Towards a Model of the New Employment Relationship: Aligning the Needs of individual and Organization

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Abstract

Purpose: This study is based on examining and extending Noer's (1997) theoretical model of the new employment relationship.

Methodology: Case study methodology is used to scrutinise the model. The results of a literature-based survey on the elements underpinning the five values of the model were analysed from dual perspectives of individual and organization using a "Multi-source Assessment" (Brutus, Petosa, & Aucoin, 2005) instrument. An analysis of the survey data is used to create a schema to guide and inform a series of focus group discussions. The focus group population was a "disproportionate stratified sample" (Singleton, Straits, & Straits, 1993) of the organization. Using content analysis, the transcripts from the focus group discussions are evaluated using the explicit themes of the model. The transcripts are also reviewed for implicit themes. The case studied is *Flight Centre Limited*, an Australian-based international travel retail company.

Findings: Using this approach, some elements of the five values in Noer's model are identified as characteristic of the company's psychological contract. Specifically, the model's values of

Flexible Deployment, *Customer-focus*, *Performance-focus, Project-based Work*, and *Human Spirit & Work* can - to some extent - be applied in this case. A further analysis of the transcripts validates three additional values from the psychological contract literature, labelled as: *Commitment*, *Learning & Development* and *Open Information*. Consequently, the findings extend Noer's model to eight values.

Research implications/limitations: This study offers researchers a research-based model of the new employment relationship. Since generalisations from the case study findings cannot be apply directly to other settings, the opportunity to test this model in a variety of contexts is open to other researchers.

Practical implications: In practice, the research methodology used demonstrates a unique process for benchmarking the psychological contract. The method may be applied in other business settings by researchers and practitioners. By so doing, organization development professionals have a procedure for comparing an organization's dominant psychological contract with the extended model presented in this paper.

Keywords

psychological contract

employment relationship

values

multi-source assessment

focus group

Classification: research paper

1. Introduction

This paper presents a model of the new employment relationship that aligns the needs of individuals and organizations. Over the past decade or so, there has been a plethora of writing on the subject of the psychological contract, particularly in the past six years (e.g., Beaumont & Harris, 2002; Grimmer & Oddy, 2007; Guest & Conway, 2002; Maguire, 2002; Nelson & Tonks, 2007). However, much of the previous research on the employment relationship has identified what this new relationship should consist of without also examining what employees and employers actually expect (Kissler, 1994; Shore & Tetrick, 1994; Sims, 1994). So a conceptualisation of the new employment relationship from the dual perspective of employer and employee is desirable. There is an opportunity for researchers to test this model in a variety of workplace contexts. In practice, the research methodology used in this study offers organization development researchers and practitioners with a distinctive approach that can potentially be applied in other organizational settings. Through this process, an organization's psychological contract can potentially be benchmarked against the model presented in this paper.

There are several factors that make this study relevant. Firstly, the changing individual and organizational paradigms (Simonsen, 1997) over the last 25 years bring into sharper focus the concept of the psychological contract. Since the downsizing movement in the 1980s the needs of organizations and workers and their expectations of each other have changed significantly. This has put a considerable strain on the traditional psychological contract.

Accordingly, here has been an explosion of interest in the changing psychological contract. Secondly, since most of the research in the past has emphasised the employee and contract violations, there is a need for more studies examining both the employee and employer perspectives. A dual viewpoint promises to shed light on issues of aligning the changing needs of employer and employee. Thirdly, from the perspective of leadership and organization development, a model that offers a conceptual framework of the new psychological contract is potentially useful for both researchers and practitioners. It is for these three reasons that Noer's (1997) "New Worker-Organization Co-dependency Model" model is investigated by applying it to an organizational case.

2. Literature Review

Despite the need for new conceptualisations of the changing employment relationship, there has been, until recently, a lack of credible research in applying new models in the workplace. Noer's (1997) model is one of the few theoretical models cited in the literature that conceptualises some of the values of the new psychological contract from the dual perspective of employee and employer. Table 1 below is an adaption of Noer's model.

Table 1 The New Worker-Organization Co-dependency Model

Individual	Value	Organization
Work in more than one organizational setting.	*Flexible Deployment*	Encourage workers to work in other organizations.
Serve the customer not your manager.	*Customer-focus*	Insist on an external focus.
Focus on what you do, not where you work.	*Performance-focus on Performance*	Link rewards and benefits with performance rather than organizational dependency.
Accept and embrace yourself as a temporary employee.	*Project-based Work*	Focus is short-term and project-related.
Find work that is stimulating.	*Human Spirit & Work*	Provide work that is stimulating.

SOURCE: Noer, D.M. (1997). *Breaking free: A prescription for personal and organizational change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, p. 214.

Underpinning the difference between the changing individual (employee) and organization (employer) mind-set is a different psychological contract (Simonsen, 1997). Pate and Malone (2000) define the psychological contract as an individual's perceptions of the employment relationship. More specifically, Noe (1999, p. 290) states that "a psychological contract is the expectation that employers and employees have about each other". According to Pate and Malone (2000), psychological contract breach occurs when employees believe that the organization has failed to deliver its promises or obligations. Guest (1998) argues that the psychological contract was originally devised as a heuristic device and not as a serious analytical construct. Nevertheless, it can be interpreted that the burgeoning interest in the concept is an endorsement of its high face validity (Marks, 2000).

Studies of the psychological contract have focused mostly on contract violations (e.g., Beaumont & Harris, 2002; Grimmer & Oddy, 2007; Llewellyn, 2001; Nelson & Tonks, 2007; Pate & Malone; 2000). Other studies have examined the relationship between job security, career development and the psychological contract (Atkinson, 2002; Lankhuijzen, Stavenga de Jong, Thijssen, 2006). Some studies have tested theoretical models of the psychological contract (Schalk & Roe, 2007); others have looked at marketplace changes and their impact on the psychological contract (Cassar, 2001; Pavlou & Gefen, 2005). Most of the recent studies have focused on employee attitudes to the psychological contract (Jordan, Schraeder, & Armenakis, 2007; Nelson & Tonks, 2007; Pate, Martin, & McGoldrick, 2003; Schalk & Freese, 2007). However, a few researchers have studied managers' perspective about the psychological contract and redress the imbalance (e.g., Shore, Bommer, & Shore, 2008; Tekleab & Taylor, 2003).

Research has predominantly focused on employees' views and has largely neglected the organizational perspective and the management of the psychological contract (Guest & Conway, 2002). This disproportionate emphasis has been remedied to some extent. For example, Guest and Conway's (2002) research, based on a survey of 1,306 senior Human Resource (HR) managers, explored the management of the psychological contract and in particular the role of organizational communication. Three distinct and relevant aspects of organizational communication were identified, concerned with initial entry, day-to-day work and more future-oriented top-down communication. By examining and extending Noer's model will continue to address the imbalance in the literature by investigating the psychological contract from the twin perspective of the employee and employer.

