Building motivational capital through career concept and culture fit

The strategic value of developing motivation and retention

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of the present paper is to offer a career concept and culture framework for measuring and managing the alignment between people, strategy and culture and especially the motivational capital as the fit between people's motives and the organization's reward and appraisal systems.

Design/methodology/approach – A survey of 312 respondents in a multinational manufacturing firm using two questionnaires about their individual career concepts, motives, and their views about the organizational strategy and culture.

Findings – The results suggest that the career- and culture-based motivational capital is positively associated with how effective the people view the strategy, how well-functioning the structure is experienced, how relevant the performance appraisal is considered, how satisfied the people feel, and how long they stay in the organization.

Research limitations/implications – Future research should add more multi-item-dependent variables, use more translated questionnaires into the respondents' own languages, and study more organizations in different industries to make further use of the career concept and culture model's ability to capture the fit between different persons and their organizations and the importance of this alignment.

Practical implications – Career and organizational development can improve the fit between individual career concepts and motives as well as organizational career culture and thereby contribute in several ways to higher performance, such as greater motivation, more positive views of the organization, and higher retention.

Originality/value – The paper provides a unique approach to understand and manage the alignment of different persons, HR systems, and organizational culture with greater precision.

Keywords Career development, Human resource management, Motivation (psychology), Retention, Organizational culture

Paper type Research paper

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The competence and motivation of the people of organizations are often viewed as key performance factors in both practice and research (e.g. Huselid, 1995; Pfeffer, 1994). When dealing with competence and motivation in practice, there is a risk of viewing them as personal attributes of people, when we say that person A is competent, person B is motivated, while person C is incompetent and person D lacks motivation. Barnard (1938) and Emerson (1962) pointed early to the fallacy of attributing power to a person instead of viewing power as a relationship between persons. Similarly, if competence and motivation were merely personal attributes, then any person should be equally competent and motivated in any situation. We do not believe that this is true simply based on the experience that a person varies in how competent and motivated he or she is in different situations. Instead, we propose that competence and motivation are better viewed as relationships between different persons and situations.

The concept of career is a quite useful tool to relate persons and organizational situations (e.g. Schein, 1978; Super, 1980). The career can be seen as the meeting-point of people and organizations. On the one hand, individual careers consist of work positions, activities, and development in one or more organizations during the course of their working lives (Driver, 1979). On the other hand, organizations offer various career opportunities and paths to their prospective and existing employees (Gunz, 1989). The career relationship between individuals and organizations seems to be changing dramatically towards more "protean" and "boundaryless" careers (Hall, 1996; Sullivan, 1999). A career-based conceptualization of competence and especially motivation should therefore be a promising possibility for highlighting the essentially relational character of competence and motivation.

This paper presents a career concept and culture fit framework for developing primarily motivation through improving the alignment between persons and organizations (Brousseau *et al.*, 1996). The career concept model was originally developed by Michael Driver (1979) and has been extended and applied together with Kenneth Brousseau (1984) and other colleagues to various person and organization issues, such as change (Driver, 1980), advisement (Brousseau and Driver, 1994), organizational culture (Driver and Coombs, 1983), demographics (Driver, 1985; Brousseau, 1989), human resource management (Von Glinow *et al.*, 1983), mergers and acquisitions (Larsson *et al.*, 2001), and international expansion, leadership, and brand management (Larsson *et al.*, 2003).

In this research, we present a framework focusing on the interplay of an organization's strategy, people and culture and the potential but very real intangible capital gained when these dimensions are aligned. We measure "motivational capital," the fit between people and culture, and test how it impacts individuals' perception of, satisfaction with, and commitment to their organizations. This is done in a quantitative case study of a multinational manufacturer.

The career concept model

There are fundamental, yet often neglected differences between how individuals view their working lives, their careers. Even though people in general seem to have a notion of what a career is, these notions are far from uniform. For example, while one person may view a career as one chosen "profession" for a lifetime, another may view a career as a climb upward on the corporate ladder. These different conceptions of careers can be expected to have important implications for how different persons view their (and

others') work lives as well as their organization's leadership, organizational culture and strategic direction.

The career concept model was developed by Michael Driver (1979, 1980) and Kenneth Brousseau (1984) to understand and describe individual views and experience of careers. The basic premise of the model is that most of us develop varied concepts of what a career means to us. These concepts may be more or less conscious and they greatly influence our choice of career path and our experience at work. The career concept model differentiates between four basic career concepts held by individuals in terms of two primary conceptual factors:

(1) The frequency of career change (durability in a given field of work).

(2) The conceptual "direction" of career movement or change.

These dimensions construct the following four primary and different career concepts:

(1) *Expert*. Career choice is made once for a lifetime, commitment to an occupation, "upward" advancement is less definitive of success than is "mastering" of the skills, knowledge and work of the expert's choice.

(2) *Linear*. Career choice focuses on upward movement on an externally defined "ladder" (such as a managerial hierarchy) with infrequent (rare) changes in career field, while upward promotions are desired as frequently as possible.

(3) *Spiral*. Career choice evolves through a series of occupations (with moderate, five-to-ten year, duration in each) where each new choice builds on past choices in order to develop new skills (lateral related movement).

