SUCCESSFUL NEWCOMER ADJUSTMENT

ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION PRACTICES
FOR SUCCESSFUL NEWCOMER ADJUSTMENT

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Abstract

This research study examines the practices organizational leaders can employ to assist newcomers in their adjustment to the organization, thereby creating an increase in the number of successful, long-term employees. In the workplace setting, organizational newcomers who fail to properly adapt are at risk for early “turnover” or an extended period of disengagement, producing an extremely costly scenario for the organization. Literature in the area of organizational socialization and successful newcomer adjustment suggests myriad ways to positively influence the newcomer’s experience; however, no single source offers a comprehensive approach that can be universally applied. Grounded by interpersonal communication theory and the principals of social penetration and uncertainty reduction, this study surveyed previous short-term employees to evaluate their common reasons for leaving the organization. By measuring relational satisfaction variables at select times within the unsuccessful employment experience, this study uncovers key areas in which organizational leaders should concentrate their socialization efforts.
We the undersigned, certify that we read this thesis and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the degree Master of Arts.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

When a newcomer joins an organization, they bring with them the memories of past failures and successes as well as expectations of what the new organization will offer them (Boswell, Shipp, Payne & Culbertson, 2009; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). At the same time, the newcomer struggles to make sense of an unfamiliar environment that includes new people and processes as well as feelings of stress, surprise, confusion, anxiety and awkwardness (Louis, 1980; Slaughter & Zickar, 2006; Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005).

Interpersonal communication drives the newcomer’s organizational socialization process. It is through communicative discourse that newcomers establish a relational point of reference between themselves, the organization and its individual members (Barge & Schlueter, 2004). During the critical organizational entry period, the formal and informal messages the newcomer receives combine to either progress or dissolve the relational satisfaction they experience (Altman, Vinsel, & Brown, 1981; Barge & Schlueter, 2004).

Successful newcomers develop interpersonal and intra-organizational trust (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt & Camerer, 1998), as well as the necessary attitudes, behaviors and knowledge to become an engaged and active contributor to the organization (Allen, 2006; Morrison, 2002). By contrast, unsuccessful newcomers fail to develop these attributes and become a liability to the organization.

Importance of the Study

Organizational socialization as it relates to successful newcomer adjustment is an important topic, especially in the workplace setting. The most recently hired workers are also the most likely to leave, or “turn over,” their position within the organization (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). Newcomer turnover is extremely costly to the organization, because
it has invested in recruitment and training but has not yet fully realized a return on its investment in the form of that employee’s productivity.

Early turnover is not the only cost of unsuccessful newcomer adjustment; newcomers who fail to adjust and yet remain with the company may also not reach their productivity potential and could even interfere with the productivity of others. In fact, lost productivity stemming from disengaged employees has been found to cost U.S. businesses billions of dollars each year (Bates, 2004; Johnson, 2004; Kowalski, 2003; Saks, 2006).

Successful newcomer adjustment increases the probability of a long-term relationship between the employee and the organization (Boswell, Boudreau & Tichy, 2005; Boswell et al., 2009; Branham, 2005; Moody & White, 2003). When a newcomer becomes actively engaged with their role and at the same time holds a positive attitude toward the organization, both the organization and the employee benefit (Saks, 2006). Therefore, it is in the organization’s best interest to invest in practices which produce positive outcomes for newcomers.

**Statement of Purpose**

The primary objective of this research study was to identify the organizational socialization practices that lead to successful newcomer adjustment. By utilizing social penetration and uncertainty reduction perspectives to examine the common issues contributing to newcomer turnover, it was possible to effectively distinguish lapses in interpersonal communications processes. Organizational leaders can use this study’s findings to better understand and promote communications that successfully socialize newcomers.
Definition of Terms Used

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions are used:

Employee Engagement/Disengagement.

The definition of the term “employee engagement” (and therefore its antonym, “employee disengagement”) is easily confused with other psychological constructs such as “organizational commitment,” “organizational citizenship behavior” and “job involvement,” yet it does have a unique meaning and application (Robinson, Perryman & Hayday, 2004; Saks, 2006). Unlike other constructs, engagement refers to a state of being in which the employee is “attentive and absorbed” in carrying out their formal role with the organization (Saks, 2006, p. 602). Interestingly, the construct of “job involvement,” which is characterized by the employee’s perception of how well the job role meets their personal needs and aligns with their self-image, is believed to be an antecedent to engagement (May, Gilson & Harter, 2004; Saks, 2006).

Employee Turnover.

Employee “turnover”—the instance of an individual leaving the organization—can result from a single issue or a number of factors, including unsuccessful newcomer socialization, employee disengagement, a better employment opportunity elsewhere or simply a personal circumstance necessitating separation. Turnover can also be initiated by the organization itself, when an employee has not met required standards for their role. For the purposes of this study, only negative-performance, newcomer turnover will be addressed; that is, an unsuccessful newcomer who either self-initiated turnover (i.e., resignation) or whose employment was terminated by the organization (i.e., firing or laying off).
Newcomer Orientation.

The term “newcomer orientation” is used in two distinct ways within the literature. First, it is used in relation to the short-term event that occurs immediately upon organizational entry in which the newcomer is introduced to organizational processes and role-related activities, as well as given a “plethora of paperwork to complete” (Hampel & Lamont, 2011, p.2). This is also typically the period of time in which the newcomer meets a broad number of colleagues with which they will interface as part of their day-to-day activity. The second use of the term “newcomer orientation” generally describes the newcomer’s cognitive and emotional processes as they attempt to make sense of their new surroundings. Louis (1980) describes this as the “encounter” stage.

Organizational Culture.

"Organizational culture" refers to the organization's attitudes, values and norms, which influence collective behavior and belief systems. According to Schwartz and Davis (1981), an organization’s culture is “reflected in the attitudes and values, the management style and the problem-solving behavior of its people” (p. 32).

Organizational Socialization.

“Organizational socialization” can be a structured or unstructured process by which newcomers acquire the “social knowledge and skills necessary to assume a particular job in an organization” (Van Maanen, 1978, p. 19). The structured form of organizational socialization is sometimes referred to as “onboarding,” a multi-channel communications process that strategically delivers the information and interaction required for the newcomer to successfully adjust to the organization and their role within it (Hampel & Lamont, 2011).
Organization of Remaining Chapters

The following chapters will detail the literature, theory, logic and methodology supporting this study, as well as the actionable outcomes of the research conducted. Chapter 2 discusses the interpersonal communication theories and ethical and philosophical assumptions guiding this study, and then proceeds with an exemplary review of the literature. In Chapter 3, the scope and methodology of the study will provide a foundation for Chapter 4, which delves into the detailed study results and ensuing discussion. Chapter 5 will summarize and conclude the outcomes of this study, and will include recommendations for organizational leaders based upon the study’s results as well as an outline of the study’s limitations and suggestions for further research.
Chapter 2. Review of the Literature

The incredible body of research in organizational socialization and newcomer adjustment can be both impressive and overwhelming to those wishing to understand how to positively influence organizational newcomers.

The first part of this chapter will discuss philosophical and ethical assumptions, as well as the interpersonal communication theories serving as a framework for the study. The second part of the chapter will review the organizational socialization literature according to three overarching themes: (1) institutionalized (formal) approaches to organizational socialization, (2) unstructured (informal) messaging within organizational culture and social interaction, and (3) individualized experiences and expectations that the newcomer brings with them upon organizational entry. The chapter will conclude with a commentary on the purpose of the research for this thesis and a series of questions that will guide its implementation and analysis.

Philosophical/Ethical Assumptions and Theoretical Basis

Interpersonal communication theory serves as the framework for this thesis. In the context of organizational communication, workplace relationships are guided by both interpersonal and organizational influences. In other words, communications between co-workers take place at an interpersonal level, but they are simultaneously influenced by individual social interactions as well as organizational requirements (Conrad & Poole, 2005).

Ethical versus Psychological Egoism.

The Greek philosopher Epicurus, who is perhaps best known for the maxim “Eat, drink, and be merry,” maintained a viewpoint based upon the concept of “ethical egoism,” which posits that it is right and good for the individual to pursue self-gratification and avoid any person or activity they deem unpleasant (Griffin, 2009), even to the point that they negate the needs of
others in favor of their own (Rachels, 1986). To the organizational newcomer, this philosophy might entail seeking out only understandable, enjoyable relationships and tasks; however, it can be assumed that the average newcomer knows that this practice, in the end, would not be of complete benefit to them (i.e., they would be disliked by their peers and most likely fired).