3. Methodology

3.1 Selected Case

The selected case was *Flight Centre Limited* (FCL), written up in the early part of the decade as a "high performance workplace" (Blake, 2001; Hewitt, 2001). FCL is an Australian-based international travel retailer, specialising in the sale of discount international airfares, holiday packages and domestic travel operating in the United States, Great Britain, South Africa, Canada and New Zealand.

3.2 Survey Structure

Using Noer's five values (see Table 1); the researcher reviewed the relevant literatures to identify some of the elements associated with each of these values. The outcome of this appraisal was the development of an on-line survey instrument. There were 50 statements in the survey, 10 representing each of the five values in Noer's model, in random order, without identifying which value they relate to. Table 2 below is a sample of the evidence guide for 10 of the 50 statements representing the value of *Customer-focus*.

Table 2 Sample of Evidence Guide

Individual Accountability	Survey Statements for the Indivdual	Elements of Customer-focus	Organization Accountability	Survey Statements for the Organization
Evidence of individuals who have received incentives for customer focus	• I am aware of a reward system for quality customer service • I am aware of examples of good customer service being rewarded	Provision of reward systems (Berry, Parasuraman, & Zeithaml, 1988; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985)	Evidence of an incentive scheme linked to customer focus	• There is a reward system in place for quality customer service • The organization has a reward system for good customer service
Evidence of attendance at courses to enhance customer service skills	• I find the customer service training programs very useful • I willingly attend customer service training programs	Development of new skills (Homburg, Workman, & Jensen, 2000)	Evidence of the provision of customer service training	• Customer service training programs are very useful • Employees are generally willing to attend customer service training programs
Evidence of role clarity	• I am very clear about my role in servicing internal or external customers • My manager spends time with me to clarify my role in servicing internal or external customers • I am generally unsure of where and when to display initiative when dealing with customers (N)	Overcoming role conflict (Adams, 1976; Bandura, 1977; Chebat & Kollias, 2000; Friedman & Podolny, 1992)	Evidence of policies to overcome role conflict	• Staff are generally clear about their role in servicing internal or external customers • I spend time with employees to clarify their role in servicing internal or external customers • Staff are generally unsure of where and when to display initiative when dealing with customers (N)
Evidence of utilising CRM system to enhance customer focus	• I believe our CRM system is a great asset in servicing the needs of customers • I find the CRM system is easy to use • I think our CRM system is not as effective as it could be (N)	CRM systems (Blodgett, 2000; Brighton, 2000; Brocklebank, 2000; Ulrich, 2000)	Evidence of the implementation of a CRM system	• I believe our CRM system is a great asset in servicing the needs of customers • The implementation of the CRM system is easy to use • I think our CRM system is not as effective as it could be (N)

Table 2 above displays four elements linked to the value of *Customer-focus* (see middle column). The individual and organization accountability for each of these elements are shown in the first and fourth columns. Two statements for each accountability were then created (see columns two and five). There are two statements representing each element. The final two elements to make up the 10 statements comprise two negatively worded statements, represented with an (N). In sum, the structure of the survey balances values, individual and organization accountabilities, associated elements, and positive and negatively worded statements.

In responding to each statement, participants were given three options: *Agree*, *Disagree*, or *Neither* agree or disagree with each statement.

All organizational members were given the opportunity to be sampled.

3.3 Survey Data Analysis

Responses from the survey were sorted into three organizational strata: Top Management (*TopMgt*), Middle Management (*MidMgt*), and Workers (*Workforce*). *TopMgt* were defined as senior managers who report directly to the Chief Executive Officer and *Workforce* were defined as those employees without any line management responsibility. The *MidMgt* strata included everyone else who did not fit these definitions.

To sort the data into three perspectives, a “Multi-source Assessment” (MSA) (Brutus, Petosa, & Aucoin, 2005) instrument was used that is referred to as the *Holistic Imaging Profiling SYStem* (HIPSYS) (see Christie, 2005). The HIPSYS uses both graphical and descriptive statistical representation to illustrate the degree of congruence between the three organizational perspectives. Profiles from the HIPSYS do not explain the reason for congruence (or incongruence) between three perspectives; they merely show the degree of similarity or dissimilarity. The HIPSYS analysis provided the basis for developing a schema for a series of focus group discussions.

3.4 Focus Group Schema

Ideally, the HIPSYS analysis of all 50 items would be discussed by the focus groups. But in reality, this was likely to take too much time and place an unreasonable strain on organizational resources. Three criteria were therefore used to prioritise the data from the HIPSYS report.

The first criterion for selection was to ensure that there was an even representation of the five values in Noer's model. Consequently, two items representing each value were chosen from the HIPSYS report. Balancing individual and organization accountabilities was the basis for the second criterion. An individual and organization accountability was selected to represent each value. One "polar example" (see Eisenhardt, 1999) for the individual and organization accountability is the third criterion for inclusion in the schema. In other words, the survey result with the greatest statistical aggregate congruence (this includes either positive or negative congruence) between the three perspectives was identified[1]. And one item with the greatest statistical aggregate incongruence was selected. Both of these results were chosen

[1] Positive congruence is defined as a favourable aggregate response to a survey statement from all three perspectives, i.e., collectively there is agreement that an element of the corresponding value is applicable in the organization. Negative congruence is defined as an unfavourable aggregate response between the three organizational strata, i.e., collectively there is disagreement that an element of the corresponding value is not applicable in the organization. Positive and negative congruence may provide some preliminary evidence of that element's application in the case.

using the statistical representations in the HIPSYS report. To illustrate, Table 3 below shows the two polar examples from the HIPSYS report representing the value of *Performance-focus*.

Table 3 Example of Polar Responses

Value	Corresponding Element	Individual Accountability	Corresponding Element	Organization Accountability
Performance-focus	Team role (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997; Motowidlo, Borman & Schmit; Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994; Welbourne & Gomez-Mejia, 1995; Welbourne, Johnson, & Erez, 1998)	Q21 Good teamwork is common practice in this organization. *TopMgt*: Agree: 100% *MidMgt*: Agree: 100% *Workers*: Agree: 91%	Innovator (Schein, 1980; Welbourne et al., 1998)	Q24 Employees are rewarded for suggesting new and improved ways for the business to be more efficient and effective *TopMgt*: Agree: 75% *MidMgt*: Disagree: 50% *Workers*: Neither

Table 3 above illustrates the aggregate statistical responses for the two selected statements representing the value of *Performance-focus*. Q.21 was selected because it had the greatest statistical positive congruence between *TopMgt*, *MidMgt* and *Workforce*. Since this was an individual accountability, the organization accountability selected was the most incongruent (inconsistent) response. In other words, the aggregate outcome for *TopMgt*, *MidMgt*, and *Workforce* was *Agree* (75%), *Disagree* (50%), and *Neither Agree or Disagree* respectively.

The justification for this polar selection condition is based on identifying the two most acute cases to counterbalance and arguably broaden the range of representation for each value in the model. In sum, the selection of the 10 statements from the HIPSYS report is based upon balancing values, accountabilities, and elements.

