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Retaining professional workers: what makes them stay?

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate why professional workers actually remain in their organisations.

Design/methodology/approach – The design of the study was cross-sectional. A number of factors important for the retention of professional workers were identified from the literature. A 19 item "retention scale" was developed based on the identified retention factors and their characteristics. It was proposed that the retention factors could be divided into two levels: organisational and job. The retention scale was completed by 138 workers form the UK site of a multinational Marketing company. The reliability of the scale was assessed using Cronbach's α and was found to be 0.80.

Findings – Factor analysis supported the division of the retention factors into organisational and job levels with a two factor structure in which organisational levels loaded strongly on component 1 and job level items loaded strongly on component 2. Scores on these two subscales predicted individual workers' intention to remain within their organisation using both MANOVA and logistic regression analysis.

Research limitations/implications – This is a preliminary look at factors important for the retention of professional workers and as such has several limitations. A more comprehensive review of the literature on retention is required and further testing of the model is required with a larger sample size. Links with the literature on the psychological contract also need to be more fully explored.

Practical implications – This research has practical implications for practitioners due to the importance of retaining top talent for increased competitive advantage. The factors that have been found here to be important for retaining professional workers have also been observed in high performing companies.

Social implications – The retirement of the baby boomer generation means that there has to be a greater emphasis on retaining key employees in organisations to mitigate the loss of key skills and competences.

Originality/value – Most previous studies and many HR managers concerned with the retention of professional and other workers tend to concentrate on those aspects of the job or of the organisation that make them leave. This study is concerned with why people stay with their employers.

Keywords Retention, Employees, Psychological contracts

Paper type Research paper

Retention of professional workers

HR professionals have traditionally used exit interviews as a means of ascertaining why individuals have left an organisation, however, it is perhaps more important to identify the organisational characteristics that make people stay with their organisations than to constantly identify the organisational characteristics that make them leave. The development of a model for employee retention could assist with this. This paper outlines the development of a model for the retention of professional workers. Professional workers are described by Van Maanen and Barley (1984) as a group of people who consider themselves to be engaged in the same sort of work (p. 289). Professions are viewed by Kerr *et al.* (1997) as a special type of occupation whose members exhibit high levels of characteristics such as expertise, autonomy, a belief in the regulation of the profession by its members and a belief in the importance of the services the profession provides (George, 2009, p. 37). This group is seen as important in relation to retention due to the possible existence of dual loyalties to both the profession and the organisation.

Each year the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) carries out a survey concerned with the recruitment and retention of UK workers. For several years managerial and professional workers have been shown to be difficult to recruit and in certain sectors such as health and other public services difficult to retain. Troman and Woods (2000) comment on the current crisis in the recruitment and retention of teachers in the UK. They claim that one feature of this trend is the number of teachers who are leaving the profession prematurely in reaction to the changed nature and organisation of their work. They also comment on the number of job vacancies for head teachers and senior manager posts in London schools. Most professional workers are also knowledge workers and as such their turnover has been shown to be higher in the US, Europe, Africa and South East Asia (Despres and Hiltrop, 1995; Dessler, 2000; Horwitz *et al.*, 2003). The retention of professional workers may be affected by their identification with both the organisation and the profession. It is possible that professional workers may have stronger professional than organisational identification (George, 2009; Robertson and O'Malley Hammersley, 2000) and communitarian-based loyalties (Alvesson, 2000).

Retaining employees, particularly professional workers, is important. Tymon *et al.* (2011) note how retaining the best professional talent is of great practical significance to organisations as it eliminates the recruiting, selection and on-boarding costs of their replacement, maintains continuity in their areas of expertise, and supports a culture in which merit can be rewarded (p. 293). Many studies suggest that organisations with greater personnel stability perform better than those with less stability (Pitts *et al.*, 2011, p. 751) and there is a danger of a loss of institutional memory in organisations with high levels of turnover amongst their professional staff (Shaw *et al.*, 2005; Mustapha *et al.*, 2011).