There is a general moral principle, with surrounding assumptions, that serves to guide us—at least within American corporate culture—to consider how our actions impact those we work with as well as the organization as a whole:

It is assumed that we have moral duties to other people, and not merely duties that we create, such as by making a promise or incurring a debt. We have “natural” duties to others simply because they are people who could be helped or harmed by what we do. If a certain action would benefit (or harm) other people, then that is a reason why we should (or should not) do that action. The commonsense assumption is that other people’s interests count, for their own sakes, from a moral point of view. (Rachels, 1986, p. 77)

A healthier alternative to ethical egoism, therefore, may be “psychological egoism.” Also referred to as the “minimax principle,” this philosophical alternative avoids the trappings of “all or nothing” by advising that one should pursue maximum benefits in return for minimal costs (Griffin, 2009).

Novelist and objectivist philosopher Ayn Rand described this ethical principle accordingly:

In psychological terms, the issue of man’s survival does not confront his consciousness as an issue of “life or death,” but as an issue of “happiness or suffering.” Happiness is the successful state of life, suffering is the warning signal of failure, of death. Just as the pleasure-pain mechanism of man’s body is an automatic indicator of his body’s welfare
or injury, a barometer of its basic alternative, life or death—so the emotional mechanism of man’s consciousness is geared to perform the same function, as a barometer that registers the same alternative by means of two basic emotions: joy or suffering.

Emotions are the automatic results of man’s value judgments integrated by his subconscious; emotions are estimates of that which furthers man’s values or threatens them, that which is for him or against him—lightning calculators giving him the sum of his profit or loss. (Rand, 1961, pp. 23-24)

This study assumes that the average organizational newcomer will take some bad (“suffering”) with the good (“joy”), as long as the good continues to outweigh the bad, such that the newcomer perceives an overall psychological profit from the organizational experience. Social exchange theorists gauge the perceived-benefits-over-cost relationship in terms of “relational satisfaction” (Griffin, 2009). Therefore, the focus of this study will involve the newcomer weighing the pros and cons of continuing with the organization they’ve recently joined.

**Social Penetration Theory.**

Altman and Taylor’s (1973) social penetration theory addresses how social interactions progress or dissolve a relationship over time. Multiple levels of communicative behavior are treated as a “unified system,” whereby verbal and nonverbal cues, as well as the communication setting, are examined as a whole (Altman, Vinsel, & Brown, 1981).

The consideration of multiple behavioral factors draws a key parallel to interpersonal communications within the organizational setting. Established in the philosophy of psychological egoism, social penetration theory also posits that, as long as the perceived rewards outweigh the perceived costs in a relationship, that relationship will successfully progress to a
more intimate level (Altman, Vinsel, & Brown, 1981). In the organizational setting, this closeness is achieved through a measured self-disclosure and reciprocity between individual and organizational parties that maintains an acceptable level of the aforementioned relational satisfaction (Griffin, 2009).

Research on organizational identification and commitment corresponds with the literature measuring relational satisfaction. For example, Van Knippenberg and Sleebos (2006) discovered a link between the individual’s perception of commitment to the organization and their overall job satisfaction:

While commitment refers to a relationship in which the individual and the organization are separate entities psychologically, identification implies that the individual and the organization are one in the sense that the organization is included in the individual's self-conception. We propose this has important implications for the relationships between identification and commitment on the one hand, and social exchange processes on the other. Central in the social exchange perspective is the assumption that the relationship between employees and their employer is built on the trade of effort and loyalty for benefits like pay, support, and recognition (Blau, 1964; Etzioni, 1961; Gould, 1979; Levinson, 1965). Such social exchange processes imply that individuals perceive self and organization as distinct entities psychologically (Levinson, 1965; Rousseau & Parks, 1993). Accordingly, our analysis suggests commitment is more contingent on perceptions of the quality of the exchange relationship between individual and organization than identification is, because identification implies psychological oneness whereas commitment does not. (p. 574)
Uncertainty Reduction Theory.

Also within the interpersonal communication umbrella is uncertainty reduction theory, which measures the “initial phases of interaction between strangers” in order to better predict how the relationship will progress (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). At the onset of organizational entry, the newcomer strives to reduce uncertainty regarding their role within the organization and amongst their peers. According to Berger and Calabrese (1975), the newcomer’s interpersonal communications will first be used almost exclusively for information gathering; therefore, the authors suggested the following axiom: “High levels of uncertainty cause increases in information seeking behavior. As uncertainty levels decline, information seeking behavior decreases.” (p. 103)

In their review of the history of organizational communication theory, Conrad and Poole (2005) note that around the same time Berger and Calabrese published their uncertainty reduction theory, organizational communication theorists were also beginning to “view organizations as dynamic, ever-changing groups of people who were actively trying to make sense out of the events that took place around them, while pursuing their own individual goals as well as goals they shared with their co-workers.” (p. 9)

Uncertainty reduction is an important component to the newcomer’s initial socialization with the organization. In their effort to reduce uncertainty, the newcomer gathers information so that future decisions are supported and the outcomes of social interactions are more predictable. Consider the following in terms of social penetration and relational satisfaction:

A curvilinear relationship exists between beliefs about probability and uncertainty, such that uncertainty is lowest when the probability of occurrence is believed to be 0% or 100% and highest when the probability of occurrence is believed to be 50%. Individuals
who are certain are those who “know” an event will or will not occur. They experience increasing uncertainty as the likelihood of the event occurring or not occurring becomes equal. If multiple alternatives are possible, uncertainty is highest when all events seem equally probable. (Brashers, 2001, pp. 478-479)

According to Clampitt and Williams (2005), a person who is unable to collect the information necessary for uncertainty reduction is likely to feel powerless and susceptible to making the wrong decisions. Left unchecked, this state of uncertainty can lead to “false dichotomies, resistance to change, rejection of relevant information, rigid categories, and regression to old rule-of-thumb models of thinking” (p. 316).

The Literature

Van Maanen & Schein (1979) are credited with identifying six overarching classes of organizational socialization tactics: collective versus individual; formal versus informal; sequential versus fixed; variable versus random; serial versus disjuncture; and those involving investiture versus divestiture. According to Jones (1986), who built upon this work, different patterns of socialization (following these six classes) will produce different results.

For the purposes of this thesis, the body of available literature will be reviewed in the context of formal (institutionalized) versus informal (individualized) organizational socialization tactics (Jones, 1986). In addition, literature relating to the newcomer’s expectations upon organizational entry will also be reviewed.

**Formal Approaches to Organizational Socialization.**

Formal organizational socialization approaches are enacted either by the organization as a whole or by the newcomer’s immediate supervisor or department within the organization. These
formal approaches include various activities that are meant to familiarize the newcomer with the organization’s information and processes (Jones, 1986).

A number of studies have examined formal organizational socialization programs to identify the activities that are most beneficial to the newcomer. In his research, Allen (2006) advanced the hypothesis that “socialization tactics that are collective, formal, sequential, fixed, serial, and investing will be negatively related to turnover among newcomers” (p. 241). Allen measured the newcomer’s propensity for turnover by gauging his or her level of organizational socialization as it related to his or her embeddedness; that is, the extent to which the employee exhibits a commitment to the organization. Allen’s work provides an important contribution to organizations today because it links employee embeddedness and formal socialization tactics, including collective learning experiences, scheduled orientation programs and one-on-one mentoring by more experienced organizational members.

An earlier study by Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg (2003) also looked at formal approaches to organizational socialization and their influence on newcomer embeddedness and turnover. In addition to the turnover issue, Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg examined the phenomenon of “work withdrawal,” where an employee psychologically disengages him- or herself from the work environment but remains a member of the organization. This, they say, is worse for the organization than if the employee were to actually turn over. Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg advance hypotheses that newcomer task mastery and role clarity are negative influencers on work withdrawal and have a positive influence on organizational embeddedness. In addition, they hypothesize that pre-entry knowledge and a proactive personality give the newcomer an advantage in task mastery, role clarity, work group integration and political knowledge. The research results that confirmed each of these hypotheses provide important
insights for organizational leaders, showing that newcomer socialization actually begins during
the interview process and continues as the newcomer enters and adjusts to the organization.
Perhaps most important, this research confirms that task mastery and role clarity—which are
often engendered by formal training processes—are critical to successful newcomer adjustment.