(4) *Transitory*. Career choice involves frequent change of field, organizations, and jobs (one-to-four year intervals) with variety of experience being a dominant force (unrelated movement in multiple directions).

An individual's "career profile" is discovered through a questionnaire, the results of which usually indicate one or perhaps two of these career concepts is/are as dominant. It is important to note that no profile is "better" than another. Profiles simply reflect individual orientations regarding his/her careers.

Career concepts have been linked to other career models (e.g. Schein's (1978) career anchors and Derr's (1986) career orientations) and empirically related to motivational differences (e.g. Driver and Coombs, 1983; Coombs, 1989; Larsson *et al.*, 2003). Expert concepts relate to in-depth competence and security needs as do Linear to needs for power and advancement, Spiral to self-development and creativity, and Transitory to needs for novelty and independence.

These individual differences in career concepts and motives are summarized in Table I from the most stable expert orientation at the left to the most change-oriented transitory view at the right of the career concept "continuum" (Larsson *et al.*, 2003). This makes up the individual bases for the motivational capital framework that is being developed here.

Career concepts, strategies, and organizational cultures

The career concept logic and language can be used not only at the individual level of career self-awareness and development, but also the strategic and organizational levels. Starting with strategy, it is possible to categorize different strategic directions

according to a similar stability versus change continuum (Larsson *et al.*, 2003). The top row of Table II shows these four types of strategies together with different organizational career cultures.

Strategies are often differentiated by the extent they are focused contra diversified and whether the diversification is related or unrelated (cf. Ansoff, 1965; Porter, 1980; Rumelt, 1974). The stable focus on and maintenance of the present strategic position through consolidation and refinement of quality represent what we call an expert strategy. Competitively striving towards maximum growth and market leadership corresponds to the linear strategy. Related diversification to new applications of existing core competencies is more of a broadening, spiral strategy, while the more unrelated transitory strategy pursues immediate targets of opportunities as they arise in various areas. Larsson *et al.* (2003) further distinguish between the different types of linear growth strategies of the more expert/linear focus on making one's own organic growth, the more pure linear approach of buying growth through corporate acquisitions, and the more spiral/linear growth strategy of cooperation through alliances.

Different types of organizational cultures will fit and support different types of strategies as well as different types of people and their careers. Thus, by classifying

Table I.
Different career concepts and related career motives

Career concept	Expert	Linear	Spiral	Transitory
Duration in field	Life	Variable	5-10 years	2-4 years
Direction of movement	In-depth	Upward	Lateral related	Unrelated
Career motives	Security expertise	Power achievement	Creativity personal growth	Variety independence

Table II.
Different strategies and organizational career cultures

	Expert	Linear	Spiral	Transitory
Strategy	Maintaining present position through quality refinement and consolidation	Growth in size, competitiveness and market leadership	Related diversification through new applications of existing core competencies	Immediate new targets of opportunities (unrelated)
Structure	Stable, flat, functional	Tall pyramid	Matrix, project organization	Informal, temporary *ad hoc* teams
Performance appraisal factors	Quality, accuracy, expertise	Cost efficiency, profit, leadership ability	Creativity, skill diversity, teamwork	Speed, flexibility, opportunity recognition
Rewards	Recognition, job security, skill refinement, own budget	Promotion, managerial bonuses, leadership development	Job rotation, cross-functional projects, creative latitude, personal development	Cash bonuses, job rotation, special assignments, independence

organizational cultures with the same career concept logic and language, we can extend the framework to include both these related dynamic fits with strategy and people (Larsson *et al.*, 2003). To keep this classification task manageable, we focus on three main components of the organizational career culture, namely organizational structure, performance appraisal, and reward system.

The relationship between strategy and structure include Chandler's (1962) classic notion of different strategies result in different structures as well as the opposite "strategy follows structure" and reciprocal views (Fredrickson, 1986; Hall and Saias, 1980). Galbraith and Nathanson (1978) and Fombrun *et al.* (1984) added human resource management to the matching process between strategy and structure. The career concept model has contributed further to making concrete the relationships between strategy, structure, and critical operational HR systems of appraisals and rewards. Appraisals and rewards systems are specific systems employing operational tactics for directing co-worker, managerial, and executive attention and behavior. These systems speak directly to career aspirations and motivations of individuals that in turn give energy and direction to behavior; behavior intended to be aligned with operational outcomes. The rise (and perhaps slow fall) of "options-based" reward systems for management and executives indeed focuses attention and behavior on short-term stock performance. Some individuals thrive in this environment. Some do not. Such systems set the tone for co-operation and provide guideposts for advancement and thus directly influence organizational culture. Driver and Coombs (1983), Brousseau *et al.* (1996), and Larsson *et al.* (2003) make specific linkages between operational HR appraisal and reward systems, organizational strategy and structure, and the career concepts and motivations of co-works, managers and executives.

The stable expert orientation fits flat pyramids (with little risk of being promoted) with strong functional departments, quality-based performance appraisal, and rewards like security and recognition. In contrast, linear people prefer tall pyramids with many levels to climb and profit orientation where good performance leads to promotion, managerial incentives, and leadership development. Spiral employees thrive in matrix structures and complex project organizations where creativity is highly valued and personal growth and cross-functional opportunities are offered as rewards. Finally, the less formal structure, the more the transitory employees are motivated to form informal *ad hoc* teams emphasizing flexibility and speed to get immediate cash bonuses (as they are not expecting to stay around f or retirement benefits.

