

# NEWCOMERS IN ORGANISATIONAL ENTRY COPING WITH EARLY JOB EXPERIENCES

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## ABSTRACT

In making sense of a new situation, individuals rely on a number of inputs. The present study investigates two such inputs: the role that past experience plays in helping the newcomer to cope with current situations, and the extent to which more general personal characteristics play a role in the sense-making process. The relationship between personality and situational variables and coping resources was studied in a large financial organisation. A group of new employees was studied during their first six months with the organisation. Theoretical material is presented which indicates that processes occur by which individuals detect and interpret surprises.

## OPSOMMING

Om sin uit te maak in 'n nuwe situasie vertrou mense dikwels op 'n aantal insette. In die studie wat hier gerapporteer word, word twee sulke insette ondersoek: die rol wat vorige ondervinding speel om die nuweling te help in die hantering van bestaande situasies, en die mate waartoe algemeen persoonlike eienskappe 'n rol speel in die sinmakende proses. Die verwantskap tussen persoonlikheid en situasieveranderlikes met aanpassingshulpbronne is in 'n groot finansiële organisasie ondersoek. 'n Groep nuwe werknemers is gedurende die eerste ses maande na hul diensaanvaarding waargeneem. Die resultate dui aan dat daar prosesse bestaan waarmee individuele verassings opgespoor en geïnterpreteer word.

## INTRODUCTION

Recruitment and selection procedures in organisations involve much time and money to procure the best candidates. Once an individual has been enticed to join the company however, it is only very seldom that as much effort is put into that employee's orientation, induction and socialisation.

There are generally two perspectives from which to view any socialisation process: the individual's viewpoint, or the organisation's perspective. The literature from the latter outweighs that from the former (Dunnette, 1966; Guion, 1965). Industrial psychologists have studied a wide variety of ways to measure human skills and abilities for selection purposes. Despite limitations on predictors and criteria, we could probably say that we know more about how to select, place, train and assess the performance of newcomers than we do about how people joining organisations react as newcomers (Wanous, 1977). The research presented here looks at the organisational entry of new employees in an effort to place more emphasis on that particular process. Thus, the focus will be from the employee's viewpoint, particularly looking at how he/she copes with early job experiences.

The key assumptions underlying the research relate to the premise that no matter what the extent of pre-employment information and post-employment induction, there will inevitably be some unmet expectation(s) experienced by the new employee. More generally, this implies that there is surprise in entering unfamiliar organisational settings. The emphasis is on exploring what it is about the individuals themselves (for example, personality and background), that leads them to accept the unanticipated reality of the new setting.

## SIGNIFICANT PRIOR RESEARCH

The term "sense-making" was coined by Louis (1980), and refers to the role of conscious thought in coping and contributes to our understanding of how individuals in organisational settings cope with entry experiences, particularly surprises.

One needs to know under what conditions coping is guided by thought or cognition. One possibility is that conscious thought is provoked when the individual senses something "out of the ordinary".

Langer (1978) proposed that conscious thinking is necessary when the outcomes of our acts are inconsistent with anticipated outcomes. But, it is evident that people do not always recognise when situations are novel (Schutz, 1964; van Maanen, 1977). As long as predicted outcomes occur, thinking is not necessary. However, when predicted outcomes do not occur, the individual's cognitive consistency is threatened (Abelson et al., 1968). The discrepancy between anticipated and actual outcomes produces a state of tension which acts as an unbalancing of the equilibrium of the individual's psychological field (Lewin, 1951). This creates a type of need for a return to equilibrium.

In developing explanations for why actual outcomes occurred as opposed to the predicted ones, retrospective explanations are produced through a particular thinking process referred to as sense-making.

### Coping With Surprise

A model was developed (Louis, 1980) which describes the processes by which individuals detect and interpret surprises. This model suggests that sense-making can be seen as a recurring cycle made up of a sequence of events occurring over time. The cycle begins as individuals form unconscious and conscious anticipations or assumptions. Subsequently, individuals experience events which differ from predictions. Such events, or surprises, trigger a process through which they are interpreted and given meaning. Attributed meanings give rise to the selection of behavioural responses and the revision of predictions about future experiences.

The cycle represents general stages in understanding a newcomer's experience. When looking at the cycle (see Figure 1), it is important to note that meaning is assigned to surprise as an output of the sense-making process. The inputs which individuals rely on when attributing meaning to surprise includes their past experiences with similar situations and their more general personal characteristics including predispositions to attribute causality to self, others, fate etc. A further input is the individual's set of cultural assumptions on interpretative schemes. Also, information and interpretations from others in the situation contribute to the sense-making process.