The above literature supports Klein & Weaver (2000), who looked specifically at how an
organizational-level training program could benefit newcomers from an organizational
socialization standpoint. By creating an optional newcomer orientation program, Klein &
Weaver were able to evaluate the embeddedness of the individuals who did participate as
opposed to those who did not. The group that did not take part in the orientation program was
found to be less organizationally socialized on 3 of the 6 measured levels, while those who
attended the program exhibited a stronger commitment to the organization. An unexpected result
of the program was that those who attended exhibited stronger “people dimension”; that is, they
more quickly developed informal social relationships and networks within the organization. The
question, however, is whether the people who chose to participate actually possessed the

Wesson & Gogus (2005) put an interesting twist on newcomer orientation research by
conducting a comparison study between a social-based orientation and a computer-based
orientation program. The organization studied was in the process of converting its traditional 1-
week group orientation program (which included presentations, videos, reading assignments,
team-building activities and Q&A sessions) to a 3-day computer-based orientation program.
During the transition, certain groups of new hires attended the traditional program while others
were socialized using the computer-based program. Wesson & Gogus found that those who
attended the computer-based orientation were weaker than their counterparts in the areas of
people, politics and organizational goals and values. In addition, supervisors rated them lower on role clarity. Given the findings in Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg (2003), this study promotes the idea that organization-level, social-based orientation programs significantly contribute to successful newcomer orientation.

**Informal Approaches to Organizational Socialization.**

Most early research in organizational socialization focuses on formal, organization-led approaches; only in the last decade has research taken a more holistic approach by examining how informal social networks impact newcomer adjustment. Because of this, a limited amount of literature is currently available on the topic.

An organization’s informal social network structures can be directly linked to newcomers’ socialization outcomes (Chao, O’Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994; Morrison, 2002). According to Chao et al. (1994), the bonds a newcomer forms (or fails to form) through their initial social interactions will be a key indicator of the level of acceptance that person achieves as they expand socially to other organizational groups. Chao et al. (1994) studied newcomers’ organizational relationships in combination with formal socialization dimensions, including task mastery; information gathering; industry and job-related language; company goals and values, and organizational tradition. The researchers did not isolate the impact of informal social relationships in and of themselves; instead, they chose to measure successful socialization according to the newcomer’s ability (or inability) to assimilate across all dimensions.

Morrison (2002), however, did explore the overall structure of newcomers’ organizational relationships and its impact on successful socialization, determining that larger,
multi-unit informational networks, when combined with a traditional mentor arrangement, could be of greater benefit to the newcomer:

For example, newcomers with larger informational networks that cut across organizational units reported greater organizational knowledge, whereas those with denser and stronger informational networks indicated greater mastery of their jobs and greater clarity with respect to their roles. Having supervisors (as opposed to just peers) within one's informational network also related to job and role learning. (p. 1156)

Barge & Schlueter (2004) took a look into informal organizational socialization processes by focusing on individual discourse and the “memorable messages” these events create. The authors explored not only the content of these messages, but also the context under which they occurred. In their research, Barge & Schlueter found that the messages newcomers received involved either fitting into the organization or developing themselves as individual contributors. This dichotomy indicates that there is a competing relationship between a newcomer’s need to assimilate and their need to make an individual impression. Organizational leaders can utilize these findings to understand the importance of both institutionalized and individualized communications with organizational newcomers.

The Newcomer’s Incoming Expectations

Perhaps the most congruent with psychological egoism, research surrounding newcomer expectations attempts to examine the alignment between the on-the-job benefits a newcomer expects to see and those they actually realize (Wanous, Poland, Premack, & Davis, 1992).

The literature suggests organizations utilize a “realistic job preview,” or RJP, to provide a realistic expectation of the positive and negative experiences a newcomer is likely to encounter. In their research on the topic, Suszko and Breaugh (1986) conducted an experiment in which part
of a group was given an RJP while a control group received no RJP. According to the study’s results, those newcomers receiving an RJP “were more likely to turn down a job offer, perceive the organization as being honest with them, be able to cope with job demands, be satisfied with their jobs, and remain in their jobs” (p. 513).

While some may view turned-down job offers as a negative event, Suszko and Breaugh (1986) stress that prospective employees are more certain they’ve made a well-informed decision to join the organization when the RJP is given prior to organizational entry. The authors suggest, however, that a secondary session upon organizational entry can also give the new employee important information that can be used to cope with their new role.

In an effort to understand the correlation between previous experience in a role and its effect on the outcome of an RJP, Meglino, Ravlin, and DeNisi (1997) advanced the hypothesis that people without previous role-specific experience would place much less importance upon negative information received as part of an RJP. Like Suszko and Breaugh (1986), Meglino et al. also studied two groups, one with an RJP and one without. The results confirmed their hypothesis by revealing that those with previous role-related experience perceived negative input as a much higher threat to their work satisfaction.

Buckley, Fedor, Veres, Wiese, and Carraher (1998) maintain that RJPs should be a standard for all organizations, because the “basic idea behind them appears to make both good business and ethical sense” (p. 452). The literature reviewed in this section does indeed indicate that pre-entry dialogue is a key component in the overall newcomer socialization process; however, the exact prescription for what information should and should not be initially revealed is still not apparent (Buckley, et al., 1998). Therefore, research surrounding the impact of RJP's
on newcomers’ expectations continues to be important to the topic of organizational
socialization.

Research Questions

Organizational socialization and newcomer adjustment literature highlights the myriad
ways organizational leaders can enact socialization programs to increase the newcomer’s initial
job satisfaction and lower first-year employee turnover rates. Current literature points to formal
and informal techniques once the newcomer has entered the organization, as well as
recommended tactics for the pre-hire process, where initial expectations are formed by the
would-be newcomer. No single source, however, offers organizational leaders a comprehensive
guide to promoting successful newcomer adjustment from the pre-hire through the onboarding
stages.

The purpose of this research study is to identify the common, organizationally-
controllable factors contributing to unsuccessful newcomer adjustment, such that successful
organizational socialization practices can be holistically developed and any cultural or
interpersonal communication barriers can be identified and productively addressed.

The following research questions will guide the study:

RQ1: What are the common issues contributing to a newcomer’s decision to exit an
organization prior to their one-year anniversary?

RQ2: Which of the common issues identified in RQ1 are controllable by the organization
and which are not?

Chapter 3 will discuss the methodology for implementing these two research questions,
in order to suggest areas of focus within an organization’s newcomer socialization process.
Chapter 3. Scope and Methodology

Scope of the Study

Previous research has shown the positive correlation between realistic job previews (RJPs) and successful newcomer adjustment; however, the literature surrounding post-entry influencers also provides a solid argument for organizational methods that improve newcomers’ success. For this study, the following research questions were explored in an attempt to identify common, organizationally-controllable themes among the reasons people gave for exiting an organization within their first year of employment:

RQ1: What are the common issues contributing to a newcomer’s decision to exit an organization prior to their one-year anniversary?

RQ2: Which of the common issues identified in RQ1 are controllable by the organization and which are not?

Because this study seeks to explain subjects’ beliefs concerning the contributors to their own organizational turnover, survey research via questionnaire provided an ideal fit (Rubin, Rubin, Haridakis & Piele, 2010). The survey research participant base was collected through random sampling from a cluster sample of social media users, specifically those utilizing the professional networking site LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) and the micro-blogging site Twitter (www.twitter.com).

Several methods were employed to maintain the random nature of respondent collection. For LinkedIn, a paid advertisement (Figure 1) and postings to the site’s “Answers” section during a specified five-day period of time. To recruit participants via Twitter, multiple postings were made using various keywords and hash tags.
Methodology of the Study

This research study incorporated a survey questionnaire method containing question sets for collecting qualitative data.

Participants.

LinkedIn claims to be the “world’s largest professional network on the Internet with more than 175 million members in over 200 countries and territories” (LinkedIn, 2012, About us: LinkedIn facts). Another social media site, Twitter, is dubbed a “real-time information network” and has a worldwide network of millions of users (Twitter, 2012, About). The social construct of these sites presents an ideal environment for soliciting participation in an employment-related research study.

The survey’s participant sample was extracted from the total population of LinkedIn members and Twitter users. Twitter views are mostly limited to a specific point in time, so the actual sample size viewing each survey-related post was relatively small in comparison to overall network usage. Due to the large scale of the LinkedIn database, however, demographics of the target sample were specified to limit the number of those seeing the display advertisement. These specifics included: 1) Ages 25 and up, 2) Only those located within the 50 United States, and 3) Those who are presently in a company with more than 50 employees. According to LinkedIn, the estimated sample size was 7.9 million people; however, it can be assumed that the actual sample size was exponentially lower, given that not every LinkedIn member accesses the
site on any given day, and because the number of ad impressions (i.e., the instances it is displayed) are based upon a cost-per-click limit. Indeed, the actual number of ad impressions over the specified five-day period was only 139,837. The ad received 34 click-throughs (i.e., responses) and approximately one-third (11) of those clicking the ad actually completed the survey.