3.5 Focus Group Discussions

Data from the HIPSYS report were triangulated using the focus group method. In other words, focus groups were used as a means of interrogating the MSA data. In keeping with a widely accepted guideline of “homogeneous” groupings (Morgan, 1992; Powell & Single, 1996; Stevens, 1996) for focus group composition, using a disproportionate stratified sample (Singleton, Straits, & Straits, 1993), the researcher met separately with representative volunteers from each stratum. The sizes of each group reflected there proportion of the total organizational population, that is, *TopMgt* (6 participants), *MidMgt* (12 participants) and *Workforce* (18 participants).

Three key questions dominated the structured focus group discussions:

1. From your perspective in the organization, are there factors within the company that may have contributed to the result in the survey analysis?
2. Are there practical examples you can offer that support these factors?
3. If so, what are they?

3.6 Focus Group Analysis

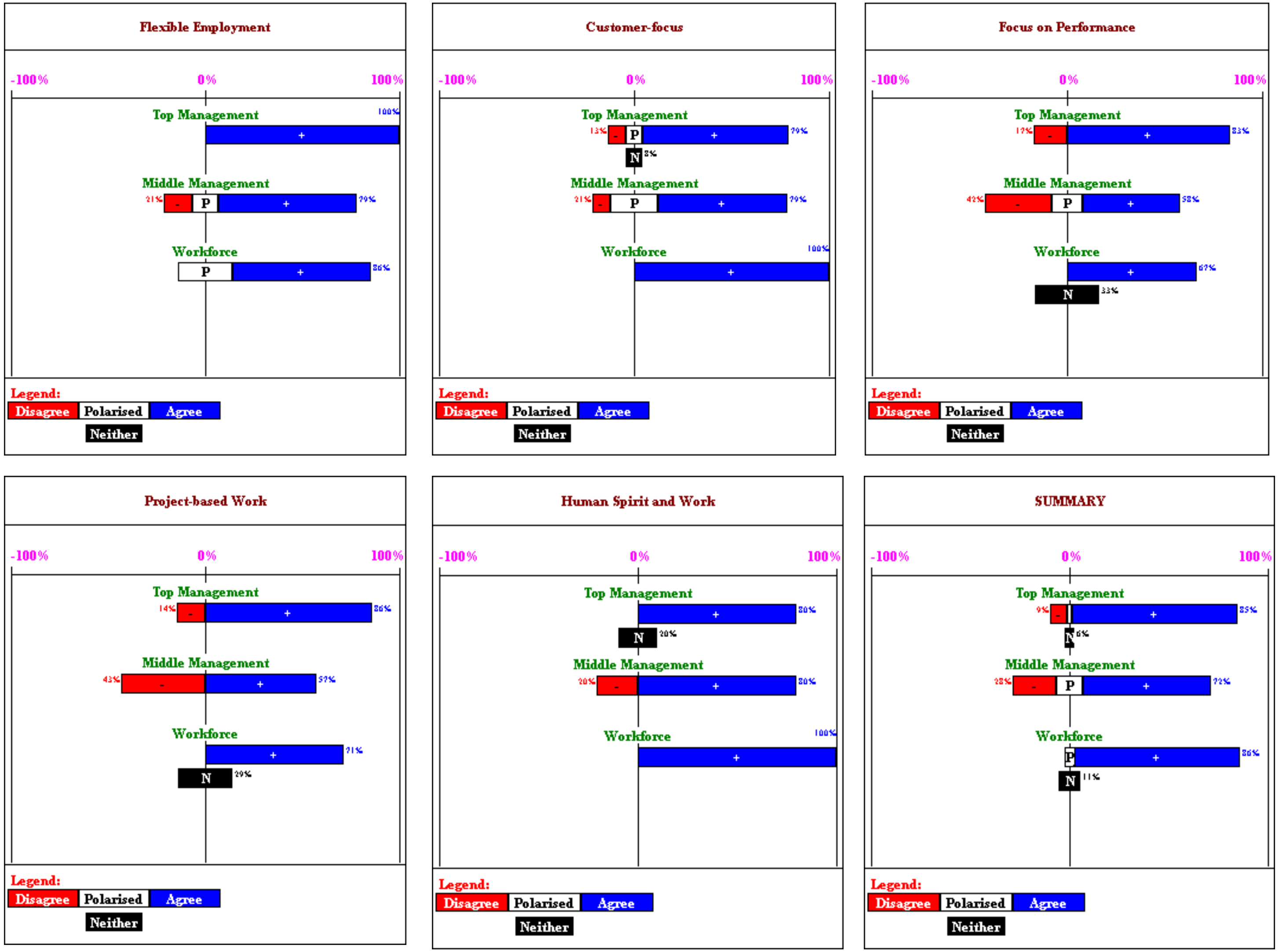
Content analysis strategies (Patton, 1990) were used to examine the transcripts from the focus group sessions with the assistance of *NUD*IST Vivo* software. The selection and definition of structured content categories applied to the transcripts came from the values of *Flexible Employment, Customer-focus*, *Focus on Performance*, *Project-based Work* and *Human Spirit & Work* and their associated elements.

As well as analysing the transcripts using structured theoretical categories, emerging themes were also investigated. The analytical method for discovering emerging themes in the transcripts was based on using a “constant comparative analysis” (as described by Morse & Field, 1996) between the three focus group transcripts. The researcher read through the data looking for work-based illustrations of elements of Noer’s model and compared these examples across all three perspectives. The system of enumeration for thematic analysis was frequency counts.

4. Findings

Figure 1 below illustrates a summary of the survey analysis in histogram format for each of the five values in the model.