Such a perspective provides a theoretical framework for understanding which aspects of socialisation are critical and why.

It suggests that socialisation practices which facilitate sense-making facilitate adaptation to the new setting.

On a practical level, this perspective takes as given the fact that newcomers will inevitably have unmet expectations and surprise in entering unfamiliar organisational settings. Therefore, instead of merely attempting to prevent one form of surprise, the mentioned framework would rather aim to intervene in the newcomer's cycle as sense is made of surprise. The assumption then, is that newcomers are ill equipped to make sense of the multitude of surprises that accompany entry into an unfamiliar organisation. If one can determine more specifically the behavioural tendencies associated with those newcomers who cope more readily with surprise a more adequate long term self-sufficient functioning could be promoted. This could also be true if setting specific interpretative schemes were more closely investigated in terms of comparisons between previous and present climate exposure.

The research reported here has attempted to identify and evaluate the extent to which a newcomer's predispositions and past working experience influence the individual's ability to cope with early experience in a new job.

The research is based on the following assumptions that have implications for interpreting and using the results. They are derived from the underlying theories and the relevant literature and research in the field:

- 1) The formal characteristics of coping behaviours are the same for all individuals, regardless of sex, age, culture or intelligence. The specific actions by which the behaviour is implemented vary (Murphy and Moriarty, 1976; Werner and Smith, 1982).
- 2) In different situations, cultures and age ranges, some behaviours contribute to effective coping more than others (Moos, 1976; Moriarty and Toussieng, 1976; Murphy and Moriarty, 1976; Valliant, 1977; Werner and Smith, 1982).
- 3) Coping behaviours are learned, therefore they can be acquired, changed or eliminated (Moos, 1976; Zeitlin, 1981).
- 4) Specific variables (namely, intelligence, language, temperament, social competence) contribute to coping behaviours, but coping, as the integrated behaviour, is more comprehensive and different than any single variable (Murphy and Moriarty, 1976; Werner and Smith, 1982).

From the above, the issues or questions investigated will include:

- 1) Do past experiences in similar work situations, as assessed by similarity in previous and present organisational work climates, help the individual to cope with sense-making in the new situation?
- 2) In their sense-making, are individuals guided by specific personal predispositions such as locus of control, attributional style, hardiness and general personality style?

#### Definition of Terms

- New Employee:** This refers to the new members of the organisation who have already been selected and recruited, and who have accepted the position in which they are currently employed.
- Past Experience:** This study refers to past experience as those experiences relating to past exposure to a particular type of organisational climate. This incorporates the individual's set of cultural assumptions or interpretive schemes from old settings (namely, internalisation of context – specific dictionaries of meaning).
- Predispositions:** These are personal characteristics which guide the individual's behaviour in the work situation and in general.
- Coping:** The extent of general well being experienced by the individual.
- Sense-making:** The process of coping with surprise in a new environment.

## METHODOLOGY

To respond to the research questions, a group of subjects was selected consisting of individuals who had just recently joined the organisation three to six months earlier. The group was then given a battery of tests to complete.

### 1. Subjects

A stratified sample of seventy-seven subjects was drawn from approximately seven thousand employees of a large financial institution which has branches nationwide. These subjects had all joined the organisation between 01/10/1988 and 30/03/1989 and were at first level management or higher. Twelve subjects were female and sixty-five were male. The group had an average age of 33,7 years and their average length of service was 4,2 months.

### 2. Materials

Seven self-report questionnaires were chosen. The test battery included:

- Jung Personality Questionnaire
  - Personal Style Self Analysis
  - Locus of Control Scale
  - Attributional Style Questionnaire
  - Hardiness Questionnaire
  - Coping inventory
  - Organisational Climate Questionnaire
- The features of these are discussed below:

#### 2.1 The Jung Personality Questionnaire

This questionnaire contains four different scales, namely:

- (i) Extraversion – Introversion (EI)
- (ii) Thinking – Feeling (TF)
- (iii) Sensation – Intuition (SN)
- (iv) Judgement – Perception (JP)

The first three scales consist of twenty questions each, the fourth scale contains fifteen questions. In each question the subject is required to indicate which of the two contrasting tasks he would prefer to do. There are three possible responses to each question, scored on a three-point scale ranging from 0 – 2.