**Implementation.**

The goal response number for the survey itself was a minimum of 50; therefore, many tactics were employed to surpass this threshold while maintaining the integrity of the random sampling method. The survey was not promoted in a way that would reveal the author’s identity, nor was it sent to any known direct or indirect connections of the author. While demographic designations were used to narrow the delivery of the LinkedIn display advertisement, no demographic restrictions were in place for the other social media postings.

Upon accessing the survey from one of the social media postings, respondents were given a full description of the survey’s objectives and end uses, then asked to opt into the survey by answering an initial question on the survey’s cover page (Figure 2). If a “yes” response was given to the initial question then the respondent was allowed to continue with the survey. If a “no” response was given to the initial question, the survey would be discontinued and the respondent taken to a “thank you” page.
Figure 2. Online survey cover page with participant opt-in question.

Those who elected to continue with the online survey were taken to a demographic page to collect baseline demographic information as well as self-qualify for the study (Figure 3). Those meeting the study criteria—i.e., they worked for an organization, but separated from the organization prior to their one-year anniversary—were qualified to participate in the Web-based survey. Therefore, those who were qualified were allowed to continue with the survey and those who were unqualified by selecting “no” to survey question 4 were taken directly to a “thank you” page. Although those who were unqualified ended the survey at that point, they were still considered as part of the total survey completion count.

For legal reasons, a second disqualifying question was included in the survey to remove anyone accessing the survey who may be under 18 (Neuman, 2006). All others were qualified to continue with the survey as there were no specific demographic qualifiers in place.
Survey.

The survey research was designed to elicit qualitative responses. In an effort to not guide responses to specific conclusions, questions were formulated with multiple choice answers to quantify common overarching workplace issues, such as work relationship problems, unexpected duties, compensation concerns, etc. Qualitative components throughout the survey enabled respondents to expand upon and give insights into their unique experience. (See Appendix for survey questions.)

Conducting the research in this way assured a combination of responses that would achieve the four primary research objectives:

1. Learn the chief reasons newcomers exit an organization prior to their one-year anniversary,
2. Determine which of the chief reasons newcomers have for exiting an organization can and cannot be controlled by the organization,
3. Identify common themes amongst the chief, organizationally-controllable reasons newcomers have for exiting an organization, and

4. Suggest which of these common themes can be addressed through a formal organizational socialization process.

**Ethics.**

Ethical research practices involve methodical, unbiased techniques and end-to-end consideration of the participants’ best interests (Rubin et al., 2010). Attention was given to research ethics during the design of the survey’s question sets and logic flow. Because no monetary or gift-based incentive was offered for completing the survey, the communicated benefit was emotional: Being a part of something that would educate organizational leaders in an effort to prevent what happened to the respondent—i.e., a failed or negative socialization experience—from happening again.

Every effort was made to communicate clearly and objectively with study participants, as well as to handle the data they provided with utmost care. Several measures were put in place to protect participants’ confidentiality and anonymity. No personally-identifying information (PII) was collected or shared with other participants. Internet Protocol (IP) address information automatically collected by the survey tool was stored on a secured server, only to be used for the purposes of conducting the survey (not reporting). For individual qualitative reporting purposes, each participant was assigned a number correlating with their contact record. Only the researcher had access to this correlational information.

**Analysis.**

In keeping with the philosophical and ethical assumptions underpinning this thesis, the researcher conducted a cost-benefit analysis to uncover the disruptor(s) to relational satisfaction
between the employee and organization (Neuman, 2006). Each dissatisfaction theme was given a value depending upon its prevalence among respondents; the higher the number of mentions the higher the correlational value to discontinued employment.

This study examined organizational processes and temporal elements to establish commonalities that can be autonomously addressed within a myriad of workplace settings (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). To better understand the processes leading up to the newcomer turnover situation, workflow analyses were conducted based upon the survey’s quantitative and qualitative responses. In addition, logic modeling was used to map the newcomer’s time with the organization, beginning with the perceived situation prior to and upon organizational entry, and proceeding through the actions on the organization’s part and the employee’s correlating assumptions that led to their turnover.

Validity and Reliability.

Construct validity for this survey can be established by comparing its key measures with those of previous studies. For example, a useful comparison of the realistic job preview (RJP) related measures from this study can be those of the study performed by Suszko and Breaugh (1986), who were able to positively correlate RJPs with successful newcomer adjustment.

The variety within the survey’s participant sample—although the sample originated from a cluster source—can serve to negate some of the spurious variables that may be present, such as a poor hire choice on the organization’s part. In addition, several response choices are seeded throughout the survey to specifically reinforce internal validity, such as asking whether someone left the company simply because they were presented with a stronger job opportunity (something that is, for the most part, beyond the company’s control).
The true test of the external validity of this research will be its real-world implementation. As organizational leaders implement this study’s findings, they will most likely find solutions that serve them well and others requiring adjustment and continued trial. Overall, however, organizational leaders should find the recommendations stemming from this study relatable to their unique business setting.

The results of this survey are discussed in Chapter 4.
Chapter 4. The Study

Introduction

This section will discuss the results of the survey, including the data collected from responses to each survey question set, to inform the overall study of practices for successful newcomer adjustment. While basic observations will be made in the first portion of this chapter, a more detailed discussion of the study results and their implications will take place in the Discussion section of this chapter.

Data Analysis

The research survey began with an opt-in question, a qualification question and two demographic questions. Five foundational questions established a benchmark from which responses could be cross-tabbed to discover any interesting correlations. For example, cross-tabbing by whether a person had performed the role previously could reveal patterns in the organizational issues they experienced or the expectations held.

Qualitative responses were gathered and subsequently analyzed based upon three distinct stages within the employment process: immediately prior to employment, two-to-three weeks following employment and the moment of organizational separation. As previously discussed in Chapter 3, a cost-benefit analysis was employed to uncover the disruptor(s) to relational satisfaction between the employee and organization (Neuman, 2006). Each dissatisfaction theme was given a value depending upon its prevalence among respondents; the higher the number of mentions the higher the correlational value to discontinued employment.

The survey questionnaire was designed to solicit feedback surrounding the overarching themes of organizational demographics, culture, peers and leadership, as well as the newcomer’s role and previous experience. As the survey data points were methodically analyzed, common
issues emerged within each of these overarching themes. For example, within the theme of organizational leadership, there was a common perception that direct supervisors and those above them did not effectively communicate and provide support for the newcomer’s role.

**Results of the Study**

A total of 56 people began the survey, with 44 completing it (a 79% completion rate). All 56 initial respondents elected to take the survey and provided the following demographic information. This information served no other purpose than to confirm that the survey’s respondents represented both genders and all age groups (with the exception of 18 and under, which would have been disqualified).

Table 1  
*Gender demographics of all opt-in participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2  
*Age group demographics of all opt-in participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 18</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-34</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 and over</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next question (Table 3) was intended to remove anyone from the survey who had not worked with a company for less than a year:
Table 3

*Qualifying question for opt-in participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, once.</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, more than once.</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, never.</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown, four respondents were disqualified from taking the rest of the survey at that point.

**Foundational Data.**

To collect foundational data representing the roles and organizations being discussed, respondents were asked to recollect their experience from their “most recent or memorable job” fitting the under-a-year criteria.

The organizations being evaluated represented various sizes and industries, as identified by respondents in Tables 4 and 5. Once again, this data was used for confirmation that respondents represented an array of organizational sizes and settings.

Table 4

*Organizational employee size*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What was the organization's employee size at the time you were hired?</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 or less employees</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-50 employees</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-500 employees</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501-1,000 employees</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater than 1,000 employees</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of the following best describes the organization's primary industry? 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture &amp; Forestry</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance &amp; Insurance</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel &amp; Restaurant (Hospitality)</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT &amp; Technology Services</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing, Advertising &amp; PR</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not-for-Profit</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil &amp; Gas</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Services</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Estate</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail &amp; Specialty Shop</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation &amp; Warehousing</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities &amp; Telecom</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/None of the Above</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following questions were posed to understand the breadth of roles represented (Table 6) as well as to determine the “newness” of the position the respondent had accepted (Table 7).