Each of the columns in Table II represents an internally consistent set of strategy, organizational structure, performance appraisal, and rewards from the respective career concept and motives. This fit between career concepts and culture was first empirically studied by Driver and Coombs (1983). Additional research has further elaborated various related career and cultural issues (e.g. Brousseau *et al.*, 1996; Larsson *et al.*, 2003). The actual measurement of the different organizational career culture components indicates not only that different parts of the same organization can have different strategies and (sub)cultures, but also that different persons have different individual views of the organization's strategy and culture. A common pattern is that very few companies are found to have consistent organizational career cultures.

Consider, for example, a company using a matrix structure, a quality-oriented appraisal system, and a bonus reward system may appear quite modern and a

desirable place to work. However, a closer inspection reveals that it frustrates each of the four career concepts. Experts appreciate the quality orientation, but find the unstable matrix structure as disturbing and they prefer long-term security and recognition of their expertise rather than immediate bonuses. Linears think that matrices are confusing ("you do not know which way is up or down"), showing results are more important than quality *per se*, and promotions will not only result in more money but also more power and status. Spirals like to work in the more dynamic matrix structure, but favor personal growth over cash bonuses and the development of creative new ventures rather than improving "old" quality. Finally, Transitory employees appreciate fast cash bonuses while they are still with the company, but view any kind of formal structures as unnecessary barriers to making business ("can't we just form temporary teams as opportunities arise?").

Even if these internal inconsistencies in organizational career cultures are common in especially new or radically changed companies, a dominant pattern tends to develop as the company evolves over time and sort out the worst problems. Strategies and structures are mainly designed by the top managers and these tend to be linear. Out of the four career concepts, only the Linear is strongly driven to climb upwards to the top of the organizational hierarchy. The competitive orientation of linear managers make them quickly learn the particular game rules of getting ahead in their respective companies. Thus, it should be no surprise to find that the corporate strategy of such firms tends to be growth (i.e. linear) and the organizational culture tends toward mainly Linear components, such as a tall pyramid structure, profit orientation, and rewards primarily geared to managerial bonuses and promotions. While linears thrive the more Linear the culture becomes, employees with other career concepts tend become more frustrated and unable to contribute their strengths.

We can now use the career concept logic, language, and assessment to enhance the triple dynamic fit between strategy, organizational career culture, and people as illustrated in Figure 1. The strategy-people fit constitutes the competence capital of the company, that is, how well the competencies of the people match the requirements of the chosen strategy. The strategy-culture fit makes up what can be called the

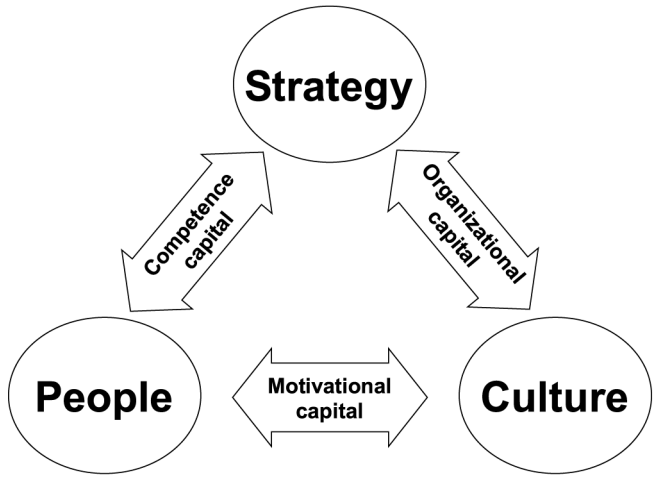

Figure 1.
A career-based framework for motivational, competence, and organizational capitals as the fits between people, culture, and strategy

organizational capital of the company, that is, how well the organizational career culture supports the corporate strategy with suitable structure, performance appraisal, and rewards. Finally, the people-culture fit represents the motivational capital of how well the organizational career culture fulfills the career motives of the people.

A career-based motivational capital framework

The career concept model provides valuable tool for assessing the fit between individual careers and the organizational culture that we call motivational capital. Driver and Coombs (1983) reported an early breakthrough study of the importance of this fit, where employee commitment, loyalty, satisfaction, perceived performance, and private life were found to be significantly affected by how well their career concepts and motives fit the perceived organizational culture.

The suggested framework is built on the construct of motivational capital as the fit between an individual's career motives and the person's percerption of the whole organizational culture. We propose a series of hypotheses relating the effect of motivation capital (independent variable) on:

- the degree to which people perceive the strategy of their organization to be effective;
- the degree to which they view the structure of their organization to be well-functioning;
- the degree to which they experience the performance appraisal of their organization as relevant;
- the degree of satisfaction; and
- how long they intend to remain with the organization (dependent variables).