There is an extensive literature on employee turnover and why employees leave organisations. Until fairly recently it was assumed that the reasons why people stayed in an organisation were the same as the reasons why people leave organisations. Intention to stay was seen as simply the converse of the turnover intention (e.g. Kim *et al.*, 1996). However, some researchers now assert that turnover and retention are not simply two sides of the same construct (Cardy and Lengnick-Hall, 2011; Holtom and Inderrieden, 2006; Holtom *et al.*, 2008; Lee *et al.*, 2004; Mitchell *et al.*, 2001). According to Reitz and Anderson (2011) the "reasons why a person stays at a job are not the reverse of the reasons why that same person might leave" (p. 323). Nevertheless as Cardy and Lengnick-Hall (2011) note considerable attention has focused on "will they go" or turnover with far less attention having been paid to "will they stay" or "why do they stay", or retention (p. 213). Loan-Clarke *et al.* (2010) describe retention as "an almost untouched research topic" (p. 393).

The aim of this study was to identify factors associated with the retention of professional workers in particular in order to develop and test a model of retention. A search of the literature concerned with the retention of professional workers in particular was carried out and a number of key factors identified by means of content analysis. Several factors that have an influence on retention have been identified by previous research (Kyndt *et al.*, 2009). Some that are commonly cited include the culture of an organisation, developmental opportunities and the quality of supervision. However, according to Cardy and Lengnick-Hall (2011) there are "a myriad of other factors" that influence decisions to stay (p. 213). Some of the factors cited include job stress, colleague stress (Brown *et al.*, 2002); compensation and appreciation of performed work, provision of challenging work, promotion and development chances, inviting atmosphere within the organisation, positive relationships with colleagues,

a good balance between professional and personal life, good communications (Walker, 2001); and supervisor support (e.g. Naqvi and Bashir, 2008).

Some of the key factors for retention can be seen to be at the level of the organisation such as remuneration and benefits (salary and career advancement), human resource practices (training opportunities and distributive justice), organisational culture (Ghapanchi and Aurum, 2011), socialisation (Allen and Shanock, 2013) and aspects of management (Andrews and Wan, 2009). Other retention factors can be seen to be at the level of the job such as autonomy, work-schedule flexibility and social support (Loan-Clarke *et al.*, 2010).

Management

The role of management as a key factor in the retention of professional workers has been cited by several studies. Andrews and Wan (2009) link improved nurse retention to manager behaviour (p. 342) and Snyder and Lopez (2002) emphasise the role of leaders in an organisation in encouraging the talent of the organisation to stay. Kaye and Jordan-Evans (2002) talk about the importance of "a good boss". There appear to be two aspects of management that are particularly important in retention these being the adoption of an "appropriate style of leadership" (e.g. Spence Laschinger *et al.*, 2009) and perceived management support (e.g. Paillé, 2013).

Appropriate style of leadership

Many writers discussing the retention of professional workers in particular cite the importance of a participatory style of management. Professional workers need to feel that their professional knowledge and skills are valued and that they are able to make decisions about issues which they perceive are within their professional domain. With reference to health care workers, Stichler (2005) talks of "leaders and managers who are comfortable in breaking down the traditional barriers to create shared leadership models, participative styles, and enabling models of leadership that make employees feel valued as participants in decisions that affect their professional practice" (p. 405).

Tremblay *et al.* (2006) mention the importance of a participatory style of management for the retention of registered nurses as do Duffield and O'Brien-Pallas (2003). The importance of participation is also mentioned by Kroon and Freese (2013). Other studies citing the importance of an appropriate style of leadership include Ghapanchi and Aurum, 2011, Cardy and Lengnick-Hall (2011), Hytter (2007) and Kyndt *et al.* (2009). Perhaps this is best summed up by Hayes *et al.* (2006) as "a management style that facilitates rather than directs" (p. 241).

Perceived management support

Ellett *et al.* (2007) mention the importance of "supportive, quality supervision" and "leadership that values employees" and Joo (2010) notes the importance of being supervised in a supportive fashion for knowledge workers. Several studies observe that the feeling of being supported by one's manager is more important for employee retention than the feeling of being supported by the organisation (e.g. Eisenberger *et al.*, 2002; Paillé, 2013). Research in the USA has also consistently shown a relationship between perceptions of manager support and employee retention and the same also appears to be true for professionals in India (Tymon *et al.*, 2011, p. 296). Mignonac and Richebé (2012) maintain the importance of disinterested support on behalf of the supervisor that is to say support with no strings attached. Studies emphasising the

importance of perceived management support include Naqvi and Bashir (2008), Pitts *et al.* (2011), Horwitz *et al.* (2003), Ito and Brotheridge (2005) and Karatepe (2013). Thus the literature would appear to support the importance of the role of management particularly in relation to management style and level of managerial support.