Table 6

Organizational level at which respondent joined

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which of the following best describes the organizational level you were hired at?</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer Options</td>
<td>Response Percent</td>
<td>Response Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President/CEO</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CxO</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager/Supervisor (with direct reports)</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager/Supervisor (no direct reports)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate/General Staff</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7

Respondent’s previous role-related experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Had you previously performed this role for another company?</th>
<th>Response Options</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, to some degree, but some parts of the role were new to me.</td>
<td>Yes, to some degree, but some parts of the role were new to me.</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, this was a completely new role for me.</td>
<td>No, this was a completely new role for me.</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The remainder of the survey focused on measuring respondents’ impressions of their role and various aspects of the organization at differing intervals of the newcomer process, from offer acceptance to two-to-three weeks post-employment, to the time of organizational separation. A total of 45 respondents continued with the survey from this point.

As a lead-in question (Table 8), respondents were asked about the “trade offs” they felt they made in order to accept the position and if any of these personal sacrifices impacted their decision to stay with the company long term.

Table 8

Respondent’s perceived trade offs for accepting the position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did taking this job involve any of the following &quot;trade offs&quot; and if so, did they ultimately influence your decision to leave the company? (OPTIONAL - Select only those that apply.)</th>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Yes, this influenced my decision to leave</th>
<th>No, this did not influence my decision to leave</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less money</td>
<td>Less money</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaker benefits</td>
<td>Weaker benefits</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer work hours</td>
<td>Longer work hours</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More travel</td>
<td>More travel</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A physical move</td>
<td>A physical move</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A longer commute</td>
<td>A longer commute</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A step back in title/function</td>
<td>A step back in title/function</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the cost-benefit continuum, the top three disruptors to relational satisfaction were “a step back in title/function,” “less money” and “longer work hours.” By contrast, “more travel,” “a physical move” and “a longer commute” were found to be the least likely to disrupt relational satisfaction between the newcomer and the organization. When responses are examined based
upon the age range of respondents, the data show that 18-25 year olds are most influenced by money, while title/function becomes increasingly important as a person progresses in their career. Interestingly, all age groups are equally concerned with longer work hours, with the exception of the 35-44 age group. This finding could suggest a pivotal point during this career stage, in which people are willing to work longer to achieve the next step up in title/function.

**Pre-Entry Impressions.**

Two question sets measured respondents’ impressions post job offer, but prior to their first day on the job. The first question set (Table 9) was designed to benchmark eight variables on a four-point, positive-to-negative corollary. At the top of the survey page supporting this question, the term “culture” was pre-defined for respondents.

**Table 9**

*Respondent’s initial impressions as a newcomer*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Overall positive</th>
<th>Somewhat positive, somewhat negative</th>
<th>Overall negative</th>
<th>Neither positive nor negative</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The organization’s culture?</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organization's product and/or service?</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organization in general?</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The industry the organization served?</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The job you were hired to do?</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your boss?</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your boss's boss?</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your immediate colleagues/ co-workers?</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority-positive data across all eight variables in the table above are consistent with previous research that finds people are generally optimistic at the prospect of a new employment opportunity (Boswell, Shipp, Payne, & Culbertson, 2009). One data point of note, however, is
that of the “boss’s boss”: The high “neither positive nor negative” rating indicates an overall lack of awareness and interaction prior to the newcomer’s organizational entry.

The goal of the second question set (Table 10) was to enable respondents to elaborate (if desired) on ways they felt the organization could have improved upon a specific variable:

Table 10

*Suggested improvements prior to entry*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization's culture:</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization's product/service:</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization in general:</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry served:</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job hired to do:</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boss:</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boss’s boss:</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate colleagues/co-workers:</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commentary attached to each variable indicated strong viewpoints on honesty surrounding organizational culture, more detailed position descriptions, and up-front engagement and support from immediate supervisors and those above them. The greatest amount of feedback was given in the areas of “job hired to do” and “boss’s boss,” while the least amount of feedback was attached to the “organization in general,” indicating that newcomers connect their initial success with their individual role and those who are in a direct path of support.

**Post-Entry Impressions.**

The same two question sets used to measure respondents’ impressions prior to their first day on the job were used to measure any shift occurring within two to three weeks of organizational entry (Tables 11 and 12).
Table 11

**Respondent’s post-entry impressions as a newcomer**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Following your first 2-3 weeks on the job, what was your general impression of...</th>
<th>Overall positive</th>
<th>Somewhat positive, somewhat negative</th>
<th>Overall negative</th>
<th>Neither positive nor negative</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The organization's culture?</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organization's product and/or service?</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organization in general?</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The industry the organization served?</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The job you were hired to do?</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your boss?</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your boss's boss?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your immediate colleagues/co-workers?</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12

**Suggested post-entry improvements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Based on your selections above, is there anything the organization could have done to make your impression(s) better?</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization's culture:</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization's product/service:</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization in general:</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry served:</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job hired to do:</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boss:</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boss's boss:</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate colleagues/co-workers:</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within the first month of the newcomer’s organizational entry, impressions have already begun to shift from the left-hand “overall positive” selection to the right, “somewhat positive, somewhat negative” and “overall negative” selections. Significant changes are seen in all variables, with the exception of “organizational product/service” and “industry served.” The greatest change occurs in the “job you were hired to do” variable, which drops by 72% in the “overall positive” category and increases by 58% in the “overall negative” category. In addition,
the “boss’s boss” variable shows a 60% drop in the “overall positive” category and a 55% increase in the “overall negative” category.

In Table 12 there is once again a large response to the “boss’s boss” variable, as well as the “boss” and “immediate colleagues/co-workers” variables. Comments indicate new revelations regarding the boss, mostly having to do with the newcomer sizing up the boss’s ability to support them in their role, based upon both direct and indirect social exchanges. According to one respondent, for example, “there were a couple of screaming incidents involving others in the first few weeks which made me wonder about my boss’s sanity.” By contrast, the “boss’s boss” and immediate co-workers remained a mystery, seeming aloof and non-collaborative to the newcomer.

To add another dimension to the topic at hand, the following question set (Table 13) was used. The goal of this question set was to determine which common, organizationally-controllable orientation practices were noticeably lacking to the newcomer.

Table 13

*Suggested newcomer orientation improvements*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A “friendlier” welcome</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More training</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More access to informational resources</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quicker technology/business system setup</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More “face time” with the boss</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, there was nothing they could have improved</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Training and access to informational resources are key factors as a newcomer orients to their role and their surroundings. These factors are even more important to those who are entering a role that is new to them. For survey respondents indicating that their unsuccessful
newcomer role was completely new to them, 59% indicated they would have liked more access to informational resources and 47% wished they had gotten more training.

As discussed in Chapter 2, principles of uncertainty reduction guide the newcomer as they strive for role clarity from both an organizational and interpersonal standpoint. Because the newcomer’s interpersonal communications will first be used almost exclusively for information gathering (Berger & Calabrese, 1975), it is important for the organization to effectively incorporate information sharing within its newcomer orientation process. Furthermore, the newcomer’s information-gathering success relies upon successfully formed interpersonal relationships with superiors and peers (Morrison, 2002).

**Organizational Separation.**

At this point in the survey the questions shifted to the time at which the respondent left the organization, their perceptions on the drivers of that separation, and their attitudes toward the organization and individuals within it upon exit.

**Table 14**

**Point of newcomer separation from the organization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At what point did you leave the company?</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Within the first month of employment</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At 2-3 months of employment</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At 4-6 months of employment</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At 7-9 months of employment</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At 10-11 months of employment</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nearly half (46%) of the survey respondents left the organization within the first 6 months, and 70% had exited the company before their 10-month anniversary. Table 14, however, confirms the impression shift seen at 2-3 weeks on the job; namely, that a key time at which an organization must recover a souring newcomer experience (if they wish to retain the newcomer) is prior to the fourth month of employment.
Again, the same initial question set was used to measure respondents’ impressions at a point in time within their organizational experience (Table 15):

Table 15

*Respondent’s point-of-separation impressions as a newcomer*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Overall positive</th>
<th>Somewhat positive, somewhat negative</th>
<th>Overall negative</th>
<th>Neither positive nor negative</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The organization's culture?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organization's product and/or service?</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organization in general?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The industry the organization served?</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The job you were hired to do?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your boss?</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your boss's boss?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your immediate colleagues/co-workers?</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15 demonstrates how a poor organizational experience can result in overall negativity toward the company, its products, its people and even the industry it serves. By the time the newcomer exits the company, the initially high numbers in the “overall positive” area have transferred to the “overall negative” area. Here, survey respondents indicated that their top three most changed impressions were within the “job you were hired to do,” “organization in general” and “organization’s culture” variables. Given that a primary goal of the newcomer is uncertainty reduction, any unpredictability or lack of alignment in these three areas can impede their vision of long-term success with the organization (Brashers, 2001).
Table 16

Point-of-separation suggested improvements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization's culture:</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization's product/service:</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization in general:</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry served:</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job hired to do:</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boss:</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boss's boss:</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate colleagues/co-workers:</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A primary complaint in the “job hired to do” variable was workload, along with poorly defined job duties and expectations. For the “organization in general,” issues with management interaction and the company’s financial status were discussed, indicating a perceived lack of mutual trust and value exchange. Dissatisfied newcomers also pointed to cultural issues of unfair or disrespectful practices that bred negativity and low morale.

