

Career orientations of information systems employees in South Africa

Magid Igharia

Programs in Information Science, The Claremont Graduate School, 130 East Ninth Street, Claremont, CA 91711, USA

Guy Meredith

Viadana, 15 Shirley Road, Claremont 7700, South Africa

Derek C Smith

Department of Information Systems, University of Cape Town, Private Bag Rondebosch 7700, South Africa

Managing the careers of information systems (IS) personnel is important to the strategic use of information in business. Finding appropriate mechanisms for motivating IS personnel will likely re-emerge as a critical success factor for IS managers. This study examines dimensions and levels of career orientations and their correlations with individual and work-related outcome variables among 112 IS employees in South Africa. The findings reveal a rich diversity of career orientations held by IS employees. The data strongly suggest that IS employees are very service- and security-oriented. IS personnel in South Africa are also lifestyle and managerially oriented. However, IS personnel scored low on technical orientation and entrepreneurship. This paper suggests that the dual career ladder is not an effective device for managing IS personnel. Organizations must be careful to provide career paths that retain and motivate workers and more importantly find a match between the organizational needs and the individual needs and restructure jobs accordingly. Suggestions for future research are offered and implications for management are identified.

Keywords: career orientations, career anchors, information systems, career management, career paths, South Africa

Information systems (IS) are recognized as a means of creating and sustaining competitive advantage in the global marketplace. Many organizations invest in IS in an effort to remain competitive and to maintain or even enhance their performance (*BusinessWeek*, 1993; *Fortune*, 1994). As an organization becomes more dependent on the use of information systems and technology, the importance of having competent IS professionals and the effective utilization or management of IS professionals in the organization increases. An important element of effective

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