Conducive environment
Another important factor in the retention of professional workers appears to be the work environment. Spence Laschinger *et al.* (2009) obtained results to support the importance of positive working environments in retaining health professionals. An environment conducive to employee retention is one where the working experience is a pleasant one, the resources are adequate and there is some degree of flexibility. HR managers can influence the working environment by ensuring that professional groups have access to sufficient resources and that flexibility within the organisation is reciprocal. Wood *et al.* (2013) found that resources were an important factor in the retention of midwives as did Alexander *et al.* (1998) with psychiatric nurses. Flexibility was found to be an important factor in the retention of allied health professionals by Loan-Clarke *et al.* (2010) and in child welfare professionals by Ellett *et al.* (2007). Moncarz *et al.* (2009) noted the importance of having a fun working environment as well as flexibility. Horwitz *et al.* (2003) also argue that a work place should be a "fun" place to work if key workers are to be retained. Consequently the key features of a conducive environment would appear to be the availability of sufficient resources to perform the job, flexibility and a pleasant or fun place to work.

Social support
Another important deciding factor in retention would appear to be relationships with co-workers. A study of nurse managers found that the second most frequent reason given for leaving their job was the relationship with their head of department (Jasper, 2007, p. 245) and that relationships between colleagues featured high amongst work place stressors. Pitts *et al.* (2011) provide evidence to suggest that employees' satisfaction with their relationships with other employees is related to employee retention. Tai *et al.* (1998) include support from co-workers as part of their retention model as do Alexander *et al.* (1998). However, Newman *et al.* (2012) found no link between support from colleagues and retention amongst Chinese employees. Social support can be characterised by feeling part of the team and friendly and caring colleagues who are there to consult with when required.

In an analysis of stories concerned with improving nurse retention, collegiality was identified as a key element by Kooker *et al.* (2007). Paillé (2013) also noted the importance of helping others or receiving help from others (p. 771). Using multiple logistic regression Brown *et al.* (2002) found that colleague support was most related to retention and Ng and Sorensen (2008) also found that being supported by co-workers is a predictor of retention levels. Other studies such as Kaye and Jordan-Evans (2002) and Ghapanchi and Aurum, 2011 cite the importance of positive relationships with colleagues and having "great co-workers" (pp. 20-21).

Development opportunities
Another deciding factor in relation to retention is the extent to which the employing organisation provides opportunities for personal and professional growth (Horwitz *et al.*, 2003). This is often predicated with talk of the new psychological contract where

the responsibility for development is seen as shifting increasingly to the individual (Beck, 2000). The resignation of knowledge workers has been found to be related to issues connected with their career (Horwitz *et al.*, 2003; Rolfe, 2005) and high retention cultures have been found to be characterised by the encouragement of continued learning (Stichler, 2005). Cardy and Lengnick-Hall (2011) assert that developmental opportunities can increase employee commitment to stay as do Kroon and Freese (2013). This is confirmed by Arnold (2005), Herman (2005) and Hiltrop (1999) amongst others.

Professional workers need the opportunity to develop new competences thus keeping their part of the new psychological contract. Moncarz *et al.* (2009) have found that professional growth is an important retention factor and that "in organizations where employees receive the proper training needed to assume greater responsibilities, turnover rates are generally lower" (p. 441). Others have found a significant negative relationship between career development support and turnover intention (Kroon and Freese, 2013).

Horwitz *et al.* (2003) include promotion opportunities in their retention strategies model. It seems logical to assume that having developed new competences that professional workers would seek to put these to use. Daniels *et al.* (2007) found that promotion or career prospects played an important role in the retention of health professionals and Tymon *et al.* (2011) found that perceived career success played a critical role in the turnover of Indian professionals. Advancement opportunities or the amount of potential for movement to higher levels within the organisation are cited by Hausknecht *et al.* (2009) as a retention factor. Several studies suggest that perceptions of career success are negatively related with intention to leave (e.g. Taylor, 1996; Pitts *et al.*, 2011). Thus an important characteristic would appear to be the potential to develop new competences and the availability of career prospects.