The following two question sets (Tables 17 and 18) were designed to gain an understanding of the situation by which the newcomer left the organization. Whether a voluntary separation, a lay off or a firing, the newcomer’s departure represents both financial and productivity losses for the organization (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003), yet if the newcomer is fired or laid off, the assumption is often that the organization itself was not receiving value from the newcomer.
Table 17

*Circumstance surrounding organizational separation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I quit/resigned</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was &quot;laid off&quot;</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was fired</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18

*Laid off/fired respondent’s preparedness for separation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those who were laid off or fired were asked if they were surprised by the organization “letting them go.” Of these six respondents, none were surprised. The common thread between the four who were laid off was a lack of role clarity stemming from what they perceived as the organization’s inability to determine “what they wanted.” One respondent was laid off within the first month of employment, one was laid off in month four and the other two were laid off at 10-to-11 months with the organization. Throughout their survey responses, these four individuals indicate that they never felt like they had a long-term place within the organization.

According to Boswell et al. (2009), the newcomer synthesizes all communications they receive during the socialization process to form an impression of their interpersonal surroundings and to predict the success they will have in that particular environment. Studies have found that these initial impressions tend to mirror the actual success a newcomer will enjoy in their time with the organization, as well as the overall length of time that person will be with the organization (Boswell et al., 2009).
Table 19 shows that the majority of respondents began looking for a new job opportunity at two-to-three months of employment. This indicates that they predicted failure early in the onboarding process.

Table 19

Point of newcomer disengagement, as indicated by active job search

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At what point in time did you begin actively looking for another employment opportunity elsewhere?</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From the point of hire/I never stopped looking</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the first month of employment</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At 2-3 months of employment</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At 4-6 months of employment</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At 7-9 months of employment</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At 10-11 months of employment</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The last in a series of disappointments—i.e., the “last straw”—is often what leads a person to move in an alternate direction. According to Barge and Schlueter (2004), the newcomer’s relationship with the organization as a whole is constructed through a series of significant moments in time which are brought about through social discourse. Therefore, the preliminary driver of the newcomer’s decision to leave is not the result of one instance, but multiple instances of frustration that have created a conglomerate of perceptions and attitudes within the newcomer’s organizational awareness.

Table 20

Respondent’s “last straw moment”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What did your “last straw moment” (where you knew you no longer wanted to stay with the company) involve? (Select one or a combination of the items below.)</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An altercation with a superior</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An altercation with a co-worker</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An altercation with a customer</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A dislike for my role</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A dislike for the company culture</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A disagreement with policy/procedure</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received a better job offer elsewhere</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be expected, more than half of respondents selected “a dislike for my role” as a last straw moment, while 41% chose “a dislike for the company culture.” One-third of the last straw moments involved some type of interpersonal altercation, while one-third also involved a disagreement with a policy or procedure. “Other” comments were centered on feeling disrespected and overextended, as well as lack of job clarity.

The following two question sets (Tables 21 and 22) examine the alignment between the newcomer’s expectations and reality. Major, Kozlowski, Chao, and Gardner (1995) discuss how the “reality shock” caused by unmet expectations correlates with newcomers’ job dissatisfaction and turnover. Because impressions are measured at both the organizational and individual levels throughout the survey, the measurement of newcomers’ expectations was also taken at the organizational and individual (i.e., job role) level.

Table 21
Respondent’s level of expectation alignment with role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How closely aligned were your expectations of the job you were to assume and the actual job you found yourself in?</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Well aligned (my expectations were realistic)</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat aligned (not entirely realistic, but no major issues)</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat misaligned (not entirely realistic, with some major differences)</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely misaligned</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 22

Respondent’s level of expectation alignment with organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How closely aligned were your expectations of the company you were joining and the actual company you found yourself in?</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Well aligned (my expectations were realistic)</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat aligned (not entirely realistic, but no major issues)</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat misaligned (not entirely realistic, with some major differences)</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely misaligned</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of respondents felt their expectations of their job role were at least somewhat aligned with the reality of the job they came into, yet most indicated that their expectations of the company were “somewhat misaligned.” This could suggest that they had an idea of the job they were undertaking, but that the organizational atmosphere made it difficult for them to effectively execute upon their role. Many free-form responses support this, with respondents commenting that they desired more autonomy, authority and input into the organizational processes that impacted their work.

The next survey question (Table 23) solicited respondents’ input on how (if at all) the organization and/or hiring manager could have better aligned their expectations prior to organizational entry and thereby improved their newcomer experience. The top suggestion was to more clearly define the newcomer’s job role, with the social aspect of peer introductions trailing in a distant second. In the free-form “other” category, suggestions included being open about the financial status of the organization as well as cultural issues such as communication silos between departments. Respondents also reiterated the need for stronger role clarification.
Table 23

Pre-entry expectation alignment suggestions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More clearly defined my role/responsibilities</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduced me to more colleagues/co-workers</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made me aware of “trade-offs” such as longer hours, travel, etc.</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, there was nothing they could have improved</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To further investigate the assertions Suszko and Breaugh (1986) made regarding realistic job previews (RJPs) and turned down job offers (as discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis), respondents—less those who said “there was nothing they could have improved” in the previous question (Table 23)—were asked to imagine whether they would have still accepted the position if they had a realistic expectation upon receiving the organization’s job offer. Not surprisingly, only 19% of respondents said “yes.”

Table 24

Realistic expectation alignment and probability of job acceptance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If your expectations had been better aligned, would you still have accepted the position?</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

The survey’s overall framework, as well as the study as a whole, was guided by interpersonal communication theory under the assumption that communications between co-workers take place at an interpersonal level, yet they are simultaneously influenced by individual social interactions as well as organizational requirements (Conrad & Poole, 2005).
According to social penetration theory, as long as the perceived rewards outweigh the perceived costs in a relationship, that relationship will successfully progress to a more intimate level, or “relational satisfaction” (Altman, Vinsel, & Brown, 1981; Griffin, 2009). This research survey mapped the newcomer’s level of relational satisfaction during their progression with the organization, beginning with the perceived situation prior to and upon organizational entry, and proceeding up to the time of organizational separation (Figures 4 and 5).

*Figure 4.* “Overall positive” impression ratings pre-entry, post-entry and upon departure.
The two broad ends of the impression rating spectrum—“overall positive” and “overall negative”—show that as the unsuccessful newcomer progresses through the three measured stages of employment, satisfaction significantly decreases while dissatisfaction proportionately increases. The decreasing relational satisfaction on the newcomer’s part represents failed organizational adjustment.

The qualitative feedback during the “two-to-three weeks post entry” stage shows that there is a critical time period in which the newcomer must maintain a positive level of relational satisfaction in order for him or her to successfully adjust. Based upon survey data surrounding the timeframe in which newcomers began looking for another job (Table 19), this critical stage is at its peak within the second and third months of employment. Louis (1980) describes this stage thusly:

When beginning work, the individual passes from outsider to newcomer and enters the encounter stage. Experiences during the encounter period are critical in shaping the individual's long-term orientation to the organization (Hughes, 1958; Berlew and Hall,
1966; Van Maanen, 1976). During encounter, newcomers' anticipations are tested against the reality of their new work experiences. Differences between anticipations and experiences (including the previously described unmet expectations) become apparent and contribute to reality shock. (pp. 230-231)

In most cases, the post-entry measurement in Figure 5 shows only a slight change in sentiment from that prior to organizational entry, revealing that during the “encounter stage” described by Louis (1980), most newcomers are still open to positive feelings toward their job, the organization and those around them. Research question one, which sought to identify the common issues contributing to newcomer turnover, will be discussed so as to better understand the specific areas of concern emerging during the encounter stage. A discussion of research question two will follow, to determine the level of control the organization has over each of the common issues identified.