Starting with the strategy of an organization, the effectiveness of this strategy is typically researched through surveys of how different types of strategies are related to performance in large samples of organizations (e.g. Rumelt, 1974; Zajac and Shortell, 1989). From a motivational capital point-of-view, the unit of analysis is the different perceived relationships between single individuals and various aspects of the culture they experience. This enables the study of the impact of the degree of fit between person and culture in even a single organization by comparing how effective the strategy is viewed by different individuals as a function of how well their career motives fit their perceived culture. Driver and Coombs (1983) found that experts were more committed, satisfied, and had higher perceived performance in the mainly Expert culture of their studied organization. We propose that this finding can be generalized into a hypothesis regarding how likely organizational member are to perceive the strategy as effective depends on how well-aligned their respective career motives are with their perceived organizational culture, that is, the motivational capital:

H1. The greater the motivational capital, the more effective the strategy is viewed by the organizational members.

Whether organizational structure is found to be determined by strategy (e.g. Chandler, 1962) or the reverse relationship of structure determining strategy (Fredrickson, 1986; Hall and Saias, 1980), much of the research of both these sides of the strategy-structure coin share the contingency notion that the fit between structure and strategy impacts

performance. The career-based motivational capital framework adds the notion that degree of perceived effective the functioning of the organizational structure is influenced by the fit between individual career motives and the culture (Brousseau *et al.*, 1996; Larsson *et al.*, 2003). As an example, Driver and Coombs (1983) found that linear persons reported being less committed, less satisfied and feeling less productive in an expert culture with a flat structure that did not fit their upward desires for a tall pyramid. In general, we hypothesize:

H2. The greater the motivational capital, the more well-functioning the organizational structure is viewed by the organizational members.

Turning to human resource management issues, performance appraisal is used to link strategy, structure and behavior/action (Fombrun *et al.*, 1984; Galbraith and Nathanson, 1978). The logic of the motivational capital framework suggests that different persons will view different kinds of performance appraisal factors as more or less relevant based on how well these factors fit their career motives. For example, long-term quality, seniority, and in-depth expertise are appraisal factors that should appeal to expert motives better than linear, spiral or transitory motives. This corresponds to Driver and Coombs' (1983) findings of experts being more committed, satisfied, and felt more productive in an expert culture. To generalize these findings, we propose:

H3. The greater the motivational capital, the more relevant the performance appraisal system is viewed by the organizational members.

Even though job satisfaction has not been as recurrent theme in career research as it has been in the field of organizational behavior (Sullivan, 1999), job satisfaction has been studied in relation to, for example, career development stages (Smart and Peterson, 1997), job changes through career counseling (Breeden, 1993), lateral career moves (Murrell *et al.*, 1996) and employee turnover (Lee and Maurer, 1997). Janssen and Van Yperen (2004) found that differences in employee goal orientations (mastery versus performance) affected job satisfaction. Our motivational capital framework goes beyond individual differences to postulate the effect of the degree of alignment between different individual career motives and the organizational culture. That is, people with primarily one type of career motives are not necessarily more or less satisfied than those with mainly other types of career motives irrespective of which type of organizational culture they experience. While Driver and Coombs (1983) found the experts were the most satisfied in their study of a mainly expert culture, we expect that experts would have been much less satisfied in more linear, spiral or transitory cultures, where other people are more likely to be more satisfied:

H4. The greater the motivational capital, the more satisfied organizational members.

Personnel turnover and employee retention have been much studied (e.g. Abelson and Baysinger, 1984; Shaw *et al.*, 2005). For example, Huselid (1995) found that the use of high performance human resource management practices decreased personnel turnover. Sheridan's (1992) findings of turnover as being influenced by perceptions of organizational culture are of special relevance here. They point towards the relevance of motivational capital as a possible predictor of employee retention. The

proposed framework transcends the notion that cultural perceptions uniformly affect retention by focusing on the match between different persons' career motives and cultural perceptions as a more precise predictor. For example, the perception of an expert culture with a flat structure can be expected to have a positive effect on the retention of experts, but a negative effect on the retention of Linears, who may view it as a "cul-de-sac" with very limited opportunities of promotion:

H5. The greater the motivational capital, the longer the retention of the organizational members.

It is possible to distinguish between career-specific and total motivational capital. The career-specific motivational capital represents the fit between a specific type of career motives and organizational culture, such as the expert motivational capital. This allows finding out to what extent certain types of career alignment are more relevant to certain outcomes discussed above. We predict, however, that it is the total motivational capital (which is the sum average of all four types of career-specific expert, linear, spiral, and transitory motivational capitals) that is a stronger determinant of the dependent variables than the separate career type-specific motivational capitals. That is, we hypothesize that it is the overall fit between a person's whole set of career motives and her/his view of the whole organizational culture that primarily determines how well the strategy, structure, rewards and performance appraisal are viewed and how satisfied people feel. We combine these four dependent variables (*H1-H4*) into an "overall experienced cultural goodness" variable:

H6. The greater the total motivational capital, the greater the overall experienced cultural goodness.

H7. The total motivational capital explains more variance of the dependent variables than any of the career-specific motivational capitals by themselves.