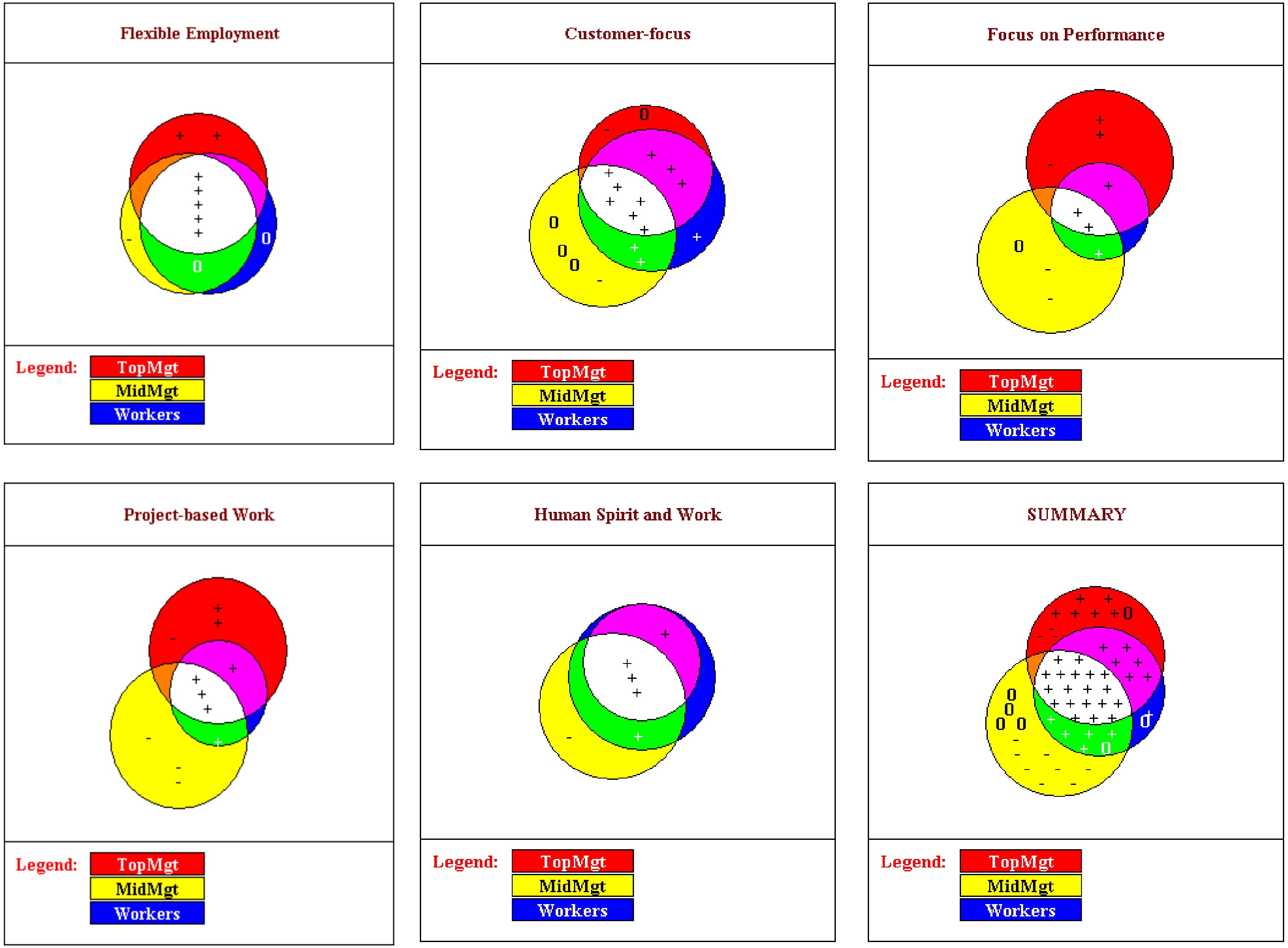
Figure 1 Histogram Representations



The six histograms in Figure 1 above show the aggregate percentage of *Agree* (blue bars), *Disagree* (red bars) and *Neither* (black bar) responses for each value in the model from the three perspectives. In the bottom right-hand corner is the summary histogram that illustrates the overall aggregate results of the survey incorporating all five values by the three perspectives. These histogram representations are useful for two reasons. Firstly, they provide an illustrative overview of *Agree*/*Disagree* ratio for each value. Secondly, the displays show the degree of congruence between the three perspectives for each value. Figure 1 serves as a useful starting point in summarising the MSA data by providing an overview of the degree of congruence between the three perspectives across the five values.

Figure 2 below is the Venn diagram representations of the survey results for the five values.

Figure 2 Venn Diagram Representations



The summary display in Figure 2 above is the same data as in Figure 1 represented differently. The Venn diagram representations show where the aggregate congruence and incongruence occurs in the three perspectives for each of the five values in the model. (+) illustrate aggregate positive responses to a survey statement. (-) illustrate aggregate negative responses to a survey statement. (o) Illustrate aggregate polarised responses to a survey statement, that is, an equal number of *Agree* and *Disagree* responses. The diameter of a circle shrinks by 10% when an aggregate *Neither* response is recorded. For example, the diameter of the *Workforce* response (blue circle) for the value of *Project-based Work* is significantly smaller that the other two circles. In short, the Venn diagram representation illustrates the specific nature of congruence between the three organizational perspectives.

Table 4 below is a summary of the aggregate statistical representations for the 10 items prioritised for the focus group schema.

Table 4 Aggregate Statistical Representations

Value	Aggregate Congruent Responses	Aggregate Incongruence Responses
Flexible Employment	Q6 Employees are generally motivated to upgrade and expand their job skills. *TopMgt*: Agree: 75% *MidMgt*: Agree: 75% *Workforce*: Agree: 100%	Q7 Employees have opportunities to rotate and sample different jobs to acquire new skills. *TopMgt*: Agree: 50% *MidMgt*: Polarised *Workforce*: Polarised
Customer-focus	Q17 I find the CRM system is easy to use. *TopMgt*: Agree: 75% *MidMgt*: Agree: 75% *Workforce*: Agree: 100%	Q15 Staff are generally clear about their role in servicing internal or external customers. *TopMgt*: Disagree: 75% *MidMgt*: Agree: 50% *Workforce*: Agree: 55%
Performance-focus	Q21 Good teamwork is common practice in this organization. *TopMgt*: Agree: 100% *MidMgt*: Agree: 100% *Workforce*: Agree: 91%	Q24 Employees are rewarded for suggesting new and improved ways for the business to be more efficient and effective. *TopMgt*: Agree: 75% *MidMgt*: Disagree: 50% *Workforce*: Neither
Project-based Work	Q29 Management generally encourages the shop teams to seek out advice and resources on a needs basis. *TopMgt*: Agree: 100% *MidMgt*: Agree: 75% *Workforce*: Agree: 100%	Q26 The shop teams are self-sufficient in forecasting new business and managing their own technical and human resources. *TopMgt*: Agree: 75% *MidMgt*: Disagree: 50% *Workforce*: Neither
Human Spirit & Work	Q36 Most employees find their work meaningful. *TopMgt:* Agree: 75% *MidMgt:* Agree: 100% *Workforce*: Agree: 100%	Q33 Management makes it a priority to provide employees with good working conditions. *TopMgt*: Neither *MidMgt*: Agree: 100% *Workforce*: Agree: 82%

The display in Table 4 demonstrates that the selection of items for the focus group schema was based on balancing congruent and incongruent survey results. For example, the responses to the five survey items on the left (Q 6, 17, 21, 29 and 36) display the highest positive congruence in percentage terms for their respective values. In contrast, the five items on the right (Q 7, 15, 24, 26, and 33) show five responses with the most incongruent responses for the corresponding value. The items for further analysis were selected based on the criteria outlined in Section 3.4.

Table 5 is the schema based on the selection of the 10 issues in Table 4 used for the focus group interviews.

Table 5 Focus Group Schema

Issue No.	Survey No.	Value	Survey Statement	Accountability	Polar MSA Results
1	7	*Flexible Deployment*	Employees have opportunities to rotate and sample different jobs to acquire new skills.	Organization	Incongruence
2	6		Employees are generally motivated to upgrade and expand their job skills.	Individual	Congruence
3	17	*Customer-focus*	I find the CRM system is easy to use.	Individual	Congruence
4	15		Staff are generally clear about their role in servicing internal or external customers.	Organization	Incongruence
5	24	*Performance-focus*	Employees are rewarded for suggesting new and improved ways for the business to be more efficient and effective.	Organization	Incongruence
6	21		Good teamwork is common practice in this organization.	Individual	Congruence
7	26	*Project-based Work*	The shop teams are self-sufficient in forecasting new business and managing their own technical and human resources.	Individual	Incongruence
8	29		Management generally encourages the shop teams to seek out advice and resources on a needs basis.	Organization	Congruence
9	36	*Human Spirit & Work*	Most employees find their work meaningful.	Individual	Congruence
10	33		Management makes it a priority to provide employees with good working conditions.	Organization	Incongruence

This schema illustrated in Table 5 above provided an appropriate mix of structure and balance to the focus group discussions.