**RQ1: What are the common issues contributing to a newcomer’s decision to exit an organization prior to their one-year anniversary?**

According to Branham (2005), “an employer of choice recruits and engages talent through practices that address tangibles and intangibles, focus on the long term as well as the short term, and are tailored to the organization” (p. 57). Tangible employee incentives include salary, health insurance and paid time off (short term) and stock options, profit sharing and 401(k) plans (long term). Examples of intangible employee incentives are work-life balance and newcomer engagement (short term), as well as organizational culture and interpersonal relationships (long term).

Many issues surrounding both tangibles and intangibles arose upon examination of the study results. Two of the most common issues identified by respondents had to do with the job
itself: the first was lack of role clarity and the second was misaligned expectations of what the role actually entailed. The newcomer’s superior (the “boss”) was also an influencer; however, the “boss’s boss” was found to be equally influential upon the newcomer’s relational satisfaction.

The “trade offs” examined in Table 8 show that newcomers are negatively influenced by lower pay, longer work hours, and a lower title and/or decreased job functionality. Trade offs can often tip the perceived-benefits-over-cost scale over time, especially if interpersonal communication issues simultaneously influence the newcomer’s relational satisfaction.

Newcomers’ effective socialization with colleagues, their supervisor and other organizational leaders is also critically important to their successful adjustment within their role and the organization as a whole. Common issues the survey discovered included newcomers’ lack of trust in their superior, confusion over relational status with colleagues and negative impressions of the character and intentions of the boss’s boss and other executives.

The common issue of cultural misalignment surfaced throughout the survey. Respondents reported incidents of situations or people they couldn’t align with, typically instances where their personal values differed or their needs were not met. For example, one survey respondent commented that the not-for-profit they joined was acquired by a for-profit organization that “stopped caring about quality…and only cared about making their numbers.” Another survey respondent lamented that she was promised an “innovative” culture but what she found was “far from it.”

Finally, a majority of respondents felt that a friendlier, more welcoming and supportive experience during their organizational encounter stage would have positively influenced their overall adjustment as a newcomer (Table 13). Not only did respondents stress the need for more
positive interaction with superiors and colleagues, but they also used their free-form comments to express their desire to engage in a shared organizational vision.

As evidenced by the above discussion, most of the common influencers to unsuccessful newcomer adjustment are intangibles. Branham (2005) supports this finding, noting that “the greatest drivers of employee engagement and retention are intangible—mostly related to the way a manager treats employees” (p. 58).

RQ2: Which of the common issues identified in RQ1 are controllable by the organization and which are not?

Understanding common issues preventing successful newcomer adjustment is helpful in identifying these issues’ antitheses; however, it is equally important to understand which of the common issues are and are not controllable by the organization. Only the issues which are organizationally controllable can be decisively addressed.

Although it may seem that intangible incentives such as innovation or work-life balance are difficult cultural changes to implement, changes such as these are possible. With the exception of personal issues on the newcomer’s part—such as a spouse’s relocation or another such extenuating circumstance—the organization is at the helm of the newcomer experience (Branham, 2005).

By simply aligning organization- and job-related expectations during the interview process, organizations can save themselves and newcomers from significant newcomer misalignment and turnover. Data from this study (Table 24) show that as many as 61% of unsuccessful newcomers wouldn’t have accepted the position had they been given a realistic job preview. While this may appear to be a negative statistic, eliminating candidates on the basis of
intangibles can free the company to locate a candidate who is better aligned—or it can point to organizational issues that must be internally addressed to bolster talent acquisition.

Given that all of the common issues identified by research question number one are organizationally controllable, leaders are challenged to adopt and support specific organizational socialization practices that are geared toward successful newcomer adjustment. Organizations that implement these practices will experience lower newcomer turnover and increased overall productivity (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003).

Chapter 5 discusses the limitations of the research conducted and includes suggestions for further study on the topic of successful newcomer adjustment.
Chapter 5. Summaries and Conclusions

The results of the study show that those who have unsuccessfully adjusted as an organizational newcomer share categorically similar experiences during the pre-hire, orientation and onboarding stages. Each of these three stages involves interpersonal communications that either aid or inhibit the newcomer’s ultimate adjustment to the organization. Consequently, the study’s findings reveal multiple communication lapses within one or more of these stages.

In the pre-hire process, the hiring manager and other organizational stakeholders must clearly and accurately communicate details of the role and the organization to the prospective newcomer. This step is critical for aligning expectations with role requirements and organizational culture as closely as possible, and it can also help the newcomer identify and address any potential “trade off” concerns. From a cultural perspective, this is also an important time to introduce stronger candidates to direct reports or teammates (if applicable) as well as the “boss’s boss,” so they can form an understanding of the organization’s vision and their role in its execution.

After the hire, the formalized interview communications that were employed will edify the newcomer as they work to reduce additional uncertainty and negotiate positive working relationships. Direct reports and teammates who met the newcomer during the interview process will have a greater sense of understanding of, and buy-in to, the new interpersonal dynamic.

During the orientation and onboarding stages, the primary goal of the hiring manager and other organizational stakeholders should be to provide the newcomer with information and social engagement that is relevant to the newcomer’s specific role requirements and the organization’s culture. Regular communications between the newcomer and the hiring manager, direct reports,
teammates and organizational peers will build interpersonal and intra-organizational trust as well as productive attitudes, behaviors and knowledge within the newcomer.

**Limitations of the Study**

This study examined the common reasons newcomers exit an organization prior to their first anniversary. Although respondents were asked what the organization could have done better, there was no study or analysis of the key contributors to newcomer adjustment. In other words, the study did not undertake to examine why people stay with an organization past their one-year anniversary.

Additionally, the analysis presented and the resulting recommendations are based upon the commonalities among a fairly small number of people. Therefore, it is recommended that the recommended socialization practices be tested in an organizational setting and adjusted as necessary to experience maximal benefit.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

As mentioned above, an examination of the reasons employees remain with an organization, rather than why they leave, would be an area of interest for further research. It may also be beneficial to conduct a multi-organizational test using a program logic model in order to determine its universal applicability (Dwyer & Makin, 1997; Rush & Ogborne, 1991).

Another area requiring further study is how C-level communications directly impact organizational culture and, consequently, the newcomer experience. Survey respondent commentary related to this study reflected a belief that certain organizations cannot retain employees due to poor leadership—and when that poor leader is at the top, their actions negatively influence the organizational culture. It might be surmised that many of these negative perceptions are tied to organizationally-controllable communications.
Conclusions

Organizational socialization is not something that can be left to chance or ad hoc activities, nor can it begin and end with a finite employee orientation period. The best time to begin organizational socialization is prior to the newcomer being hired, in the interviewing process when expectations are formed by the prospective employee.

The characteristics of a successfully adjusted newcomer are interpersonal and intra-organizational trust as well as productive attitudes, behaviors and knowledge. Most of the issues preventing successful newcomer adjustment are under the direct control of the organization, presenting an opportunity for organizational leaders to identify and productively address the organizational and interpersonal barriers preventing a positive newcomer experience.

The interpersonal communication theories of social penetration and uncertainty reduction play an important role in understanding the newcomer experience. To effectively socialize newcomers, organizational leaders must be aware of the newcomer’s concept of relational satisfaction and their need for role clarity, and plan their communications accordingly.

This study’s findings and the related literature support a measured, purposeful approach to organizational socialization. Organizational leaders who actively address turnover issues with a formal socialization program that includes quantifiable communication objectives and company-wide participation will see turnover decrease and productivity increase as more newcomers develop into successful, long-term employees.
References


Church, W. *Logic modeling and evaluation research* [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from Blackboard Web site: https://learn.gonzaga.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp.


