

## Additional cases

### ***The Effect of Personality and the Work Environment on Knowledge Worker's Creativity***

#### **Relevant to: chapter 11 (Socio-cultural Issues)**

The creativity of knowledge workers, their ability to develop, apply, and create knowledge is one of their most important features for their employers. Dul et al. present the findings of a study that investigated the impact of three distinct factors on the creativity of knowledge workers. These three factors were the personality of knowledge workers, the socio-organizational work environment, and the physical work environment. Dul et al. use the term 'creative performance', defined as '*the production of novel and potentially useful ideas*' (p. 717), and hypothesize that all three factors examined are directly linked to the 'creative performance' of knowledge workers.

In looking at the link between personality and creative performance Dul et al. suggest that there may be a positive relationship between the level of creativity inherent in their personality and their ability to perform creatively. Creative personality is defined as, '*the accumulation of separate personality traits that are related to creativity*' (p. 718), which was measured using an established survey instrument.

Dul et al. argue that various aspects of the socio-organizational environment, such as the extent to which people collaborate and work in teams or the complexity of their work, and the need to solve problems, are also positively related to knowledge workers' creativity. They argue that it is the workers' perception of the work environment that is important, and that if they perceive the socio-organizational environment positively this will impact positively on their level of creativity. In the survey that was utilized in this study, nine different aspects of the socio-cultural work environment were examined including how challenging people's jobs are, the extent to which task rotation occurs, the amount of team working people engage in, the level of autonomy people have, and the extent to which people have time to think.

Finally, Dul et al. suggest that various aspects of the physical work environment may positively impact on knowledge workers' creativity levels. Aspects of the physical work environment which may have this impact includes having a window view, the presence of plants, or colours which have a positive influence on people's mood.

Dul et al. tested their hypotheses in a survey-based study of knowledge workers in some Dutch SMEs. Data was obtained from 274 knowledge workers who worked in 27 different companies. A diverse range of companies were surveyed, and the occupations of respondents included consultants, designers, managers, and marketers.

In the analysis of their survey results, Dul et al. found that all three factors examined (creative personality, the socio-organizational work environment, and the physical work environment) were positively linked to the creativity levels of the knowledge workers that were surveyed. Further, the statistical analysis undertaken by Dul et al. found that creative personality had the largest and strongest impact on peoples' creativity levels, while the physical work environment had the smallest and weakest relationship impact on creativity.

Questions:

1) Reflect on the managerial and HRM-related implications of this study's findings. What does this study suggest management and HRM staff in knowledge intensive firms do to facilitate the creativity of their workers?

Source: Dul, J, Ceylan, C, Jaspers, F. (2012). 'Knowledge Workers' Creativity and the Role of the Physical Work Environment.' *Human Resource Management*, 50/6: 715-734.