New Directions in Organizational Fit

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Introduction

This year the Global e-Conference on Fit has dedicated much of its space to a discussion of outline submissions for a new book that we are compiling for Wiley. The new book, entitled *New Directions in Organizational Fit*, will be a collection of chapters specifically written for this volume. We are immensely grateful for the opportunity to discuss this project at the conference and we hope that the global coverage will (1) attract interest in the project and (2) spark a debate on where our field is going. In this short paper, we outline the rationale for the book and explain the production process. During the conference we hope you join with us and discuss the chapter outlines that potential contributors have submitted.

Rationale

2007 saw the publication of the first book dedicated to the concept of organisational fit. This book, entitled *Perspectives on Organizational Fit*, was edited by noted academics in the field, Cheri Ostroff and Timothy A. Judge. It was published by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates in their Organizational Frontiers Series. The book contains contributions from many of the leading authorities in the field. The chapters explore definitional, methodological and statistical issues and the final chapter, by Timothy A Judge, pulls together a state of the art review of the topic. This summary captures the argument of the book which is towards greater methodological and definitional rigour, a move away from subjective and perceived forms of fit, a separation of research into different categories of fit, and a questioning of whether fit has any value above a more general orientation to jobs and organisations. Judge ends by saying, 'I do believe that there are some problems that are seemingly intractable. However, it is at times like this that the greatest innovations are made' (p.441). In many ways this book marks the end of the first period in organizational fit research. It marks a moment in time when fit researchers have honed their methodological approaches and gathered a large amount of data that has left them wondering, "What exactly is this thing called fit?"

We find ourselves intellectually provoked by this question, and our goal for this new book is to stimulate further conceptual progress on the topic of organizational fit. In particular, we want to use the book to encourage new research that explores: (1) how people form their impressions of fit, (2) how these evolve over time, and (3) how misfit differs as a psychological state from fit. Hence, we encourage grounded, constructivist and interpretivist approaches in addition to the positivist ones that dominate the mainly American literature (and the *Perspectives on Organizational Fit* book). And we want to explore lessons from related fields such as identity, deviance, embeddedness, belongingness and work/life balance. Importantly, we believe that fit does have a future and that to make headway we need to encourage fundamental research that re-establishes the nature and impact that people's sense of fit has on their behaviour. We hope to use our proposed book as the catalyst that will stimulate a resurgence of interest in the concept of fit.

We are also considering an "application" section to the book, in which we would encourage papers that address: 1) how fit is measured and used in organizations, as well as 2) how the subject of organizational fit might be taught to university and professional, as well as Ph.D. students.

Although we are using the term 'organizational fit' in the title of the book – because it is term that most people use to label this field – we want to consider the domain broadly and we are interested in receiving submissions any dimension of organizational fit. This includes person-job, person-team, person-culture and other forms of fit. Chapters that consider fit from a multi-level perspective are also encouraged.

More specifically, over the past year we have been identifying trends in the fit literature which are going to likely set the structure for the book. At present, these trends include, but are not limited to:

- Understanding what underlies perceptions of fit;
- Distinguishing misfit from fit;
- Looking at organizational fit within its social, economic, and religious environments;
- Exploring organizational fit in different forms of work;
- International perspectives on fit;
- Assessing the impact of organizational fit on organizations and teams;
- Assessing fit for organizational use; and,
- Longitudinal studies of fit.

Process

This is an open call that genuinely seeks new and different voices on organizational fit. This is an unusual to construct a book as most editors invite people they know, or are aware of, to contribute chapters. This traditional path has the advantage of ensuring quality and quantity. However, we feel that this is a key moment for organizational fit as it struggles to find the way ahead and scholars around the globe are engaging with the topic. We cannot possibly be aware of all the interesting work and with the support of Global e-Conference of Fit we hope to reach out and encourage submissions from a wider range of researchers than has been possible before.

As this book looks to the future, time is a crucial element in the production of the book and we hope to get it published in double-quick fashion. The following deadlines are fixed and will be adhered to. We do not want this book to come out after the 'new directions' discussed in the book have become 'old directions'! The first deadline is 1st April 2010. This is for full versions of the papers that will be reviewed and commented upon by the editors. In addition, the editors may ask subject specialists to offer their comments during this period as well. The editors are committed to returning comments to authors by the 1st June 2010.

The second deadline is for final submissions. They need to be received by 14th September 2010. The papers will be reviewed again by the two editors and hopefully make final decisions on inclusion. If we can adhere to these deadlines, the anticipated publication date is early 2011.

For the 1st April 2010 deadline: 6000-10000 word 'finished' papers should be emailed to Jon at the following email address: j.billsberry@coventry.ac.uk. Please produce your paper in Word 2003 (.doc) format (.docx format is unacceptable given the persistent problems with these attachments in email and PDF is not acceptable as they need to be styled for the conference format). Please use British English spellings (not US English), but using a 'z' in organization rather than an 's', as the book will be published by a British publisher, Wiley-Blackwell. In all other matters, please follow APA format.

Final Thoughts

We believe that the topic of organizational fit is at a crossroads. Ahead lie many different avenues. Judging but some recent comments, one of these is a *cul de sac*. However, we cannot believe this is the right road to take. We know the desire of people during recruitment and selection to find someone to work where they will fit in (and the desire of selectors to recruit people who will fit) and also the pain associated with being a misfit. Surely both of these phenomena deserve attention. We are much less certain about which of the other avenues are worth travelling down and we have a suspicion that we do not yet know what all the avenues are. We certainly do not know where they will lead.

The role of this book is twofold. First, we hope that colleagues will help to identify the various avenues that lie ahead. What are the priorities for organizational fit researchers? What should we discard and what should we develop? Second, we hope that colleagues will look at how we should travel down these avenues. How should we be defining fit? What epistemologies and methodologies should we try? We hope that this conference will be a fruitful place for our initial discussions.

Reference

Ostroff, C. and Judge, T.A. (Eds.) *Perspectives on Organizational Fit*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.