcomers obtain information during the encounter period of assimilation. Research has found that effective information acquisition is related to assimilation outcomes such as satisfaction, commitment, and retention [1]-[2]. These findings notwithstanding, the existing research on newcomer information acquisition leaves many questions unanswered. This is because the issue of information acquisition has been approached from several different frameworks, such that there is not a generally accepted typology of the information that newcomers must acquire. Further, have focused almost on newcomer information seeking and have paid relatively little attention to the unsolicited information that newcomers receive. Another issue that has been neglected is the perceived usefulness of various types of information.

A majority of the type of information which newcomers seek during the assimilation literature to date has been conducted within the United States. This project intends to adapt the type of information which newcomers seek during the assimilation literature from the United States to Thailand, allowing us to assess whether the assimilation process true of the American is also representative of The Thai.

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II. The Objective of Study

The research sought to identify the different types of information that play a role during the newcomer assimilation process within Thai organization.

III. Statement of Problem

This study tries to address the problem of the assimilation newcomers into Thai organizations. There might be many problems that newcomers do not understand and they experience as they try to adjust themselves to an organization. The assimilation process in an organization has a major influence on the performance of individuals, and thus affects group and organizational performance as well. Regardless of whether it is consciously planned and managed or whether it occurs informally, assimilation provides newcomers with considerable information about appropriate roles and behaviors. Assimilation is the process of what [3] referred to as "learning the ropes"

While a few would deny that the assimilation process is part of organizational life, the specific relationship between assimilation activities and subsequent employee attitudes not well known. [4] Suggests that when newcomers enter an organization they are faced with learning a new culture. Newcomers must assimilate the unofficial rules for sorting, labeling, and interpreting experience in the organization. These unwritten rules provide important clues for how to become an effective organizational member.

Thai organizations spend a great deal of time and money to orient new employees. Usually the direct costs for indoctrination program are substantial. However, there are indirect costs as well. For example, newcomers generally work below capacity while they learn their jobs and adjust to their new surroundings. The possibility of reducing costs provides an important incentive for organizations to learn about ways to improve orientation and assimilation programs.

Most interaction in organizations involves information seeking. Researchers have taken the position that information

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seeking is particularly important and somewhat unique during organizational entry [5]. Organizational entry might represent the most critical time of employee role learning. The ease and quickness with which newcomers learn their role are likely to affect their relationships with members of their role set and have an impact on their career path.

Types of information needed are perhaps the two most widely studied determinants of newcomer information-seeking [6]-[7]-[8]-[9]-[10]. There are seven types of information that newcomers obtain the organizational assimilation period. These are technical information, referent information, social information, appraisal information, normative information, organizational information, and political information. Newcomers have to obtain these types of information during the organizational assimilation period in order to reduce their uncertainty [11].

This study will provide Thai organizations with more information concerning the effectiveness of types of information. And the readers of this study will understand more about the important role of information toward newcomers as part of the assimilation process.

A. The Information that Newcomers Need/ Information Seeking

Upon entering an organization, newcomers typically experience some degree of surprise [4] or role shock [12]. Faced with learning the formal and informal requirements of a new role within the organization, this boundary passage event is often associated with high levels of uncertainty. Information transmitted from various organizational sources during the entry or encounter stage [12] of organizational assimilation is intended to help newcomers cope with the surprise and the uncertainty they might experience. In particular, messages from management, supervisors, and co-worker during the encounter period are usually designed to clarify newcomers' roles, to indoctrinate newcomers to organizational practices, to ease newcomers into membership in their work groups, and to help newcomers begin to develop new self-image, in keeping with their new roles and organizations [13].

Despite an organization's attempts to provide newcomers with information that is relevant to their new roles, there might be inadequacies in the nature and scope of the information presented. In fact, one study has shown that, during the encounter period, newcomers perceive that they receive less information from those around them than they believe is needed [14].

B. Types of Information

Researchers have identified several types of information that employees actively and passively obtain during the months following their entry into a new organization. [6] focused on two of these: (a) technical information needed to execute required tasks competently and (b) social information about other people and about one's workgroup.