Methodology

We studied the motivational capital framework through an action research survey of 312 members of a multinational manufacturing firm (MMF) of mainly industrial machinery in 40 countries and ranging hierarchically from top managers to non-managerial personnel. This company had decided to make use of the career concept and culture model as an organizational development tool in the late 1990s. This was done through initial administration of pencil/paper versions of two established questionnaires. One measured the individual career concepts and motives with 38 questions about the direction, duration, and motivating factors in the career of individuals. This questionnaire has been used in practice by more than 500,000 people as well as in research by, for example, Driver and Coombs (1983) and Larsson *et al.* (2003), including extensive validation by Coombs (1989). The other measured the person's view of the organizational career culture with 78 questions about how the organizational members characterize the strategy, structure, performance appraisal, and rewards of their organization. This has been used in research by, for instance, Brousseau *et al.* (1996). These initial measurements were then followed by presentation of the career concept and culture model in a large off-site top manager meeting and several unit workshops as well as personal feedback on the respondents' career

profiles. These presentations and feedback were performed by HR persons in the company that had been certified in the career concept model.

The two questionnaires were administered to the top 250 managers globally as well as to 193 mainly middle managers, supervisors, and co-workers of nine national work units, adding up to a total of 443 targeted persons. Of these, 357 answered to at least one of the questionnaires and 312 answered both in full. This corresponds to the high partial response rate of 81 percent and full response rate of 70 percent, which can be attributed to this being a part of the company's own development initiative. A total of 184 (74 percent) out of the top 250 managers and 128 (66 percent) of the 193 other targeted persons answered both questionnaires. The most common reason for not responding at all was mainly that the persons were not being able to participate in the subsequent meeting/workshops.

Both the questionnaires have five-point Likert scales ranging from "very little" to "very great". The questions of the career concept questionnaire deals with how an individual views her/his ideal career development and which factors/motives guide the career decisions, such as "refine your technical skills and abilities". The questions of the organizational career culture survey address how the respondent views the strategy, structure, performance appraisal, and rewards of her/his organization, such as "to what extent does your organization reward successful employees with promotions to managerial positions?" Eight measures of the career motives and organizational cultures (not including strategic items) were used from these two questionnaires to calculate the motivational capitals:

- expert motives (three items, Cronbach alpha of 0.54);
- linear motives (three items, Cronbach alpha of 0.58);
- spiral motives (three items, Cronbach alpha of 0.60);
- transitory motives (three items, Cronbach alpha of 0.50);
- expert culture (12 items, Cronbach alpha of 0.70);
- linear culture (11 items, Cronbach alpha of 0.74);
- spiral culture (13 items, Cronbach alpha of 0.79); and
- transitory culture (13 items, Cronbach alpha of 0.74).

These measures are averages of their respective items that are transformed to scores ranging from a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 7.0 for display purposes.

The career-specific motivational capital was operationalized as the degree of match between one set of career motives and its corresponding culture score to generate an index ranging from 100 as absolute maximum fit and 0 as absolute minimum fit. For example:

$$\text{Expert motivational capital} = 100 - ((\text{Expert motives} - \text{Expert culture})^2/0.49)$$

That is, a perfect fit between the one level of career motives of an individual with the levels of experienced organizational culture will result in a sum score of 100 (e.g. 5.4 expert motives − 5.4 expert culture = 0 and so forth), while maximum misfit with maximum score 7.0 on motives and 0.0 on culture or vice versa for a specific career motive-culture combination will result in a sum score of 0.0 (e.g. 7.0 linear motives − 0.0 linear culture = 7.0 difference that is squared to 49 and divided by 0.49

(as one hundredth of the maximum misfit squared) = 100 which in turn is subtracted from the starting index of 100 to result in a score of 0). The gap between a certain type of career motives and culture is squared to include both situations where the culture is viewed as less than the motives (e.g. too little expert structure, appraisal, and rewards compared to the person's expert motives and therefore s/he is likely to miss this partly lacking expert culture) and as more than the motives (e.g. too much linear structure, appraisal, and rewards compared to the person's linear motives and therefore s/he is likely to be disturbed by this partly excessive linear culture).

The total motivational capital is then the average of the four expert, linear, spiral, and transitory motivational capitals according to the formula below. It also has an absolute maximum of 100 (i.e. all four sets of career motives have identical levels to those of their respective cultures) and an absolute minimum of 0. Cronbach's alpha for this total motivational capital index consisting of the four career-specific motivational capitals was 0.59.

$$\sum((100 - ((\text{x motives} - \text{x culture})^2/0.49))/4)$$

x = Expert, linear, spiral, transitory.

The dependent strategy, structure, performance appraisal, and satisfaction variables (*H1-H4*) were measured by the following single item questions as part of the organizational culture questionnaire (also five-point Likert scales from "very little" to "very great"): to what extent do the following statements describe your organization? Overall, most of the organization's employees seem to consider that:

- the present strategy is effective;
- the present organizational structure is well-functioning;
- the present performance appraisal system (that is, what the organization evaluates and rewards) is relevant; and
- they are motivated and satisfied.

The dependent retention variable (*H5*) was reversely measured as the employment year of the respondent (ranging from 1962 to 1998), that is the earlier/"lower" employment year, the longer/"greater" retention.

The dependent variable "overall experienced cultural goodness" (*H6*) is the average of the four first dependent strategy, structure, performance appraisal, and satisfaction variables above. This 4-item variable had a Cronbach alpha of 0.83.