Table 6 below contains a summary of the structured and emerging themes from the content analysis of the transcripts of the three focus group discussions.

Value – *Flexible Deployment*	
Issue 1	Employees have opportunities to rotate and sample different jobs to acquire new skills. • *Rotation and Sampling of Job Tasks at the Store Level* • *Limited Scope to Rotate and Sample Job Roles Beyond the Shop Environment* • *The Mutual Benefits of Rotating and Sampling Job Roles for the Organization and the Individual*
Issue 2	Employees are generally motivated to upgrade and expand their job skills. • *Recruitment and Selection Process* • *Strong Learning and Development Culture* • *The Nature of the Work* • *Linkage between Learning and Development Activities and Job Skills* • *Distinction between Upgrading and Expanding Job Skills*
Value – *Customer-focus*	
Issue 3	I find the CRM system is easy to use. • *The Regular Use of Organizational Support Structures* • *Quality of Organizational Support is Dependent on the Customer Workers Communicating their Support Needs* • *The Need for the Organization to Inform Where and How Information May be Accessed*
Issue 4	Staff are generally clear about their role in servicing internal or external customers. • *FCL Support Measures to Manage Conflict* • *Conflicting Priorities for Customer Workers* • *External Challenges for Customer Workers* • *Customer-focussed Support Conceptualised as a Two-way Process* • *Organizational Support Conceptualised as Emotional as Well as Systemic*
Value – *Performance-focus*	
Issue 5	Employees are rewarded for suggesting new and improved ways for the business to be more efficient and effective. • *Lack of Formal Recognition for Innovation Throughout the Organization* • *Innovation in the Stores* • *A Culture of Resisting Change*

Issue 6	Good teamwork is common practice in this organization. • *Performance Incentives Favour Individual Achievement* • *Individual-based Incentives Mitigated Against Teamwork* • *The Impact of Personality on Teamwork*

Table 6 Summary of Structured and Emerging Themes

	Value – *Project-based Work*
Issue 7	The shop teams are self-sufficient in forecasting new business and managing their own technical and human resources. • *Sufficient Autonomy* • *Insufficient Autonomy* • *A Balance Between Freedom and Control*
Issue 8	Management generally encourages the shop teams to seek out advice and resources on a needs basis. • *Store Teams Pay Fees for Support and Advice* • *Accessibility of Support* • *Management Support Linked to Performance*
	Value – *Human Spirit & Work*
Issue 9	Most employees find their work meaningful. • *"Selling People's Dreams"* • *Growing and Developing as a Person* • *Employee Benefits* • *Respect from Other People*
Issue 10	Management makes it a priority to provide employees with good working conditions. • *Work/home Balance* • *Physical and Technical Working Conditions* • *Emotional Support*
	Emerging Themes
	• *Commitment* • *Learning & Development* • *Open Information*

Table 6 above shows the five structured themes from Noer's model. Next to each of the 10 issues represented in the focus group schema are the implicit themes from the content analysis in sequential order of reporting. The three emerging themes are listed at the end of the table. Table 6 serves as a basis for the discussion of these research findings in the next section.

5. Discussion

It is acknowledged that there is considerable inter-relationship between the themes and issues. However, for ease of reference, the following discussion is organized around the structured and emerging themes represented in Table 6.

5.1 Flexible Deployment

Flexible employment practices can benefit the progressive worker by assisting them to enhance their employability within and outside the organization. The organization also benefits by becoming more manoeuvrable in the marketplace (Wiens-Tuers & Hill, 2002). The motivation and willingness of workers to multi-skill is an important factor in the success of flexible work practices (Greene, 2000). There are several indicators from the transcripts that workers were motivated to upgrade and expand their job skills (Issue 2, Table 6). Several themes support this claim.

There was a strong perception that FCL's recruitment and selection processes were a major contributing factor in creating a workplace culture where employees were motivated to upgrade and expand their job skills. One of the selection criteria at FCL is that individuals have a university degree. There is evidence of a causal relationship between high levels of education and the ability to adjust to new situations (Carnoy, 1998). In an organizational context, this translates to learning new tasks and adopting new methods of performing old tasks. The research findings from this study suggest that training, information sharing, and a degree of autonomy in decision making is evident in the retail outlets. However, it would be a generalisation to suggest that these characteristics exist beyond the stores.

The multi-faceted nature of work in the travel industry was another factor research participants claimed contributed to high motivational needs to constantly upgrade skill levels. Learning and development opportunities available within FCL are generally perceived by participants as closely linked to the functional duties of workers. It could therefore be argued that the evolving nature of the travel industry is well suited to the dual benefits of flexible employment practices for the individual and organization.

Some research participants made the distinction between upgrading and expanding job skills. Moreover, the general perception was that FCL provided employees with opportunities to upgrade their current job skills, but little opportunity to expand them. In other words, there was an emphasis on providing workers with the opportunity to advance their skills within the confines of their current role at FCL. However, outside the bounds of the retail store environment, employees were not given learning and development opportunities to expand their role. It is therefore understandable that the analysis of the survey data was inconclusive on the issue of whether FCL provided employees with opportunities to rotate and sample different jobs to acquire new skills (Issue 1, Table 6).

5.2 Customer-focus

The findings suggest that customer workers generally did use with ease customer and product information to service the needs of customers (Issue 3, Table 6). For instance, airfare coordinators, although they are not always immediately reachable, were acknowledged in the findings as well utilised by the retail stores when they had challenging airfare inquiries from customers. By utilising the expertise of these airfare coordinators, customer workers exhibited a commitment to using available organizational support structures.

However, it was not clear from the findings whether the primary motivation of customer workers for frequently using the support of airfare coordinators was to serve the customer's needs or comply with FCL's regulatory airfare requirements (Issue 4, Table 6). Put another way: Is the predominant reason for seeking out the airfare coordinator to resolve an airfare inquiry to provide quality serve for a customer? Or is their motive to obtain organizational backup for what may be perceived by the customer worker as a difficult customer request? This motive would imply an inclination to serve the organization's concerns ahead of the customer's, the antithesis of Noer's individual response to the value of *Customer-focus*. Customer workers can be put into a position of role conflict between the competing forces of the organization and the customer (Heiss, 1990; Katz & Khan, 1966; Merton, 1968).