In their model of newcomer information seeking, [5] focused on a different set of information types. Drawing from the feedback and interpersonal communication literature [15]-[16]-[17]-[18]; [5] proposed that there are three basic categories of information that newcomer try to obtain during assimilation: (a) referent information about what is required for one to function successfully in one's job role, (b) appraisal information about whether one is functioning successfully in their job role, and (c) relational information about the nature of one' s relationship with others. The latter information is similar to what [6] called social information, in that it focuses on other people with whom one works.

Building directly from the assimilation literature, Morrison [1]-[9] proposed more detail typology consisting of the following types of information: (a) technical, (b) referent, (c) normative, and (d) feedback. She defined technical information as information about how to perform required job tasks [6]; referent information as information about role demands and expectations [5]; normative information as information about the organization's culture (defined in term of norms, value, history, and customs); and feedback information as information about how others are perceiving and evaluating one's job performance and behavior. The latter form of information closely parallels what [5] called appraisal information.

[2] Suggested that, in addition to technical, referent, and social information, newcomers also need to obtain organizational information about their firm's structure, procedures, products, services, and performance, and political information about the distribution of power within the organization [19] have also suggested that newcomers need to learn about issue surrounding organizational power and politics.

In sum, there are several existing typologies of assimilation related information; however, these typologies overlap in many respects. Integration of the existing typologies suggests that the following types of information are needed by new employees: technical information about how to execute required tasks [6]-[1]-[9]-[2]); referent information about what is required and expected as part of one's job role [5]-[1]-[9]-[2]; social information about other people and one's relationships with those people [6]-[5]-[2]; appraisal information about how others are evaluating one's performance and behavior [5]-[1]-[9; normative information about the organization's culture [19]-[1]-[9]; organization information about the firm's structure, procedures, products/services, and performance [19]-[2]; and political information about the distribution of power within the organization [19]-[2].

All of the work here has been conducted in Western organizations. The study reported in this paper provides a shift in focus as this research was conducted in a Thai organization. Specifically, the research reported in this paper examined:

Hypothesis: Newcomers will distinguish among the various forms of information received in terms of the usefulness of that information. Specifically:

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Hypothesis (a): Job-focused information (technical, referent, and appraisal) will be assessed as more useful than social, normative, organizational, and/or political information.

Hypothesis (b): Social information will be assessed as more useful than normative, organizational, and political information.

IV. Methodology

This particular research, with its focus on employee perceptions of the process of organizational assimilation, required access to a moderately large number of new or relatively new employees. One option was to survey new employee across a wide range of organizations. That option would clearly provide for a diversity in employee experiences and perspectives. However, there would be a myriad of a difference born of the size of each organization, the presence or absence of formal employee training programs, the presence or absence of mentoring relationships, etc.

In essence, the very diversity that might constitute an advantage would make the task of drawing conclusions complex and difficult indeed. Thus, a second option-that of using a case study approach by focusing data collection on employee experiences within a single organization was deemed preferable.

A. Sample

The sample in this study was obtained through systematic random sampling procedures. The researcher obtained a list of new employees from the personal department of Bangkok Bank and selected 300 employees who had worked no more than 18 months in each department. Bangkok Bank considers employees whose length of stay with the bank has been less than 18 months as "new" employees. The research asked for assistance from head of the personal department of Bangkok Bank in identifying eligible employees and in distributing the questionnaires. The respondents for this study were all considered permanent employees of the Bank.

B. Demographic Information Analysis

A total of 247 usable questionnaires were returned for a response rate of 82.5%. Generally, the sample characteristics were compatible with the characteristic of the population. Most of respondents are female (n = 135; 54.7%), between 26 and 39 years of age (n = 169; 68.4%), with a monthly salary ranging from 10,001 baht to 15,000 baht (n = 142; 57.5%). Their modal education is a bachelor's degree (n = 235; 95.1%).