#### 2.2 The Internal/External Locus of Control Scale

Developed by Rotter (1966), this questionnaire consists of twenty nine items. Six of these items are neutral in order that the aim of the test not become too apparent. The subjects are required to choose one of two options that would fit their particular attitude best.

Van Heerden (1978) found this scale to be valid for South African conditions, and also provided the Afrikaans translation.

#### 2.3 Attributional Style Questionnaire

The Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ; Peterson, Semmel, et al., 1982) describes twelve hypothetical events. Half of the events described are good events and half are bad events.

The respondents are required to write one cause of the outcome in the space provided for each situation described. They are then asked to rate on three seven-point scales:

- i) whether the outcome was due to something about them or something about other people or circumstances (Locus).
- ii) will this cause again be present? (Stability)
- iii) and does the cause influence just this situation or other areas of their life? (Globality).

Respondents circle a number from one to seven corresponding to their casual beliefs.

#### 2.4 Hardiness Questionnaire

The scale used in the present study is a twenty item version of the original 71-item measure. The shortened version of this scale has been used extensively by Koba-

sa (1982) and has been found to duplicate the findings obtained when using the longer measure.

By answering the questionnaire, an index of hardiness can be obtained which may range from a minimum score of 0 to a maximum score of 48. The measure which is obtained is an inverse one, where a high composite score indicates a low level of hardiness.

### 2.5 Personal Style Self Analysis

This is a professional consulting instrument constructed out of a number of instruments and has been in use for the last ten years for management development (Zimble, 1989).

The questionnaire is made up of ten statements, each of which has an alternate choice. The respondent is required to allocate five points between each of the alternatives in terms of what he believes.

The respondent's scores are then plotted on a Style Profile Sheet on each of four dimensions:

- assertive (outgoing)
- non assertive (reserved)
- non expressive (thinking); and
- expressive (feeling)

### 2.6 Coping Inventory

The coping inventory (Zeitlin, 1985) is used to assess the behaviour patterns an individual uses to adapt to the demands of his environment.

The coping inventory has 48 items equally divided into two categories:

- coping with Self and
- coping with Environment

The inventory is rated by each individual on the basis of that individual's perception of his own behaviour in a variety of situations.

After rating the inventory, the "Adaptive Behaviour Summary" is used to describe how effectively a person copes. (This is an index (ABI) which describes the sum of the Self Score and the Environment Score, converted to a 1 to 5 range).

### 2.7 Organisational Climate Questionnaire

Using the original scales of Litwin and Stringer's (1986) organisational climate Questionnaire, Gelfand (1972) refined their original instrument and adapted it for South African conditions.

The nine dimensions which the questionnaire covers include: Structure, Responsibility, Reward, Risk, Warmth, Support, Standards, Conflict and Identity.

The questionnaire requires the participant to give an honest reflection of his personal feelings on each item by crossing the appropriate response.

## 3. Procedure

### 3.1 Selection of Subjects

The seventy-seven employees who had been chosen for the study, were all required to complete the seven questionnaires described above.

A total of forty-eight questionnaire packs were returned, making the response rate 62,34%.

### 3.2 Testing Procedure and Instructions

A descriptive/normative survey method was appropriate for the data which was derived from questionnaires.

The subjects were given five weeks to complete the questionnaires. A clear set of instructions was attached for each questionnaire, and a covering letter was enclosed to explain what the data was to be collected for.

### 3.3 Statistical Analysis

The basic design for this study was a correlation analysis, using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient.

Correlation coefficients were computed between all the measures and cast into an intercorrelation matrix. (Refer Table 2). A confidence level of 95% was considered appropriate.

Climate scores were assessed on the basis of the similarity of group percentages per factor in terms of past climate, existing climate, and industry norms for the financial sector.

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

A statistical summary of the data reveals a certain profile for the sample (see Table 1).