Autonomy
Autonomy is a key feature of job satisfaction and has been found to be a job characteristic which is particularly important for professional workers (Alexander *et al.*, 1998; Boyle *et al.*, 1999; Ellenbecker, 2003; Hart, 2005; Tai *et al.*, 1998; Tremblay *et al.*, 2006). Thus the opportunity to behave autonomously is a critical issue in relation to the retention of this group. The degree of autonomy afforded to workers is a function of the style of leadership both at organisational and other levels. Andrews and Wan (2009) assert that autonomy has been demonstrated to reduce intent to leave and Kooker *et al.* (2007) list autonomy as one of the elements that are essential to professional nursing practice. Autonomy has also been found to influence turnover decisions amongst IT professionals (Ghapanchi and Aurum, 2011). Autonomy is linked with empowerment and Pitts *et al.* (2011) claim that employees who feel empowered are less likely to leave. This is echoed by Spence Laschinger *et al.* (2009).

Autonomy also involves a degree of flexibility in decisions involving workload. Armstrong *et al.* (2007) (Ghapanchi and Aurum, 2011) comment on the importance of work-schedule flexibility for the retention of female employees and Hausknecht *et al.* (2009) list flexible work arrangements as one of their retention factors as do Horwitz *et al.* (2003). Thus autonomy can be seen to be characterised by the ability to choose how to do one's work; having influence over one's work; and flexibility in workload decisions.

Compensation
Compensation is often assumed to be a key factor in employee retention. When shortages of professional workers are discussed one of the key factors identified is

often compensation. Pitts *et al.* (2011) emphasise the importance of pay as a strong
predictor of employee turnover citing a number of studies (e.g. Lambert *et al.*, 2001).
The role of compensation does not, however, appear to be a straight forward one.
Hytter (2007) demonstrated that rewards have an indirect influence on retention and
Ellenbecker (2004) notes that wage rates only have a modest effect on nurse retention.
According to Hayes *et al.* (2006) pay itself is not a key factor in retention and they cite
several studies to support this. Hausknecht *et al.* (2009) cite extrinsic rewards such as
the amount of pay and other benefits as one of their retention factors. However, Horwitz
et al. (2003), whilst they mention other models of retention which include compensation
such as Baron and Hannan (2002), within their own model an important aspect
of retention is the transparency of pay decisions. Thus these studies make the link
between compensation and issues of procedural justice. Perceived equity in relation to
compensation is mentioned as an important factor in the retention of IT professionals
by Paré and Tremblay (2000). Rambur *et al.* (2005) identified the degree to which
employees are paid fairly for what they contribute to the organisation as a key job
dimension related to the retention of nurses. Compensation also needs to reflect a
satisfactory balance between efforts and rewards (Tremblay *et al.*, 2006) and be
consistent with responsibility, ability and workload (Alexander *et al.*, 1998). The key
characteristics of compensation in relation to retention would appear to be the
perception that decisions relating to pay are transparent and that salaries are fair
and based on performance and effort.

Crafted/sculpted workload
The individualisation of the work place and the adoption of the new psychological
contract have also been noted in the tendency for employees to craft their jobs in
accordance to their individual strengths, preferences and lifestyle. Some talk of a shift
to "sculpting" jobs based on the life interests of professional workers (Butler and
Waldrop, 2001). Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) propose that jobs can be crafted by
employees by changing cognitive, task and/or relational boundaries to shape interactions
and relationships with others at work. Mittal *et al.* (2009) found that the ability to craft
their jobs was an important factor in the retention of care workers. Thus another
important aspect is having a workload that is adapted to the resources and/or the
abilities of the individual, with opportunities to be creative and to make full use of
individual skills.