Participants also indicated that the quality of organizational support was dependent on the customer worker communicating their needs. There was a perception that adequate information sources were available - if not always accessible - and that a certain amount of responsibility to use these sources rested with customer worker initiative. Globalisation will continue to put pressure on organizational support structures for customer workers (Bathie & Sarkar, 2002; Sebastianelli & Nabil Tamimi, 2003; Wright, 2002). This continuing pressure is likely to place more onus of responsibility on customer workers to communicate their customer dilemmas so that the organization may be able to respond with the appropriate support. In other words, the ability of an organization to be customer-focused is likely to be increasingly dependent on customer workers being accountable for communicating their support needs to management.

5.3 Performance-focus

The research findings demonstrate that there is a widely-held perception that good teamwork was common practice within FCL (Issue 6, Table 6). Despite this, FCL favours individual performance over team accomplishment. While team-based incentives are generally becoming more commonplace in the workplace (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997), the main criterion for pay-for-performance continues to be individual performance (Sturman, Trevor, Boudreau & Gerhart, 2003). Organizational leaders are placing an increasing value and importance on teamwork as an integral performance indicator (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997). Teamwork has been identified in the literature as an important dimension of contextual work performance (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997; Campbell, 2000; Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994). These pay systems can encourage inter- and intra-team cooperation (Welbourne & Gomez-Mejia, 1995). It is likely therefore that organizations are being challenged to amend this imbalance of individual over team performance in their pay and incentive systems.

There was however some suggestion that teamwork was more commonplace in the retail stores than elsewhere in FCL. The value of cross-functional cooperation is likely to be more relevant with the pressure to generate new knowledge within the organization (Sinkula, 1994; Slater & Narver, 1995); to share information (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Narver & Slater, 1990); and to be more market responsive (Achrol, 1991). Conversely, the costs of not focusing on organizational behaviour that generates, shares, and responds to new knowledge across functional boundaries are likely to be increasingly high for companies that reinforce individual performance over team performance.

There was no evidence to suggest that FCL has a performance incentives system in place to reward employees who contribute new and improved ways for the business to be more efficient and effectiive (Issue 5, Table 6). Nonetheless, there were claims made by participants that innovative activity did occur quite frequently in the retail stores. These improvements originating in the retail stores were evidently not being communicated throughout FCL, including other retail stores. This lack of cross-functional communication is likely to mitigate against the need to create new knowledge within the organization (Sinkula, 1994; Slater & Narver, 1995), to share information across functional boundaries (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Narver & Slater, 1990), and to respond more rapidly to changes in the market.

5.4 Project-based Work

Data from the findings were inconclusive on the issue of whether store teams were self-sufficient in forecasting new business and managing their technical and human resources

(Issue 7, Table 6). Nonetheless, there was agreement between the individual and organizational perspectives on the requirement to manage the balance between corporate control (functional-based) and team autonomy (project-based) within the realm of forecasting new business and administering resources.

The majority of the *TopMgt* sample (75%) perceived the store teams as having sufficient autonomy to make decisions in the area of forecasting new business and administering technical and human resources. For instance, one *TopMgt* participant indicated that the store teams were free to collaborate with their shopping centre management to advertise and market their FCL store services. In contrast, there was minimal support from the individual perspective for the notion that the store teams had sufficient autonomy to make their own decisions (see Table 4). For example, a worker recounted a time when he needed to refurbish his retail store. The team in the store decided on purchasing flat screen monitors to maximise space. However, the store was over-ruled by management who indicated to the team that the desire to have all the stores looking identical was the reason. While branding and imaging are an important part of marketing, this example is likely to create a perception in the minds of workers that they are overly dependent on management to make decisions on their behalf.

The data from the individual and organizational perspectives was positively congruent on the issue of management encouraging store teams to seek out advice and resources on a needs basis (Issue 8, Table 6). The finding may be an indication that “boundary spanning” (Yan & Louis, 1999) is occurring at the retail team level. Boundary spanning is an externally-focused set of team behaviours to seek support outside the team environment to sustain and enhance their team’s identity and progress. FCL actively promoted specialist advice and resources to the stores through this fee-for-service arrangement. This ready access to support measures was readily utilised by store teams. These instances involved boundary spanning behaviours as bargaining and negotiation for resources, contracting and cooperation with various business units, and alliance and coalition building with other sections of the business (Scott, 1992). Boundary spanning activity in teams is characteristic of organizations that encourage project-based work as distinct from function-based work.

5.5 Human Spirit & Work

The data provided three different interpretations of what constitutes ‘good working conditions’ (Issue 10, Table 6). Balancing work and home responsibilities was one way workers conceptualised the quality of their working conditions. As an illustration, workers cited long working hours in the travel industry and the attendance at compulsory evening meetings, known as ‘Buzz Nights’ as an unsatisfactory characteristic of their work environment. These *Buzz Nights* are planned to ‘reward’ the performance of workers who achieve their sales targets. But the workers interviewed perceived these functions as an imposition on their ‘own’ time. Further, they viewed these functions - outside regular working hours - as a factor that lessens the quality of their working conditions. Research in work-life balance provides lots of similar examples across all occupations where employees are suffering both personally and in their family life from working too long hours (Shorthose, 2004). These findings reinforce the need to reduce work time rather than re-balancing personal and work priorities within companies (Beck, 2000; Gorz, 1999; Hayden, 1999).

Another way that working conditions were conceptualised by participants was through the physical and technical work conditions. Isaksen's (2000) research suggests that upgrading and enhancing the physical and technical resources of an organization may not necessarily improve the significance workers gained from their work. On the other hand, according to Isaksen, neglecting physical work conditions may adversely affect the meaning workers gain from their work.

A third way working conditions were conceptualised was through emotional support. More specifically, emotional support was defined by participants as the feeling of comfort in coming to work, the approachability of team leaders, and the compatibility of colleagues. These notions perhaps suggest that the psychological well-being of workers in their interactions with others they work in close contact with is an important aspect of working conditions.

There was a high degree of positive congruence between the individual and organizational perspectives on the issue of whether most employees found their work meaningful (Issue 9, Table 6). One explanation for this in the focus group discussions was the satisfaction several participants derived from providing good service to customers. Moreover, several participants spoke of their personal experiences in dealing with satisfied customers and how this positively influenced their own perception of their work. A second interpretation of why workers generally found their work meaningful was their personal growth and development. As indicated earlier, the development of personal capacities has the potential to assist employees to be more employable in the wider marketplace. A third explanation was the range of employee benefits workers had access to at FCL provided a sense of meaning. Specifically, participants cited the chance to travel, the opportunity to purchase shares, and access to health and financial advisors as significant work benefits. Employee benefits have been recognised in the literature as an important dimension in potentially enhancing the well-being of workers (Burton & Fairris, 1999). A fourth way workers found meaning in their work was from the respect they received from work colleagues and the wider community. For example, within the bounds of the organization, one participant described FCL as a “real community” in the sense that colleagues generally displayed an interest in how each other was performing. These four interpretations reinforce the diverse ways people derive meaning from their organizational work.