**TABLE 1**  
**Statistical Summary**

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Locus	6,98	3,91	1	15
ASQ - POS	16,46	1,96	12,5	20,66
ASQ - NEG	11,18	1,92	6,66	15,66
HARDINESS	14,08	5,49	5	32
COPING S	3,93	,46	2,4	4,9
COPING E	4,13	,57	2	5
ABI	4,06	,50	2,4	4,9
JPQ I/E	5,81	1,66	2,5	9,25
JPQ F/T	6,26	1,39	3,25	9,5
JPQ N/S	5,44	1,72	1,5	10
JPQ P/J	5,04	1,77	1,33	9
PSSA (O)	14,79	3,46	8	22
PSSA (R)	10,21	3,46	3	17
PSSA (T)	16,77	3,08	9	25
PSSA (F)	8,23	3,08	0	16

Key - ASQ : Attributional Style Questionnaire  
JPQ : Jung Personality Questionnaire  
PSSA: Personal Style Self Analysis

The sample mean for locus of control indicates a general internality amongst the subjects. In terms of attributional style, the subjects display an overall external, unstable and specific attributional style. They also tend to be high in hardiness as well as in coping resources. The personality profile displayed by the sample means indicate an extrovert/thinking/sensation/judgement type for the group. For personal style, the sample tends toward an assertive/non-expressive style.

The intercorrelation analysis between the criterion measure - coping, and the various other measures identified no significant correlations other than with Attributional Style (for positive situations) and Hardiness. Coping with self correlated positively with attributional style for positive situations ( $r = 0,2875$ ) ( $p < 0,05$ ); coping with environment also correlated positively with attributional style for positive situations ( $r = 0,3553$ ) ( $p < 0,05$ ). Coping was furthermore found to correlate

inversely with hardiness ( $r = -0,3316$ ) ( $p < 0,05$ ). The combined index of coping (The Adaptive Behaviour Index (ABI) which represents coping with self and coping with environment together, was found to correlate positively with attributional

style for positive situations ( $r = 0,34449$ ) ( $< 0,05$ ) and correlate inversely with hardiness ( $r = -0,2846$ ) ( $p < 0,05$ ) (See Table 2). This finding, therefore, provides only marginal support for the second research question.