Work-life balance
Work-life balance has become an increasingly important factor for many professional
workers. Differences observed across generations suggest that the current generation
of professional workers demand flexible work schedules which allow for success in
their personal as well as their professional life (e.g. Ellenbecker, 2003, p. 405). The
balance between work and other life domains means that some professional workers
will sacrifice some degree of success in their work-life if this allows more time for other
areas of life. Some working mothers, for example, plan their work schedules along
with their children's and home schedules allowing dedicated time for both. Some
professional workers who have achieved a significant level of career success may then
decide to emphasize other areas of their life in subsequent years. This has led to the
phenomenon known as "downshifting" (see, e.g. Laabs, 1996). Kyndt *et al.* (2009)
emphasize the importance of a healthy balance between the professional and

personal life. Loan-Clarke *et al.* (2010) found that work fitting in with family responsibilities was one of the reasons for remaining in NHS employment. Leners *et al.* (2006) state that in order to retain nurses employers need to provide a "harmonious balance of work and personal life" (p. 654). Thus being able to find sufficient time for activities other than work is another key retention characteristic.

Table I outlines the eight factors identified above in the literature review as being important for the retention of professional workers and breaks the factors down into their main characteristics and one aim of the study was to use these eight factors to develop a reliable measure of an individual's intention to remain in the organisation.

As outlined in the introduction it would appear that some retention factors are at the level of the job and others are at the level of the organisation. In the rudimentary model developed it is proposed that the "management", "conducive environment", "social support" and "develop opportunities" cluster together in an "organisational" group and the "autonomy", "compensation", "crafted/sculpted workload" and "work-life balance" cluster together in a "job" group. It is also proposed that the "job" and "organisational" level items predict individual employees' intention to remain in the organisation.

The aim of the current study was to develop an evidence-based model for the retention of professional workers and to carry out a preliminary test of the model within one large organisation. Thus as outlined above, in order to test the model the following research questions were identified:

RQ1. Can the characteristics identified in relation to the eight retention factors be developed into a reliable measure of an individual's intention to remain in the organisation?

RQ2. Do the "management", "conducive environment", "social support" and "develop opportunities" cluster together in an "organisational" group?

Level	Retention factors	Characteristics
Organisational	Management	Appropriate style of Leadership
		Support from top and other levels of management
	Conducive environment	Fun/pleasant place to work
		Adequate resources
		Flexibility
	Social support	Feeling part of the team
		Friendly and caring colleagues
		Colleagues who are available for consultation
	Development opportunities	Potential to develop new competences
		Promotion/career prospects
Job	Autonomy	Possibility of choosing how to do one's work
		Having influence over one's work
		Flexibility in workload decisions
	Compensation	Transparent pay decisions
		A "fair" salary based on performance and effort
	Crafted/sculpted workload	Having a workload that is adapted to the resources/abilities of the individual
		Full skill utilisation
		Being creative
	Work-life balance	Being able to find sufficient time for activities other than work

Table I.
Factors in the retention of professional workers

RQ3. Do the "autonomy", "compensation", "crafted/sculpted workload" and "work-life balance" cluster together in a "job" group?

RQ4. Do the "job" and "organisational" level items predict individual employees' intention to remain in the organisation? (Figure 1).

Methods

Materials

A short questionnaire consisting of 19 items was developed with items relating to the characteristics outlined in Table I. The items were based on the characteristics and included items such as "I feel as if I am part of a team" and "I have friendly and caring colleagues" Items were measured on a five point likert scale running from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Additional items relating to intention to remain in the current organisation and whether or not they were currently looking for a job were added as well as some biographical data.