Results

Table III displays the means, standard deviation, and Spearman correlation coefficients of the dependent and independent variables.

The 312 MMF respondents had primarily linear and spiral motives (5.50 and 5.49 averages on 0-7 index scales) and viewed their organizational culture as mainly expert (4.27 on similar 0-7 index scales) and linear (3.96). Looking at the different cultural parts, the structure was most clearly viewed as expert flat and functional, while the appraisal (with mostly linear cost efficiency, expert quality, and transitory customer adaptation) and rewards (with expert security and recognition as well as linear promotion and spiral development of new skills) were fairly pluralistic.

Table III.
Means, standard deviation, and spearman correlation coefficients

Variables	Mean	SD	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11
Dependent												
1. Effective strat.	3.41	0.78	0.57**	0.46**	0.53**	−0.12*	0.79**	0.06	0.11*	0.16**	0.07	0.20**
2. Well-func. struc	3.27	0.81		0.42**	0.50**	−0.08	0.77**	0.09	0.14*	0.18**	0.18**	0.23**
3. Relevant perf app	2.89	0.87			0.59**	−0.09	0.78**	0.10	0.18**	0.24**	0.10	0.27**
4. Satisfied mem.	3.19	0.83				−0.11	0.82**	0.18**	0.12*	0.26**	0.04	0.26**
5. Employm. year	1985.5	8.52					−0.12*	−0.09	−0.08	−0.08	−0.07	−0.12*
6. Ov. cult. good.	3.18	0.66						0.13*	0.18**	0.26**	0.14*	0.30**
Independent												
7. Expert motiv.capital	95.86	5.71							0.12*	0.19**	0.05	0.47**
8. Linear motiv.capital	92.83	7.01								0.29**	0.09	0.61**
9. Spiral motiv. capital	91.91	8.08									0.26**	0.71**
10. Transitory motiv. capital	95.55	5.72										0.50**
11. Total motiv. capital	94.06	4.40										

Notes: $n = 312$; $^{*}p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$

It is interesting to note that there was a rather wide distribution of views of how well the organization was doing. On one side, 13 percent considered the strategy as ineffective (low or very low) and 34 percent the performance appraisal as having low or very low relevance. On the other side, 42 percent viewed the strategy as highly effective and 21 percent the performance appraisal as being highly relevant. While this made the strategy the most positive cultural part and the performance appraisal the least positive part, the respondents were fairly divided in roughly about 1/3 negative, 1/3 moderate and 1/3 positive in their evaluation of the organization. This was also largely the case with the satisfaction variable. Thus, these non-uniform views of the organization suggest that some of the variation can be linked to how well the individual career motives and experienced organizational culture match, that is, the motivational capital.

The spearman correlations indicate that this distribution is significantly explained by the motivation capital of the respondents. All the first four dependent strategy, structure, performance appraisal and satisfaction variables were significantly positively correlated with the total motivational capital and with most of the career-specific motivational capitals (i.e. two of the four career-specific motivational capitals were positively correlated with the strategy variable (*H1*), three with the structure variable (*H2*), two with the performance appraisal variable (*H3*), and three with the satisfaction variable (*H4*)). These findings thus lend support to the first four hypotheses of the motivational capital framework.

The fifth hypothesis received partial support by the findings. The total motivational capital was significantly negatively correlated with employment year as predicted (that is, the greater the motivational capital, the longer the tenure, the earlier/"lower" the employment year), but to a less extent than the first four hypotheses. None of the career-specific motivational capitals was significantly correlated with employment year.

H6 was the most strongly supported with the overall experienced cultural goodness being positively associated with total motivational capital and spiral motivations capital at the 0.001-level, linear motivational capital at the 0.01-level, as well as expert and transitory motivational capital at the 0.05-level.

The spearman correlation coefficients also indicate support for *H7* that the overall motivational capital was as expected more correlated to all of the six dependent variables than any of the separate career-specific motivational capitals. The spiral motivational capital was the strongest correlated among the career-specific motivational capital measures with all the dependent variables, followed by linear motivational capital.

In addition to this correlational analysis, multiple regression was used to further analyze the data. Table IV displays the results of the regression analysis of *H1-H6* as models 1a, 2a, 3a, 4a, 5a, and 6a where all four career-specific motivational capitals are used as independent variables. The results show significant positive associations between (1a) expert and spiral motivational capitals and how effective the strategy of the organization is viewed by its members; (2a) expert, spiral, and transitory motivational capitals and how well-functioning the organizational structure is viewed by the members; (3a) linear and spiral motivational capitals and how relevant the performance appraisal is viewed by the members; (4a) expert, linear, and spiral motivational capitals and how satisfied the members feel; and (6a) all four