**TABLE 2**  
**Intercorrelation Matrix for Data Variables**

	JPQ I/E	PSSA. (O)	LOCUS	ASQ-POS	ASQ-NEG	HARDI	PSSA. (R)	PSSA. (T)	PSSA. (F)	SEX	COPING. E	ABI	COPING. S	SERVICE	AGE	JPQ. FT	JPQ. N/S	JPQ. P/J	JPQ. I/E
JPQ I/E	1,000	0,4632	-0,3355	0,0828	0,1228	0,0270	-0,4632	0,1666	-0,1666	-0,1665	0,1302	0,1059	0,0487	-0,1741	0,0158	-0,3317	-0,2927	0,1360	1,000
PSSA. (O)	0,4632	1,000	-0,0444	0,0562	0,2531	-0,0191	-1,000	0,0165	-0,0165	-0,0126	0,2234	0,2147	0,1991	0,1429	-0,2197	-0,2817	-0,5548	0,3536	0,4632
LOCUS	-0,3355	-0,0444	1,000	-0,4129	-0,1816	0,4048	0,0444	-0,3267	0,3267	0,2088	-0,1573	-0,1299	-0,0721	0,0134	-0,0951	-0,0573	-0,1763	0,1953	-0,3355
ASQ-POS	0,0828	0,0562	-0,4129	1,000	0,1860	-0,3207	-0,0562	0,2858	-0,2858	-0,3028	0,3553	0,3449	0,2875	0,1788	-0,0693	0,1043	0,0786	-0,2874	0,0828
ASQ-NEG	0,1228	0,2531	-0,1816	0,1860	1,000	0,0169	-0,2531	0,3511	-0,3311	-0,0509	-0,1627	-0,1352	-0,0840	0,1589	0,0094	0,1570	-0,2282	0,1234	0,1228
HARDI	0,0270	-0,0191	0,4048	-0,3207	0,0169	1,000	0,0191	-0,2093	0,2093	0,2638	-0,3316	-0,2846	-0,2158	0,0252	-0,1728	-0,0887	-0,0971	0,1858	0,0270
COPING. S	0,0487	0,1991	-0,0721	0,2875	-0,0840	-0,2158	-0,1991	0,1083	-0,1083	-0,1228	0,8782	0,9623	1,000	-0,0620	-0,1282	0,0640	-0,1756	0,0653	0,0487
SERVICE	-0,1741	0,1429	0,0134	0,1788	0,1589	0,0252	-0,1429	-0,1442	0,1442	0,0061	-0,0661	-0,0676	-0,0620	1,000	-0,1027	0,1375	-0,0737	0,0888	-0,1741
AGE	0,0158	-0,2197	-0,0951	-0,0693	0,0094	-0,1728	0,2197	0,0266	-0,0266	0,0647	-0,0558	-0,0879	-0,1282	-0,1027	1,000	0,1099	0,3384	0,0073	0,0158
JPQ. FT	-0,3317	-0,2817	-0,0573	0,1043	0,1570	-0,0887	0,2817	0,0443	-0,0443	-0,3613	-0,0308	0,0125	0,0640	0,1375	0,1099	1,000	0,2180	-0,1668	-0,3317
JPQ. N/S	-0,2927	-0,5548	-0,1763	0,0786	-0,2282	-0,0971	0,5548	0,2448	-0,2448	0,1080	-0,1646	-0,1753	-0,1756	-0,0737	0,3384	0,2180	1,000	-0,4544	-0,2927
JPQ. P/J	0,1360	0,3536	0,1953	-0,2874	0,1234	0,1858	-0,3536	0,0938	-0,0938	0,1883	0,1032	0,0778	0,0653	0,0888	0,0073	-0,1668	-0,4544	1,000	0,1360
PSSA. (R)	-0,4632	-1,000	0,0444	-0,0562	-0,2531	0,0191	1,000	-0,0165	0,0165	0,0126	-0,2234	-0,2147	-0,1991	-0,1429	0,2197	0,2817	0,5548	-0,3536	-0,4632
PSSA. (T)	0,1666	0,0165	-0,3267	0,2858	0,3311	-0,2093	-0,0165	1,000	-1,000	0,1174	0,1423	0,1156	0,1083	-0,1442	0,0266	0,0443	0,2448	0,0938	0,1666
PSSA. (F)	-0,1666	-0,0165	0,3267	-0,2858	-0,3311	0,2093	0,0165	-1,000	1,000	-0,1174	-0,1423	-0,1156	-0,1083	0,1442	-0,0266	-0,0443	-0,2448	-0,0938	-0,1666
SEX	-0,1665	-0,0126	0,2088	-0,3028	-0,0509	0,2638	0,0126	0,1174	-0,1174	1,000	-0,1294	-0,1408	-0,1228	0,0061	0,0647	-0,3613	0,1080	0,1883	-0,1665
COPING. E	0,1302	0,2234	-0,1573	0,3553	-0,1627	-0,3316	-0,2234	0,1423	-0,1423	-0,1294	1,000	0,9726	0,8782	-0,0661	-0,0558	-0,0308	-0,1646	0,1032	0,1302
ABI	0,1059	0,2147	-0,1299	0,3449	-0,1352	-0,2846	-0,2147	0,1156	-0,1156	-0,1408	0,9726	1,000	0,9623	-0,0676	-0,0879	0,0125	-0,1753	0,0778	0,1059
JPQ. I/E	1,000	0,4632	-0,3355	0,0828	0,1228	0,0270	-0,4632	0,1666	-0,1666	-0,1665	0,1302	0,1059	0,0487	-0,1741	0,0158	-0,3317	-0,2927	0,1360	1,000

The finding with regard to climate confirmed the first research question that past experiences, if similar to those experienced in the new work environment, would contribute to better coping abilities on the part of the new employee.

The data obtained from the Organisational Climate Question-

naire provided scores pertaining to the respondents' perception of climate in their previous jobs and in their current new jobs. To analyse this data, the sample averages and resultant sample percentages were determined for each climate dimension (See Table 3). The group percentages were then compared with the percentage norms (Nasser & Schmickl, 1976) per dimension for the Financial Sector (See Figure 2).

**TABLE 3**  
**CLIMATE QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS**

<b>PRESENT ORGANISATION</b>									
	(24) STRUCT.	(16) RESPON.	(20) REWARD	(16) WARMTH	(16) SUPPORT	(20) STDS.	(16) CONFL.	(16) ID.	(16) RISK
GROUP AVE	15,9	9,1	12,9	11,0	10,4	14,2	9,3	10,7	10,3
GROUP %	66,2	56,8	64,3	69,0	65,0	71,1	57,9	67,1	64,1
FINANCIAL NORM	67,0	71,0	68,0	78,0	78,0	74,0	64,0	74,0	61,0
<b>PREVIOUS ORGANISATION</b>									
	(24) STRUCT.	(16) RESPON.	(20) REWARD	(16) WARMTH	(16) SUPPORT	(20) STDS.	(16) CONFL.	(16) ID.	(16) RISK
GROUP AVE	15,4	8,8	10,9	10,1	9,2	12,6	8,6	9,2	9,7
GROUP %	64,3	55,0	54,6	63,4	57,8	63,2	54,0	57,8	60,5
FINANCIAL NORM	67,0	71,0	68,0	78,0	78,0	74,0	64,0	74,0	61,0

NOTE: Figures in brackets above the dimension labels indicate the highest possible score obtainable for each dimension.

