

Effect of Social Astuteness on Career Success in Nandi Hekima Sacco Limited, Kenya

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Abstract: *Even though previous studies have linked social astuteness to career success, there are limited empirical evidences to support this argument. This study sought to establish the effect of social astuteness on career success. As such, the study adopted a survey research design and data analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Scientists. The results of this study showed a positive relationship between career success and social effectiveness ($F=16.075$, $R^2=0.341$, $P=0.000$). The study recommends that, personality be aligned with the job of an individual during the recruitment process for the organization to gain competitive advantage. The implications of this study indicate that management should consider employee personal reputation as an integral component of career success and by extension organizational success.*

Date of Submission: 07-09-2017

Date of acceptance: 14-10-2017

I. INTRODUCTION

Individuals building reputations influence individuals around them in a manner that they develop behaviors consistent with the reputation they wish to develop. Social effectiveness is an aspect that helps an individual build reputation (Ferris, Blass & Laird 2002). In organizational context, social effectiveness refers to effective use of persuasion, explanation and other influence mechanisms to reveal the ability to control others (Zinko, Ferris, Blass & Laird in press).

Social effectiveness increases perceived credibility of an individual in the eyes of those around their network (Ferris, Treadway, Adams & Perrewe, 2005). Ability to develop and manipulate a network is important in development of personal reputation since it gives an individual to convince immediate audience who will then transfer then transfer the reputational message to others. The immediate audience makes communication more effective by reinforcing the reputational message sent by reputation building individual. Social interaction between leaders and members increases the chance of passage of the intended message to the target audience.

Political skill is used to measure social effectiveness and it is defined as the ability to effectively understand others at work and to use knowledge to influence others to act in a ways that enhance one's personal and organizational objectives (Ferris, Kolodinsky & Frink 2005). Political skill is related to self-monitoring, personality, interpersonal skill and intuition (Ferris, 2005). In the study of political skill which is a social effectiveness construct (Ferris, 2002) suggested that the ability to network enables politically skilled individuals to develop a favorable social identity which is necessary component in building and maintaining identity. Social competence enables individuals to influence those around them and improve their social standing.

Empirical evidence show that, during the development of individual and leader relationship process, roles must be defined by the participants and in the process, individuals use their political skills to help create the image that a supervisor has of them (Zinko, 2007). Employees insert themselves into close relationships in order to gain supervisor's favor. The groupings lead to development of memberships that develop quickly and remain stable after they have formed resulting in automatic categorization (Zinko. 2007). Once the subordinates have been 'categorized', supervisors will then rely on the image of workers in these categories to make decisions. Members will always strive to belong to high group to 'high quality' exchange groups. Members of 'high quality' group, report enhanced levels of satisfaction and effectiveness as well as mutual influence, more open and honest communication and greater access to resources (Perrewe, Kacmar & Rason2004).

Members in the low-quality relationships have less access to supervisor information and restricted to fewer resources, low organizational commitment hence disadvantaged in terms of job benefits and career progress (Kamdar & Van Dyne, 2007). Employees are dependent on their immediate supervisors for their task assignment. Supervisors control important processes and work outcomes such as performance appraisal, promotions and compensations (Ferris & Perrewe, 2007). The study was intended to establish relationships between employees and supervisors that facilitate career advancement.

Socially effective individuals move easily in societies they live in since they can comprehend their surroundings properly. They easily adopt behaviors as situations warrant and possess the ability to change as situation demand them to. Furthermore, socially effective individuals are able to exert a strong influence on people around them. They can easily adapt to conflicting management using the appropriate tactic for each and every given situation (Ferris, 2002).

They possess social competencies that enhance personal and organizational goals through understanding and influence of others in social interactions (Blickle, 2010).

Research by Liu, Ferris, Zinko, Perrewe, Weitz, & Xu, (2007) empirically demonstrated a link between social effectiveness and performance rating of an individual. The study associated these individuals with titles and degrees and defined them as individuals who excel beyond their peers at a task. Forret & Dougherty (2004) reported that, these individuals develop and maintain relationships with those people who have the potential to assist them in their work or career. They are members of professional networks such as mentoring networks which are beneficial to career development. Studies show that social networks are related to access to information, compensation and promotion (Forret & Dougherty, 2004).

From the social perspective, human resource decision such as promotion and pay raises are used by decision makers to justify their decisions among multiple constituencies. Selecting reputable individuals who demonstrate high level of social effectiveness help decision makers justify their choice and reduce the potential liability of making wrong decisions when chosen person delivers poor performance (Judge, Ferris, Kolodinsky, Dobbins & Cardy, 2007). Empirical research by Baron, (2000) shows that, fewer resources to maintain and develop social networks reduces the likelihood of accessing information from mentors linked to compensation.