Table IV.
Results of multiple regression analysis on *H1-H7*

	Model					
	1a	2a	3a	4a	5a	6a
Dependent variables:	Strategy effectiv.	Structure well-func.	Perf. ap. relevant	Satisfaction	Employ. year	Overall experienced cultural goodness
Independent variables:	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*
Expert motivational capital	0.12*	0.12*	0.08	0.14*	−0.05	0.14*
Linear motivational capital	0.07	0.05	0.16**	0.13*	−0.08	0.13*
Spiral motivational capital	0.14*	0.14*	0.15*	0.20**	−0.08	0.20**
Transitory motivational capital	0.06	0.21**	0.05	0.01	−0.00	0.10
F	5.34**	9.86**	7.78**	9.14**	1.70	12.3**
R^2	0.07	0.12	0.10	0.12	0.02	0.15
Comparative single indep. var.	1b	2b	3b	4b	5b	6b
Total motivational capital *b*	0.26**	0.33**	0.31**	0.32**	−0.15*	0.38**
R^2	0.07	0.11	0.10	0.10	0.02	0.15

Notes: $n = 312$, $^{*}p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$

career-specific motivational capitals and how good the members experience the overall organizational culture. None of the career-specific motivational capitals was significantly associated to employment year (5a).

These four career-specific motivational capitals can be compared with the total motivational capital as a single independent variable explaining the six hypotheses at the bottom of Table IV (i.e. models 1b, 2b, 3b, 4b, 5b, and 6b). As the previous correlational analysis indicated, the total motivational capital is significantly associated with all the dependent variables, including employment year. *H7* is further supported by total motivational capital not only explaining more variance than any of the career-specific motivational capitals by themselves, but also explaining almost as much variance (average of 0.092 R^2 for all model 1b-6b) as all of the four career-specific motivational capitals together (average of 0.097 R^2 for all model 1a-6a).

Discussion

Overall, the findings of this study lend support to the proposed career and culture fit framework. The total motivational capital was significantly associated with all six dependent variables in the predicted directions, while the four different career-specific motivational capitals had more mixed results. Spiral and linear motivational capitals had significant correlation coefficients with five out of the six dependent variables in the predicted directions, whereas expert and transitory motivational capitals had only significant correlation coefficients with two of the six dependent variables. No correlation coefficient turned out to be in the opposite direction of the hypotheses for any of the predicted relationships. When tested together in the multiple regression analysis, the spiral motivational capital retained its significantly positive associations with five of the dependent variables, expert motivational capital actually increased to four significant associations, linear decreased to two and transitory to only one significant association with the six dependent variables.

A possible explanation for this pattern of mixed results for the career-specific motivational capitals is that spiral and linear were the most prevalent career motives among the respondents, which may have given additional weight to those two career-specific motivational capitals. It may also be that the overall tendency towards the expert culture gave some additional weight to the expert motivational capital in the regression analysis.

However, a key finding is that the more aggregated measures of both the independent and dependent variables that indicate the strongest support. That is, the total motivational capital explained more variance in all six of the dependent variables than any of the career-specific motivational capitals. The four-item overall experienced cultural goodness was also explained to a greater extent by all of the independent variables than any of the five single item dependent variables. This suggests that total motivational capital as a more relevant measure of the career motives and culture fit and its associations with other organizational and individual factors than the career-specific motivational capitals as was predicted in *H7*.

These findings represent an important conceptual and empirical extension of Driver and Coombs' (1983) early study of the fit between persons' careers and organizational culture. Rather than making an overall evaluation of the studied organization's culture and then predicting how well different career orientations fit this culture, the conceptualization and measurement of the motivational capital of each person as the

overall fit between her/his career motives and perceived organizational culture should increase the generalizability of the notion of career and culture fit between person and organization.

Retention was the least explained dependent variable by the motivational capitals in both the correlation and regression analyses. Measuring retention with the year of employment may not capture the voluntary character of people wanting to stay, since there probably have been involuntary lay-offs of people (cf. Huselid, 1995) who very much wanted to stay as well as people who have stayed not so much because of their great desire to do so, but more due to difficulties in finding alternative jobs. Employment year is also affected by varying levels of recruitment and lay-offs during different time periods, such as business cycle effects (Larsson and Eneroth, 1993). In our study, employment year is also associated with how well the organization is viewed to be doing, since the perceived effectiveness of strategy and overall experienced cultural goodness variables were also significantly related to employment year.

Limitations and future research

There are several limitations to this study that need to be considered. The data were collected through self-report questionnaires. This may bias respondents towards more consistent or positive responses. However, the main purpose of answering to the questionnaires was for the respondents to get developmental input about their own career and organization as the practical part of this action research instead of merely contributing to a research project. The respondents' individual answers to all cultural and dependent variable-related items were not disclosed. In addition, the four single item dependent variables were formulated in terms of the respondents' perception of most of the organizational members' views and not explicitly their own individual view (since the latter formulation could bias respondents that may have not been convinced about the anonymity of their answers). Furthermore, the study used very complex and opaque independent variables as the fit between different career motives and types of organizational cultures in two separate questionnaires made it practically impossible for the respondents to figure how they ought to respond. This also reduced the risk of common method bias, as did the inclusion of employment year as a dependent variable.