C. Data Gathering Instrument

The questionnaire focused on type of information that newcomers believe are useful to them in mastering their job and becoming assimilated into their organization. There were 40 items in this section, covering seven types of information: technical information, referent information, social information, appraisal information, normative information, organizational information, and political information. The scale ranges from 1 to 5, by which 1 means "not very useful", 2 means "not useful', 3 means "moderately useful", 4 means "useful", and 5 means "very useful." Mean score of "low level" range from 1-2, "moderate level" is defined as a score of 3, and "high level" ranges from 4 to 5. [20] reports reliability coefficients ranging from .74 to .90 for these items. Discriminant validity is supported by the fact that within-scale correlations are almost always larger that the across-scale correlation

Reliability test was conducted for the scale to investigate the internal consistency among the items. Alpha coefficients were .9119 for types of information scale. The pretest results indicated that the type of information scale was sufficiently reliable for use in the actual study. This testing also revealed that there was no cultural differences serving to on validate the questionnaire. The translated questionnaire could be employed in Thailand.

A repeated measures analysis was performed in order to examine the usefulness of various forms of information that newcomers receive. There are seven measures analyzing seven types of information in this single group. The minimum sample size need is approximately 23 for a correlation of .50 with an effect size of .35 at an alpha level of .05 and with the seven repeated measures [21].

V. Results

The hypothesis predicted that newcomers will distinguish among the various forms of information received in terms of usefulness of that information. In a corollary to hypothesis one, it was predicted that job-focused information (technical, referent, and appraisal) will be assessed as more useful than social, normative, organizational, and/or political information. A second corollary predicted that social information will be assessed as more useful than normative, organization, and political information. The above hypothesis and its two corollary predictions were partially supported. Repeated measures analyses revealed that newcomers do make significant distinctions with respect to the perceived usefulness of the various types of information (Job, social, normative, organizational, and political) that served as a focus for this study. The multivariate analysis presented in Table I reveals that newcomer draw significant distinctions among types of information ($F_{(4,243)} = 24.127$, $p < .001$- see Table I). The mean values (see Table II) of each variable indicted that social information is the most useful type or information ($\overline{X} = 4.2065$), followed by job information ($\overline{X} = 4.1614$), political information ($\overline{X} = 4.0587$), normative information ($\overline{X} = 3.8976$), and organizational information ($\overline{X} = 3.8806$). Essentially, social, job, and political information were evaluated by newcomers as highly useful, while normative and organizational information were related as moderately useful.

Even though these means suggest that newcomers find all types of information important, repeated contrasts revealed that newcomers do fine some forms of information to be significantly more useful than other forms of information to be significantly more useful than other forms of information. Job

information is perceived to be significantly more useful for newcomers than political information ($F_{(1, 246)} = 7.114$, $p < .05$). Job information is also perceived to be significantly more useful for newcomers than organizational information ($F_{(1, 246)} = 8.895$, $p < .05$), and normative information ($F_{(1, 246)} = 63.961$, $p < .001$). Political information is perceived to be significantly more useful for newcomers than normative information ($F_{(1, 246)} = 17.933$, $p < .001$). Social and job (technical, referent, appraisal) information ($F_{(1, 246)} = 1.924$, $p > .05$) were equally useful, while normative and organizational information ($F_{(1, 246)} = .340$, $p > .05$) were found to be equally useful. Repeated contrasts for newcomers assessments of the usefulness of social information versus political information ($F_{(1, 246)} = 11.803$, $p < .05$), social information versus organizational information ($F_{(1, 246)} = 9.364$, $p < .05$), and social information versus normative information ($F_{(1, 246)} = .7192$, $p < .05$) (see Table III)

TABLE I
MULTIVARIATE TESTS FOR TYPES OF INFORMATION

Effect	F	Hypothesis Df	Error Df	Sig.	Observed Power[a]
INFOT					
Pillai's Trace	24.127	4.000	243.000	.000	1.000
Wilk's Lambda	24.127	4.000	243.000	.000	1.000
Hotelling's Trace	24.127	4.000	243.000	.000	1.000
Roy's Largest Root	24.127	4.000	243.000	.000	1.000

[a]Computer using alpha = .05
Note: INFOT = Type of Information

TABLE II
MEANS FOR TYPES OF INFORMATION

	Mean ($\overline{X}$)	Standard Deviation (SD)	N
Social	4.2065	.6780	247
Job	4.1614	.5104	247
Political	4.0587	.6170	247
Normative	3.8976	.6203	247
Organization	3.8806	.5180	247

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TABLE III
TESTS OF WITHIN-SUBJECTS REPEATED CONTRASTS FOR TYPES OF INFORMATION