5.6 Emerging Themes

Noer’s model has been extended to include three additional values labelled as: *Commitment*; *Learning & Development*; and *Open Information.* These concepts are mentioned in the literature on the new psychological contract (see Boswell, Moynihan, Roehling & Cavanaugh, 2001). There references in the transcripts are therefore consistent with other research. So these three themes have been cross-referenced with recent literature to seek some face validity. Furthermore, evidence of some application of these three themes in the case studied reinforces Boswell et al.'s (2001) claim for including these values in their model of the new psychological contract.

5.6.1 Commitment

Research suggests that when employees perceive support from their employer, they are likely to feel an obligation to the organization and demonstrate their own commitment by working to achieve organizational outcomes (Eisenberger, Fasolo & Davis-La Mastro, 1990; Shore & Wayne, 1993; Wayne, Shore & Liden, 1997). Concepts such as employability, continuous learning, flexibility and independence are now more relevant to contemporary workers than job security, qualifications, predictability and organizational dependence (Simonsen, 1997). In short, the concept of organizational loyalty has been replaced by organizational commitment in the evolving psychological contract.

The literature suggests that the opportunity to be more employable (Feldman, 2000) and to have flexible work practices to assist in balancing work and home responsibilities (Stephens & Feldman, 1997) are two areas that can impact on generating organizational commitment from workers. Several workers in their focus group felt a sense of - what Meyer and Allen (1991) refer to as “normative commitment” to FCL - based on the opportunity to learn organizationally-sponsored skills that could be beneficial for their careers. These workers felt a sense of reciprocal obligation to FCL to assist the company to achieve their business outcomes.

In contrast, several workers in the focus groups raised what they perceived to be a lack of consideration by FCL for them to balance work and home responsibilities (see 5.5 Human Spirit & Work). Various researchers foresee organizations implementing strategies to overcome conflict between work and home as a means of retaining their core employees (e.g., Capelli, 2000; Hochschild, 1997; Stephens & Feldman, 1997). It is only relatively recently that a significant number of employees are beginning to define career success in terms of work/home balance rather than hierarchical rank (Stephens & Feldman, 1997). In light of these research findings, FCL’s management (and other companies) would do well to investigate the broad range of issues associated with balancing work and home responsibilities for their employees. This may lead to the implementation of some flexible and sustainable conditions and practices thereby creating the organizational environment to enhance workers' commitment to achieve commercial outcomes.

5.6.2 Learning & Development

An analysis of the transcripts demonstrates that operational learning and development initiatives crossover all five values of Noer's model. Aside from procedural Human Resource Development (HRD) strategies, a company's overarching philosophical approach to learning and development is an important consideration. An organization's approach to HRD can explicate the assumptions managers have about employees. An insight into the assumptions managers have about people may shed some light on the nature of the current psychological contract. For this reason, Noer's model has been extended to include the value of *Learning & Development*.

There are three predominant philosophical approaches to HRD in the literature. The method commonly adopted in most organizations is the "production-centred approach" (Kuchinke, 1999; Maitland, 1994; Rummler & Brache, 1990; Stryker & Statham, 1985). A company adopting this approach is motivated primarily to develop employees' current job skills to directly improve overall production and productivity. The research findings in this study indicate that FCL's learning and development philosophy is overwhelmingly characteristic of this production-centred approach. For instance, according to one research participant, the perceived relevance of training and development opportunities are evaluated on the basis of whether training would immediately translate into a more productive output. Moreover, several participants across the three perspectives viewed FCL learning and development programmes as predominantly assisting them to complete their organizational task more efficiently or effectively.

A second philosophical perspective on learning and development is the "person-centred approach" (Aktouf, 1992; Barrie & Pace, 1999; Berger & Luckman, 1966; Elliott, 2000; Fisher & Torbert, 1995; Nader, 1984). The emphasis of this approach is on the development of self. In other words, a person-centred approach is based on the personal development of employees. A third school of HRD thinking is referred to as the "principled problem solving approach" (Anderson, 1995; Argyris, 1964; Bandura, 1997; Kincheloe, 1995; Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972; Lawler, 1992; Lawler et al., 1995; Watkins & Marsick, 1993). The focus of this approach is on the development of employees to problem solve. As a consequence of superior problem solving capacities, the employee's ability to make more effective decisions on-the-job is potentially enhanced.

An eclectic approach that emphasises the dimensions of the three approaches, namely, individual, organization and situation is likely to benefit both entities in the employment relationship. A multi-dimensional approach to HRD has more scope to meet the growth needs of workers and also assist in contributing to organizational goals. This multi-dimensional framework can potentially enhance the legitimacy of the corporate HRD function within a company by broadening its range of strategies. Moreover, apart from emphasising the strengths of each dimension, an eclectic approach can also minimise the weaknesses inherent in each HRD approach.

5.6.3 Open Information

The value of *Open Information* is a key component for appropriate employee participation. With the spread of employee participation programmes, the challenge of resolving the "initiative paradox" (Campbell, 2000) involves greater numbers of workers and managers across more and more industry groups. The initiative paradox is defined as managing the extents and limits of worker participation in decision-making contexts. It is therefore concerned with the flow and quality of information that promises to create a responsive environment to enable suitable participation by workers in organizational decision-making. These communication systems can assist organizational members to become more knowledge intensive, radically decentralised, participative, adaptive, flexible, efficient, and responsive to rapid change (Hastings, 1993; Kozminski & Cushman, 1993; Miles & Snow, 1986; Monge & Fulk, 1999; Nohira & Berkley, 1994; Taylor & Van Every, 1993). The growing literature in this area would suggest that managing worker initiative is increasing concern for organizations across all industries.

Campbell's (2000) model is designed to manage most contexts of workplace initiative. It contains four potential resolution strategies. These include: *Goal alignment*, *Communication of boundaries*, *Emphasis on information sharing*, and *Dynamic accountability*. There are illustrations from the findings that two strategies, namely, *Communication of boundaries* and *Emphasis on information sharing*, could be evident in FCL. For example, in certain situations workers felt that they understood the extent and limits of their authority and under what circumstances they could be resourceful. Should this be evident across the organization, it may indicate that the boundaries for enterprising behaviour in certain situations are being communicated by managers to workers. The fact that information sharing is linked to the performance bonus system in FCL implies that there is at least some encouragement to share information from the organization perspective.

On the other hand, issues arising from work/home balance discussed earlier imply that some realignment is needed between individual and organization goals. Other evidence implies that workers are held accountable for failures in the implementation of innovative ideas. This example fits Campbell's *Dynamic accountability* descriptor. Although it matches *Dynamic accountability*, it is likely to be the wrong circumstances to implement this approach since it is likely to constrain innovation. In sum, organizations would do well to examine their own participation programmes by using Campbell's framework to develop and refine information channels between managers and employees.

Table 7 below illustrates the extensions to Noer's model with the three additional values. The appropriate individual and organization accountabilities are also included.