**1. Discussion of results**

If one considers the relevance of the findings, the first is that coping – organisational entry coping – stands on its own and is isolated from the majority of the other variables. Secondly, it is statistically definable as a result. Thus, despite the fact that, in general, the second research question for this study was only partially substantiated, the results indicate that a personality factor of non-reliance on

externality has some connection with the coping resources displayed by individuals in a new working environment.

This concept of non-reliance on externality is further supported by the findings which pointed to the existence of some relationship between coping and attributional style. More particularly, an internal/stable/global attributional style.

The third influencing variable which had some relationship with coping, was hardiness. In this regard, previous research has stipulated that individuals high in hardiness engage more in transformational and less in regressive coping when dealing with stressful events (Kruger, 1987). This is a finding which has been substantiated here.

In terms of the statistical findings relevant to the first research question, the correlations strongly indicate that higher levels of coping are indeed associated with similarities in past and present situational experiences. Of greatest significance was the finding that adaptive coping was strongly associated with similarities in environment where the importance of goals and performance standards are perceived, and where there is an emphasis on getting problems out in the open and different opinions can be expressed.

What these results highlight is the greater role which environmental factors seem to play when it comes to newcomers having to cope with a new work situation. Personality does play a role to some extent, but apparently only marginally so, and certainly not to the extent which may have been expected at the outset of the research.

## CONCLUSIONS

The process of assimilating new employees into an organisation is an important one. After an individual joins an organisation, he sees the organisation and the job for what they actually are. Through a variety of activities, the individual attempts to become an active participant in the organisation. The demands on the individual create situations that induce stress no matter how close the individual came to realism during the pre-employment period.

The main focus of this study was to determine whether or not there were any personal or situational factors which helped the individual with the process of accommodating or coping with the new situation.

The variables which were found to have the most influence within this particular research sample were hardiness, attributional style (internal; stable; global) and, to a lesser extent, outgoing personal style.

However, even the most hardy, outgoing and proactive newcomer can be frustrated by a work situation that is not similar to what he is used to. Here, the emphasis is on the organisational climate as an element of a newcomers' situation. Organisational climate variables have the potential to promote proactive behaviour or interaction on the part of the newcomer.

The individual and situational variables that may characterise the process of newcomers' coping with new work experiences, provides an appropriate set of variables which have been largely ignored in previous research.

### Implications for Human Resource Practitioners

The contribution of these research results for the field of human resource management can be highlighted by assessing current problem areas. For instance: high turnover rates experienced by some organisations among new employees during their first year of work; the strain that some organisations go through when new employees and existing employees cannot come to terms with each other; the problems organisations have when new employees feel stifled or when they complain about expectations.

All these incidents are symptomatic of problems in the process of assimilating new employees into an organisation. It was the purpose of this research to outline variables and to present results which could help to better understand how the process could be more successfully managed.

If one accepts the premise of surprise, then post-employment induction could focus on helping those employees who do not display the personal variables of hardiness or attributional style, to cope better. Furthermore, knowledge of situational variables to which the new employee has been exposed will have an impact on the pre-employment phase. What is really being implied here is to introduce more effective anticipatory socialisation, namely, accept that surprises will occur, and instead of trying to minimise them, provide the employee with tools and assistance to deal with them.

Finally, there are implications for the newcomers themselves. It would no doubt be beneficial for newcomers to enter organisations with an understanding of the nature of entry experiences: why it is likely that they may experience surprises during the socialisation period; why they are relatively ill-equipped to make accurate sense of surprises arising during early job experiences and how they might proactively seek information from insiders at work to supplement their own internal interpretative schemes.

## Conclusion

Early experiences in an organisation can have a great effect on a person's career. The joining process, which determines these experiences, needs to be understood and carefully managed. The quality of the management of this process can ultimately affect the cost of getting new people and of keeping them. It can also affect the level of productivity, commitment and innovativeness of employees when they join. Unfortunately, it appears that in many organisations this process is mismanaged, or not managed at all.

In the final analysis, the payoff for a particular organisation will depend upon its awareness of the importance of the process which newcomers experience on entering a new work environment. It will also depend upon the way with which that organisation can examine the situation and attempt to invoke better management of the process.

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