Source	Transformed Variable	df	F	Sig.	Observed Power[a]
INFOT	INFOT_1	1	1.924	0.167	0.282
	INFOT_2	1	7.114	0.008	0.757
	INFOT_3	1	17.933	0.000	0.988
	INFOT_4	1	0.340	0.560	0.089
	INFOT_5	1	11.803	0.001	0.928
	INFOT_6	1	63.961	0.000	1.000
	INFOT_7	1	8.895	0.003	0.844
	INFOT_8	1	9.364	0.002	0.862
	INFOT_9	1	7.192	0.006	0.762
Error (INFOT)	INFOT_1	246			
	INFOT_2	246			
	INFOT_3	246			
	INFOT_4	246			
	INFOT_5	246			
	INFOT_6	246			
	INFOT_7	246			
	INFOT_8	246			
	INFOT_9	246			

[a]Computer using alpha = .05

Note: Transformed Variable Mean Difference of Usefulness between Two Types of Information
INFOT_1 = Mean Difference of Usefulness between Social and Job Information
INFOT_2 = Mean Difference of Usefulness between Job and Political Information
INFOT_3 = Mean Difference of Usefulness between Political and Normative Information
INFOT_4 = Mean Difference of Usefulness between Normative and Organizational Information
INFOT_5 = Mean Difference of Usefulness between Social and Political Information
INFOT_6 = Mean Difference of Usefulness between Job and Normative Information
INFOT_7 = Mean Difference of Usefulness between Job and Organizational Information
INFOT_8 = Mean Difference of Usefulness between Social and Organizational Information
INFOT_9 = Mean Difference of Usefulness between Social and Normative Information

VI. CONCLUSION

This study focused on the ways that newcomers employ various types of information as those newcomers progress through the process of organization assimilation. The subjects in this study consisted of 247 employed from Bangkok Bank, with data collection accomplished through the use of a written questionnaire. This study attempts to examine the ways that newcomers respond to and use various types of information during the process of organization assimilation. Repeated measure analyses were used to reveal the various forms of information that newcomer acknowledg receiving. The data were coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science.

Hypothesis was partially supported. Specially, newcomers indicated finding all types of information useful but were most positive in their assessments of social information. Due to the Thai society, it seems reasonable to expect that newcomers will want to have their own networks, especially when they enter to a new organization. Social information is useful in reducing uncertainty and anxiety during the assimilation process. Newcomers want to know how to get along with other people in the organization. They need information concerning the behaviors and personalities of the person with whom they work. They also need to know how to deal with politics at work, who to trust and who not to trust, how well they are fitting in, the appropriateness of their social behaviors, and how well they are getting along with co-worker. All of these needs are related to the possession of social information.

Job (technical, referent, and appraisal) information was also evaluated as useful by newcomers. Newcomers want to know how to perform specific aspects of their job, how to perform their tasks efficiently and effectively, how to balance competing demands, how much authority they have, their responsibilities, the reward criteria, and their job related goals and objectives. Newcomers need feedback concerning the adequacy of their job skills and abilities, how well they are performing their jobs, how others evaluate that performance, and their potential advancement.

The employees surveyed in this study indicated that one of the most useful types of information for them is political

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information. The importance of political knowledge has not generally been recognized in literature. Yet the results of this study suggest that an important priority for newcomers is to learn about organization politics. As [1] explained, political information is the unexpected information that newcomers need to receive.

Normative and organizational information are the least useful when compared with other types of information. That is, at least for the newcomers in this study, the history of the organization, organization politics and procedures, and even the structure of the organization are of less interest than are other categories of information (i.e., job, social, and political information). This finding might be due to employees being more concerned about their jobs and promotions rather than the history or objectives of the organization.

A. Limitation

The sample for this study was homogeneous in many respects. Although our respondents entered a variety of department within the Bank, and displayed a variety of a personal characteristics, for the purpose of generalizability a more diverse sample of newcomers might be preferred.

B. Future Research

Future research concerning newcomer information seeking might well benefit from attention to different professions and industries. Another important direction for future research would be to access the amount and quality of information that newcomer actually obtain from their information seeking efforts.

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