The somewhat lower Cronbach alphas for the individual career motives than for the organizational culture scores can be attributed to greater sensitivity to language issues (most of the respondents from 40 different countries answered the questionnaires in English, even though this was often at best their second language) due to much fewer career motive items (3) per score as compared to the many more culture items (11-13). Thus, the highly multinational character of the respondent sample provided a tougher challenge to both the measurements and hypothesis-testing due to possibly confounding language issues as compared to a purely domestic sample. In addition to lower Cronbach alphas for the career scores with few items, this may have contributed to lower R^2. Future research and practice should try to minimize such possible language effects by translating the career and culture questionnaires to as many languages as possible (rather than limiting the use to only countries with English as their primary language in an increasingly global world) as Korn/Ferry International has done in their global recruitment, assessment, and coaching services (e.g. Brousseau *et al.*, 2006; Larsson *et al.*, 2003).

The first four dependent variables were measured with only single questionnaire items. The calculation of scale reliability was only possible for the last dependent variable "overall experienced cultural goodness" as an overarching construct comprised of the four organizational items. It is desirable for future research to measure how well the strategic, structural, performance appraisal, and rewards are viewed with multiple items for each variable. Still, it is a strength of the present study to be able to report both significant findings on each of these four analytically distinct variables as well as on the overall construct of experienced cultural goodness that they appear to make up together with a high Cronbach alpha. The better results of both the total motivational capital and overall experienced cultural goodness variables suggest that future research using multiple item measures could probably account for more variance than the relatively low amounts explained in this study. In addition, future research should also add relevant control variables, such as age, gender, and managerial level that were missing in this study.

The use of data from only one organization limits the generalizability to other organizations. While this study adds one more analyzed organization to the early study of Driver and Coombs (1983), future research should add more organizations and preferably cross-organizational comparisons to study possible industry and national effects. For example, motivational capital may be relatively more important in service industries that have to rely more on human resources than the here studied manufacturing firm. Some findings of national culture differences in career concepts and motives (Larsson *et al.*, 2003) also indicate that different career-specific motivational capitals can be more or less important in different countries.

Future research should also use more advanced outcome and performance measurements, such as voluntary exits, capability audits (Ulrich and Smallwood, 2004), synergy realization in mergers, acquisitions, and other strategic changes (Larsson *et al.*, 2004), and financial results. This can strengthen our understanding and valuation of how important it really is to manage motivation for achieving business success.

Implications

This study suggests that especially the total motivational capital of an organization is important for how effective the strategy is viewed, how well-functioning the structure is experienced, how relevant the performance appraisal is considered, and how satisfied the members feel. These findings go beyond the common basic assumption that satisfaction is related to performance. Viewing the organization's strategy, structure, and appraisal system more positively is more likely to enhance performance than merely being satisfied. Consider the alternative of employees experiencing the strategy as ineffective, the structure as poorly functioning, and the appraisal system as irrelevant. Such views can hardly be conducive for high-performing contributions.

These views tend to be self-reinforcing, given the positive correlations between the first four dependent variables. Since the total motivational capital is positively associated with all of them, it can become an important managerial tool to enhance performance. By aligning organizational culture with employees' career motives, the motivational capital and the employee views of their organization are enhanced, contributing to enhanced retention and reduced cost associated with turnover (e.g. recruiting and training). This complements Huselid's (1995) findings of the positive

impact of high-performance HR practices on turnover, productivity, and performance. It also adds more of a motivational side to the organizational capability framework of Ulrich and Smallwood (2004) that builds the intangible strengths and value of the organization.

Organizations can increase their motivational capital in several ways. First, career development efforts can increase self-awareness of what is mostly motivating to different individuals. Employees can thereby both reduce career misdirection of pursuing careers on other people's terms (such as an upward linear career, that actually would not be motivating for certain people that have less linear motives) and discover previously unrecognized motivation potentials (such as transitory motives that have been devalued because of viewing the transitory career negatively).

Second, the organizational career culture can improve the alignment of its structure, appraisal and reward systems to avoid demotivating inconsistencies such as the spiral matrix structure, expert quality appraisal, and transitory rewards example above where most people are forced to lose motivation by either having to behave in unwanted ways or getting unwanted rewards.

Third, by using a model, language, and measurement that can relate the people and culture of the organization, such as this motivational capital framework, the fit between people's career motives and human resource management can be improved. It is important to realize that what is intrinsically rewarding for experts can be quite demotivating for others, such as spirals and transitories, and vice versa. Kerr (1975) warned early against the folly of rewarding A while hoping for B, that is, inconsistent performance appraisal, reward system, and strategies. The career concept and culture model can further help organizations avoid the double folly of rewarding people with for them demotivating reward while appraising other performance factors and hoping for some other strategically needed behavior, such as the previous example of mainly rewarding expert behavior (quality) with transitory rewards (short-term bonus) when striving for a linear growth strategy.

Fourth, in addition to using career-based HR development, rewards, and appraisal to increase the motivational capital of an organization, selection is another HR function that can be utilized in this pursuit. Unfortunately, selection and development practices are often kept relatively separate in practice (e.g. the use of different tools and specialized consultants). In contrast, we find that great value can be gained from managing selection and development as two closely related HR processes, such as the talent management of identifying and developing high potentials for different managerial levels (Brousseau *et al.*, 2006). The career model can be used for matching who should be selected for what kind of development that will suit both the person and the organization.

Matching career-wise self-aware people with consistent, pluralistic, and precise human resource management and organizational cultures can be a powerful way of building strong motivational capital platforms for high performance implementation of corporate strategies.

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