Interpersonal skill is a style that combines social astuteness and the ability to execute appropriate behaviors in an engaging manner that inspires confidence, trust and genuineness (Perrewe & Nelson, 2004). Individuals high on interpersonal skill find themselves more engaged in more helping behaviors at work and demonstrate better job performance (Carmeli, 2003). Such individuals are rated highly by supervisors (Ferris, *et. al.*, 2005). In a study examining productivity of faculty members in institutions (Bergeron, Bilimnia & Liang, 2010) shows that faculty members with good interpersonal skills are able to resolve interpersonal issues with colleagues easily and respond well to comments from reviewers. They exhibit high teaching rates and may also be in a position to manage their service obligations while maintaining positive relationships with colleagues and administrators.

Because organizational decisions are often made in political environment, socially effective individuals may have a competitive advantage at getting information pertaining to organizational politics and power structures (Wolf, Klein & Gardener, 1994). Individuals need support of colleagues at all organizational levels in order to execute their activities effectively (Janasz & Sullivan, 2004). Higher levels of political knowledge are associated with increases in annual salaries (Seibert, 2003). Individuals with greater social skills may have more knowledge of important issues within the organization and more awareness of political issues. Thus, the organizational members possessing good interpersonal skills may have better job outcomes. In sum, individual differences influence an individual's career outcomes.

In self-determined environment, proactive individuals may have an advantage over less proactive individuals. Proactive individuals are likely to take initiative in establishing social networks. In organizations, collegial networks may be critical in influencing career success. Social networks may engage colleagues in relationships that involve collaborating together and dialoguing about efficient and effective ways of solving organizational problems and other personal issues which may lead to higher career outcomes (Thompson, 2005). Proactive individuals may find ways such as trading off expertise for data access to get resources helpful in career advancement.

Thompson (2005) found out that, proactive individuals had higher job performance because they worked to establish relationships with others who had resources and influence to help them achieve their objectives. These individuals may also have access to organizational resources due to their personal efforts. Individuals with better interpersonal skills are more sensitive to social cues and can judge better and adapt well to interpersonal situations. They may also be good at dealing and influencing others effectively (Perrewe & Ferris, 2004). Influence may lead to negotiation for lighter work load and assignments without creating a rift between colleagues.

Career success refers to real or perceived achievements individuals have accumulated as a result of their work experiences (Judge, Cable, Boudreau & Bretz, 1995). Career success can be viewed as intrinsic or extrinsic. Extrinsic career success is observable and consists of highly tangible outcomes such as pay and ascendancy. Intrinsic success is individual's appraisal of his/her success and most commonly expressed in terms of job, career or life satisfaction (Judge, Higgins & Chad, 2005).

Career success is determined by factors such as combination of specific competencies and a performance record, along with network development, organizational politics and reputation building. Career success is not only determined by traditional factors including job-related skills and performance records but

also by networking, politics and social effectiveness (Sorensen & Feldman, 2005). Political perspectives of organizational politics argue that performances, promotions, compensation which manifest career success are strongly affected by organizational politics.

Today's competitive environment calls for social effectiveness to facilitate effective interpersonal interactions and career progression (Ferris, Treadway, 2005). Socially effective individuals pose social awareness that enable them to adjust and calibrate behavior to different situations in a genuine and sincere manner. The competencies of these individuals inspire others and as such performances and career success evaluations decisions makes through linkages such as reputation (Perrewe, 2007).

Personal reputation build by socially effective individuals tend to be effective because they make use of network-building activities and influence tactics to transmit signals that establish a favorable image to recipients (Ferris, 2007). It has been suggested that, socially effective individuals form strong relationships with supervisors in order to get rewards associated with their personal reputations. Social activities of employees play an important role in shaping perceptions and assessment of their characters and potentials. Perceptions influence the degree to which individuals are successful in their careers through their ability to obtain organizational resources such as rewards and positions (Judge, 2007). Empirical evidence shows that, there is a link between career success and tactics of influence (Ferris, 2003) although consideration has been give to ingratiation and self-promotion.

Organizational politics especially those linked to human resource decisions are so prevalent such that perceptions of raters exhibit more influence on decisions than the target employees behavior and aggregate contribution (Ferris, Basik & Buckley, 2008). From organizational politics perspective, careers can be seen as political campaigns (Inkson, 2004) involving contact hunting, self promotion (Higgins et al., 2003) and use of influence tactics (Ferris, 2007). The success of such campaigns depends on individual competencies that enable the effective management and projection of positive image across work environments that influence the assessment of performance and career potential. Empirical evidence show social effectiveness to be related to salary, promotion, and career satisfaction (Ng, 2005) yet the research is limited in scope and focused on general organization politics.

1.1 Methodology

Survey research design was used in the study to predict the past and present reputations of employees in Nandi Hekima Sacco. Regression analysis and other statistical tools were applied. Primary data was collected using questionnaires that formed the primary source of data.

1.2 Model specification

Pearson's product moment correlation was used to test the direction, strength and significance of this relationship. The strength and significance of the cause-effect relationship was then tested using simple linear regression. Multiple response analysis was used to test the frequency of the most prevalent social effectiveness skill.

The regression equation ($CS = \beta_1 + \beta_2 SA + E$)

Where CS= Career success, β_1 = Y Intercept, β_2 =Gradient of the regression, SA= Social effectiveness.