Table 7 Modified Employment Relationship Model

Individual	***Values of the Relationship***	**Organization**
Work in more than one organizational setting.	***Flexible Employment***	Encourage workers to work in other organizations or organizational units within the same company.
Serve the customer not your manager.	***Customer-focus***	Information and incentives for external focus.
Focus on what you do, not where you work.	***Performance-focus***	Link rewards and benefits with performance rather than organizational dependency.
Accept and embrace yourself as a temporary employee.	***Project-based Work***	Focus on projects rather than organizational functions.
Find work that is meaningful.	***Human Spirit & Work***	Provide work (wherever possible) that is meaningful.
Commitment to achieving organizational outcomes.	***Commitment***	Loyalty to enhancing employees' personal objectives.
Learning and growing on the job.	***Learning & Development***	A partnership for employee development.

Contributing to decision-making processes.	***Open Information***	Providing employees with access to information about company goals, needs, and HR systems.

SOURCE: Baker, T. B. (2005). *Towards a new employment relationship model: Merging the needs and interests of individual and organisation*. QUT, Brisbane: Doctoral thesis, p. 231.

To create benchmarks between the traditional and new employment relationship, Table 8 below is a diametrically opposite model to the one in Table 8. Table 8 represents the traditional employment relationship.

Table 8 Traditional Employment Relationship Model

Individual	Values of the Relationship	Organization
Work in one organizational setting & specialise.	***Specialised Employment***	Encourage workers to specialise & remain in one organizational unit.
Serve your manager before the customer.	***Internal-focus***	Emphasis on organizational policies & procedures.
Focus on fulfilling your job requirements.	***Job-focus***	Link rewards & benefits to organizational dependency.
Accept & embrace yourself as a functional -based worker.	***Functional-based Work***	Focus on organizational functions.
Find & accept any work.	***Human Dispirit & Work***	Provide any work.
Demonstate loyalty to organizational processes, procedures & policies.	***Loyalty***	Demonstrate loyalty to employees who are loyal to the organization.

Commit to achieving qualifications.	***Training***	Train employees in organizational processes & procedures.
Be willing to carry out managerial instructions.	***Closed Information***	Providing employees with enough information to carry out their organizational function.

SOURCE: Baker, T. B. (2005). *Towards a new employment relationship model: Merging the needs and interests of individual and organisation*. QUT, Brisbane: Doctoral thesis, p. 21.

The juxtaposing of Tables 7 and 8 illustrates the polarisation between the traditional and new employment relationship both in terms of the conflicting values and the corresponding individual and organization accountability. Table 9 below summarises the dramatically changing employment relationship values over a relatively short period of time.

Table 9 The Changing Employment Relationship Values

Traditional Values		**New Values**
Specialised Employment	→	Flexible Deployment
Internal-focus	→	Customer-focus
Job-focus	→	Performance-focus
Functional-based Work	→	Project-based Work
Human Dispirit & Work	→	Human Spirit & Work
Loyalty	→	Commitment

Training	→	Learning & Development
Closed Information	→	Open Information

SOURCE: Baker, T. B. (2005). *Towards a new employment relationship model: Merging the needs and interests of individual and organisation*. QUT, Brisbane: Doctoral thesis, p. 91.

To complete the discussion, it could be useful to summarise the paradigm shifts exhibited in Table 9. The value of specialisation in the workplace - once important - is now giving way to the value of flexible deployment of skills (Wiens-Tuers & Hill, 2002). The focus was once on internal processes and procedures are likely continue to be imperative. But now – more than ever – a driver for business success is an company focus on the customer (Bathie & Sarkar, 2002; Sebastianelli & Nabil Tamimi, 2003; Wright, 2002). Systems of remuneration favouring performance over job-related behaviours are likely to be in the long-term interests of individuals and organizations (Sturman et al., 2003). Heightened expectations of work and the changing nature of the role work plays in people's lives creates a more significant connection between human spirit and work than in the past. Organizational committed has now replaced loyalty. The speed of change means that learning and growing on-the-job is now more important than off-the-job training. Opening channels of communication impacts more positively on encouraging enterprising behaviour than closed information channels. Consequently these paradigm shifts in a relatively short timeframe have altered the psychologial contract. Therefore the expectations and responsibilities of individual and organization is also diametrically opposite to the way they have engaged in a traditional employment relationship.

7. Application of Results

There are three ways this research study can make a contribution to the current psychological contract literature. Firstly, from an extensive survey of the literature, this study is one of the few empirical research studies undertaken to date that have attempted to test a theoretical model of the employment relationship in an organizational case. As such, this study provides a case study account of how some of the values of the new psychological contract employment relationship may be applied in a work setting. The second contribution of this study is it provides one of the few validated working models of the new employment relationship. This model can therefore be used by organization development practitioners and researchers as a potentially useful framework for investigating the psychological contract in other organizational settings.

The third role this study can make to the literature is to advance the knowledge about the new psychological contract phenomenon by considering implications for the individual and the organization within an organizational setting. In practice, by having a more detailed understanding of the individual and organizational responsibilities in the new psychological contract, researchers can cross-reference these findings with similar studies in other organizations. It is to be hoped for these three reasons that this study plays a useful and timely function in the expanding literature on the psychological contract.

8. Beneficiaries of Research

From a research perspective, this study opens up possibilities for other researchers to conduct future research in a number of areas. Since generalisations from case study findings cannot be applied directly to other settings (Yin, 1994), the opportunity to test this model in a variety of contexts, is an appropriate avenue for further research. Conclusions drawn from cross-culture and cross-industry studies should assist organization development professionals to make assumptions about managing an organization's transition from the traditional to the new employment relationship.

Future research may extend this model to include other values of the new employment relationship not discussed in this study. Moreover, the three emerging themes of *Commitment*, *Learning & Development* and *Open Information* need further verification. Corroboration of these three new values and the addition of other values can possibly contribute to a more in-depth understanding and clearer definition of the phenomenon of the new psychological contract. This should provide practitioners with a broader range of strategies to identify and develop appropriate contemporary mind-sets for the employment relationship. This is likely to be in the best interests of the individual and organization.

In practice, the research methodology provides practitioners with a unique and rigorous consulting methodology that can explore the elements of eight values of the employment relationship in an organizational setting.

9. Conclusion

This study goes some way to validating Noer's theoretical model, its five values: *Flexible Employment*, *Customer-focus*, *Focus on Performance*, *Project-based Work* and *Human Spirit & Work*, and the corresponding individual and organization accountabilities. To extend - and hopefully strengthen - the model, three additional literature-based values and their matching individual and organization responsibilities have been included: *Commitment*, *Learning & Development* and *Open Information*. The research methodology used in this study may provide a creditable substitute for many outdated HR strategies. Traditional HR strategies often fail to take into account the changing individual and organizational paradigms over the past 25 years. They are arguable unsustainable, the therefore less effective, in bring about change in organizations in a time of accelerated change and uncertainty. Progressive employees and employers need a radically different kind of relationship from the one that has existed for over 200 years since the Industrial Revolution. Managers, employees, trade union officials, and HR personnel have to change their thinking about the employee-employer relationship. This is easier said than done. There are many pressures to retain the traditional employment relationship, yet the costs of retaining the 'them and us' dichotomy between employee and employer are too high for both entities in the 21st Century.

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