Appendix A: Survey Questions

Opt-In Question

1. Take the survey?
   a. Yes, sounds interesting!
   b. No, thank you.

Participant Demographics

2. Your gender
   a. Male
   b. Female

3. Your age group
   a. Under 18 (Disqualifying answer)
   b. 18-25
   c. 26-34
   d. 35-44
   e. 45-54
   f. 55+

Self-Qualifying Question

4. Have you ever started a new job but left the company before being there a full year?
   a. Yes, once
   b. Yes, more than once
   c. No, never (Disqualifying answer)

Organizational Demographics

5. What was the organization’s employee size at the time you were hired?
   a. 10 or less employees
   b. 11-50 employees
   c. 51-500 employees
   d. 501-1,000 employees
   e. Greater than 1,000 employees

6. Which of the following best describes the organization’s primary industry?
   a. Listing of 17 industry categories
   b. Other/None of the above
Participant's Organizational Role

7. Which of the following best describes the organizational level you were hired at?
   a. President/CEO
   b. CxO
   c. Vice President
   d. Director
   e. Manager/Supervisor (with direct reports)
   f. Manager/Supervisor (no direct reports)
   g. Associate/General Staff

8. Had you previously performed this role for another company?
   a. Yes
   b. Yes, to some degree, but some parts of the role were new to me
   c. No, this was a completely new role for me

9. Did taking this job involve any of the following "trade offs" and if so, did they ultimately influence your decision to leave the company? (OPTIONAL - Select only those that apply.)
   a. Matrix with the following choices:
      i. Less money
      ii. Weaker benefits
      iii. Longer work hours
      iv. More travel
      v. A physical move
      vi. A longer commute
      vii. A step back in title/function

First Impressions

10. Before your first day on the job, what was your general impression of…
    (Matrix with positive-to-negative range of choices.)
    a. The organization's culture?
    b. The organization's product and/or service?
    c. The organization in general?
    d. The industry the organization served?
    e. The job you were hired to do?
    f. Your boss?
    g. Your boss's boss?
    h. Your immediate colleagues/co-workers?

11. Based on your selections above, is there anything the organization could have done to make your impression(s) better?
    (Series of optional text boxes.)
    a. Organization's culture:
    b. Organization's product/service:
SUCCESSFUL NEWCOMER ADJUSTMENT

Initial Orientation

12. Following your first 2-3 weeks on the job, what was your general impression of…
   (Matrix with positive-to-negative range of choices.)
   a. The organization's culture?
   b. The organization's product and/or service?
   c. The organization in general?
   d. The industry the organization served?
   e. The job you were hired to do?
   f. Your boss?
   g. Your boss's boss?
   h. Your immediate colleagues/co-workers?

13. Based on your selections above, is there anything the organization could have done to make your impression(s) better?
   (Series of optional text boxes.)
   a. Organization's culture:
   b. Organization's product/service:
   c. Organization in general:
   d. Industry served:
   e. Job hired to do:
   f. Boss:
   g. Boss's boss:
   h. Immediate colleagues/co-workers:

14. In your first 2-3 weeks on the job, was there anything the organization/hiring manager could have done to improve your orientation experience? (Select all that apply.)
   a. A "friendlier" welcome
   b. More training
   c. More access to informational resources
   d. Quicker technology/business system setup
   e. More "face time" with the boss
   f. No, there was nothing they could have improved
   g. Other (please specify):
Leaving the Company

15. At what point did you leave the company?
   a. Within the first month of employment
   b. At 2-3 months of employment
   c. At 4-6 months of employment
   d. At 7-9 months of employment
   e. At 10-11 months of employment

16. After leaving the organization, what was your general impression of…
   (Matrix with positive-to-negative range of choices.)
   a. The organization's culture?
   b. The organization's product and/or service?
   c. The organization in general?
   d. The industry the organization served?
   e. The job you were hired to do?
   f. Your boss?
   g. Your boss's boss?
   h. Your immediate colleagues/co-workers?

17. Based on your selections above, is there anything the organization could have done to make your impression(s) better?
   (Series of optional text boxes.)
   a. Organization's culture:
   b. Organization's product/service:
   c. Organization in general:
   d. Industry served:
   e. Job hired to do:
   f. Boss:
   g. Boss's boss:
   h. Immediate colleagues/co-workers:

18. Which of the following best describes the circumstance under which you left the organization?
   a. I quit/resigned
   b. I was “laid off”
   c. I was fired
   d. Other (please specify):

19. Was this circumstance a complete surprise?
   (Asked only of those designating 18b or 18c above)
   a. Yes
   b. No
20. Had you been looking for another employment opportunity when this happened?  
(Asked only of those designating 18b or 18c above)  
  a. Yes  
  b. No

21. At what point in time did you begin actively looking for another employment opportunity elsewhere?  
(Asked only of those designating 18a or 20a above)  
  a. From the point of hire/I never stopped looking  
  b. Within the first month of employment  
  c. At 2-3 months of employment  
  d. At 4-6 months of employment  
  e. At 7-9 months of employment  
  f. At 10-11 months of employment

22. What did your "last straw moment" (where you knew you no longer wanted to stay with the company) involve? (Select one or a combination of the items below.)  
(Asked only of those designating 18a or 20a above)  
  a. An altercation with a superior  
  b. An altercation with a co-worker  
  c. An altercation with a customer  
  d. A dislike for my role  
  e. A dislike for the company culture  
  f. A disagreement with policy/procedure  
  g. Received a better job offer elsewhere  
  h. Personal circumstances beyond the organization's control  
  i. None of the above  
  j. Other (please specify):

23. How closely aligned were your expectations of the job you were to assume and the actual job you found yourself in?  
  a. Well aligned (my expectations were realistic)  
  b. Somewhat aligned (not entirely realistic, but no major issues)  
  c. Somewhat misaligned (not entirely realistic, with some major differences)  
  d. Completely misaligned

24. How closely aligned were your expectations of the company you were joining and the actual company you found yourself in?  
  a. Well aligned (my expectations were realistic)  
  b. Somewhat aligned (not entirely realistic, but no major issues)  
  c. Somewhat misaligned (not entirely realistic, with some major differences)  
  d. Completely misaligned
25. Before your first day with the company, could the organization/hiring manager have done anything to better align your expectations with reality? (Select all that apply.)
   a. More clearly defined my role/responsibilities
   b. Introduced me to more colleagues/co-workers
   c. Made me aware of "trade offs" such as longer hours, travel, etc.
   d. No, there was nothing they could have improved
   e. Other (please specify):  

26. If your expectations had been better aligned, would you still have accepted the position?  
   (Asked only of those designating 25 a, b, c or e above)
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Unsure

27. Please provide any additional comments you’d like to share regarding your unsuccessful experience at this company.
Appendix B: Sample Program Logic Model

**Goals**

To as closely align expectations with role requirements and organizational culture as possible while identifying and addressing “trade off” concerns

To provide information and social engagement relevant to role requirements and organizational culture

**Target Groups**

Prospective newcomers (interviewees)

Organizational newcomers

Hiring managers and other organizational stakeholders

Hiring managers and other organizational stakeholders

**Resources**

Written job description

Interviewee’s resume

Organizational chart

Role-related process documentation

**Activities**

Discussion between interviewee and:
- Hiring manager
- “Boss’s Boss”
- Prospective direct reports
- Teammates/work group

Regular interaction between newcomer and:
- Hiring manager
- Direct reports
- Teammates/work group
- Organizational peers

**Short-Term Outcome Objectives**

To increase the interviewee’s knowledge of role requirements, organizational culture and trade offs

To support job-offer decision making and stakeholder buy-in

To develop interpersonal and intra-organizational trust as well as productive attitudes, behaviors and knowledge within the newcomer

**Short-Term Outcome Indicators**

% of interviewees indicating they fully understand the role, culture and trade offs

% of hiring managers confident they chose the right candidate

% of newcomers displaying trust, a positive attitude, knowledge and productivity at the end of 90 days

% of newcomers staying with the organization through their one-year anniversary

**Long-Term Outcome Objectives**

To develop hiring managers’ skill of recognizing and hiring qualified, long-term employees

To develop a sense of organizational belonging and commitment within the newcomer

**Long-Term Outcome Indicators**

% of employees staying with the organization more than three years
Appendix C: Mentor Agreement Form

MENTOR AGREEMENT (To be submitted with Thesis Proposal)

You have been asked to serve as a Mentor for Stacey Holleran, who is completing the requirements for her Masters Degree in Communication and Leadership Studies. As a mentor you are asked to share ideas with this student and read the next to final draft of her thesis. You are not expected to directly supervise this student’s work but rather meet with them as a “young colleague.” If you are willing to serve as a Mentor for her, please sign this agreement.

I am willing to serve as a Mentor for Stacey Holleran as she completes her thesis. I realize I do not need to supervise her work in any direct fashion and will only serve as a more experienced colleague with a younger colleague. I will provide help in the way of suggestions, ideas and resources and am willing to review drafts of her written work. I also agree to read the next to last draft of the student’s thesis and will sign my name on the title page of the final draft. My signature on the thesis only indicates that I have read it and is no indication of the quality of the work. I will not be asked to assign a grade or make any evaluative comments to the course convener.

Signature: 

Title: Lecturer

Email and telephone number: hathorn@georgias.edu

Date: Sept. 7, 2012