The data was then analyzed with the aid of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 and the results appropriately interpreted.

1.3 Results and discussion

1.3.1 Employees Social Astuteness

The respondents were asked to rate their perception on the evaluated employee's social astuteness. Their responses were then analyzed using multiple set analyses as captured in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Employee Social Astuteness

The Employee:	Frequency (N)	Percentage of Cases (%)
This employee communicates easily and effectively with others	18	56.3
This employee is seen as someone of high integrity	19	59.4
This employee is known for producing good results	22	68.8
Has the respect of colleagues and associates	22	68.8
Has high level of motivation	18	56.3
Appraise situations more positively	12	37.5
Has ability to influence immediate colleague	19	59.4
Has strong network ties with multiple mentors	17	53.1
Has higher access to the departments administrative staff assistance	8	25.0
Has higher access to information and ideas from books and database		
Receive regular feedback from subordinates	15	46.9
Has strong relationship with experts		
Is independent and has freedom on how to do his/her work	15	46.9
The job allow him/her to use initiative and innovation	8	25.0
Has autonomy in determining how to do his/her work		
	16	50.0
	18	56.3
	15	46.9

(Source: Primary data 2013)

From the results in Table 4.6, majority of the evaluated employees had effective social skills that could make them attain career success with the most frequent skill being respect for colleagues (68.8%) and producing good results (68.8%). Skills used less frequently were developing relationship with experts (25.0%) and access to administrative staff for assistance (25.0%).

1.3.2 Correlation of Social Astuteness and Career Success

Correlation analysis was performed to determine the relationships between social astuteness of evaluated employees and career success. The correlation coefficient (r) was used to measure the strength and direction of the relationships between social astuteness and career success. The results are as shown in Table 3.2

Table 3.2: Correlation of Social Astuteness and Career Success

Correlations			
Social Effectiveness	Pearson Correlation	Social astuteness	1
		Career Success	.584**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
Career Success	N	35	33
	Pearson Correlation	.584**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	33	34

(Source: Primary Data 2013)

Results showed a moderate positive relationship (R=0.584, p=0.000) between Social Effectiveness and Career Success that was statistically significant at 99% confidence level.

1.3.3 Regression of Social astuteness on Career Success and Hypothesis testing

In order to investigate the relationship between career success and social effectiveness of the evaluated employees, hypothesis two was set and tested as follows:

Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: There is no significant linear relationship between career success and social effectiveness of the evaluated employees.

Regression analysis was carried out to test the null hypothesis. From the regression output (Appendix 4) and hence the regression parameters β_1 and β_2 obtained the hypothesis was tested by constructing the following linear model: $CS = \beta_1 + \beta_2 SE$ where: CS is Career Success (the dependent variable) β_1 is the y-intercept, β_2 is gradient of the regression line and SE is Social Effectiveness (regressor variable).

The values of the coefficients β_1 and β_2 were found to be 0.917 and 0.642 respectively from the regression output. Thus the model relating career success and social effectiveness took the form: $CS = 0.917 + 0.642SE$. This model has correlation of determination, $R^2 = 0.341$, which meant that 34.1% of the variation in career success is explained by the social effectiveness of the employees. This model is significant ($F = 16.075$)

and $p = 0.000$ which is less than the significance level of 0.01, and $t=4.009$ that is greater than the threshold of 2 for t -values) while $\beta \neq 0$. The null hypothesis was rejected and concluded that at 99% significance level, there is a significant positive linear relationship between social effectiveness and career success.

1.4 Summary

The findings also lend support to the body of literature that there is a link between social astuteness and performance rating of an individual (Zinko, Perrewe, Weitz & Xu, 2006), that socially effective individuals develop relationships with elites in the organization who help them excel in their performances. The findings also supported the findings by Forret & Dougherty, (2004) suggesting that, social networking is related to compensation and promotion. It was also found out that, findings supported Thompson, (2005) and Perrewe, (2004) who concluded that, socially effective individuals have high job performance because they tend to establish relationships with people who possess resources and influence that enable them achieve their objectives. This implies that, social effectiveness influences career success positively. These findings supported the empirical evidence by Zinko, Perrewe, Weitz & Xu, (2006) which suggested a link between social effectiveness of an individual and his/her performance rating. In addition, the findings also supported findings of a study by Janasz & Sullivan (2004) which suggested that, people with strong interpersonal skills are likely to have better job outcomes. Strong interpersonal skills attract great rewards such as positive personal reputation, promotability and higher rating from supervisors. Socially effective individuals transmit signals that create a favorable perception in the eyes of raters.

1.4 Conclusions and recommendations

There is a significant positive relationship between social astuteness and career success. Social astuteness help employees get their performances appraised and earn those rewards that enhance career success. Individuals who possess strong interpersonal skills demonstrate good reputations and attract higher ratings from supervisors.

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Sonoi A. Chepkosgei. "Effect of Social Astuteness on Career Success in Nandi Hekima Sacco Limited, Kenya." *International Journal of Business and Management Invention (IJBMI)*, vol. 6, no. 10, 2017, pp. 26–31.