Sample

The questionnaire was administered electronically to the UK employees of a multinational marketing company. A total of 138 participants completed the questionnaire. In total, 55.2 per cent of those completing the questionnaire and answering this question were male and 44.8 per cent were female. Respondents came from a variety of job roles and included Accountants, IT professionals, Consultants, Marketing and Sales Professionals and HR professionals. The average age of respondents was 34.3 years with a range of
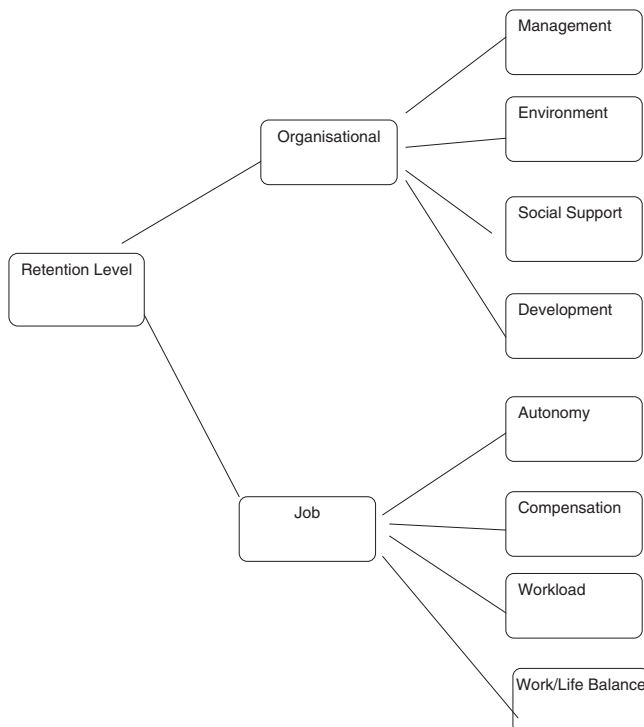

Figure 1.
Model for retention of
professional workers

from 20 to 61 years. Participation was entirely voluntary and it was explained to participants that it was part of a preliminary research project.

Analysis
In order to assess the reliability of the scale the α coefficient of the questionnaire was analysed using Cronbach's α and was found to be 0.80. This is above the accepted level of 0.70 and would therefore appear to suggest that the scale is a reliable measure (DeVellis, 2003).

The 19 items of the retention scale were subjected to principal components analysis (PCA).

Results
Descriptive statistics
The means and standard deviations for the 19 items of the retention questionnaire are shown in Table II. The inter-correlations of all of the items are also shown in Table II. Scores on the "organisational" subscale formed from items loading on Component 1 ranged from 1.58 to 4.67, the mean score was 3.11 (SD = 0.57, $n = 138$). Scores on the "job" subscale formed form the items loading on Component 2 ranged from 1.00 to 4.33 with a mean score of 2.89 (SD = 0.60, $n = 138$).

Factor analysis
The 19 items of the retention scale were subjected to PCA. Prior to performing PCA, the suitability of the data for factor analysis was assessed. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed the presence of many coefficients of 0.3 and above. The Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin value was 0.75, exceeding the recommended value of 0.6 and Bartlett's test of Sphericity reached statistical significance, supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix.

PCA revealed the presence of seven components with eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining 24.9, 9.6, 7.7, 6.4, 6.2, 5.9 and 5.3 per cent of the variance, respectively. An inspection of the screeplot revealed a clear break after the second component. Using Cattell's (1966) scree test, it was decided to retain two components for further investigation.

The two-component solution explained a total of 34.5 per cent of the variance, with Component 1 contributing 24.9 per cent and Component 2 contributing 9.6 per cent. To aid in the interpretation of these two components, oblimin rotation was performed. The rotated solution revealed the presence of a simple structure (Thurstone, 1947), with both components showing a number of strong loadings and all variables loading substantially on only one component (see Table III). The interpretation of the components was consistent with the structure outlined in Table I, with organisational level items loading strongly on Component 1 and job level items loading strongly on Component 2. There was a weak positive correlation between the two factors ($r = 0.23$). The results of this analysis support the use of the two different levels (organisational and job) in the retention model.

Reliability
Using the factor analysis as a basis, two subscales were created, the organisational subscale and the job subscale. The Cronbach α value for the organisational subscale was 0.82 which exceeded the recommended value of 0.7, indicating adequate internal consistency. The Cronbach α value for the job subscale was 0.64 which is just below the

Measures	M	SD	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
1. Team	3.34	0.99	0.48**	0.36**	0.47**	0.38***	0.27**	0.39***	0.26**	0.31**	0.27**	0.17*	0.15	0.19*	0.09	0.08	0.08	0.00	0.23**	−0.01
2. Supportive	3.20	1.00		0.42**	0.40**	0.28**	0.31**	0.52***	0.39**	0.25**	0.26**	0.31**	0.13	0.16	0.15	−0.02	0.12	0.02	0.26**	−0.04
3. Caring colleagues	3.70	0.79			0.34**	0.32**	0.24**	0.18*	0.18*	0.05	0.08	0.14	0.21*	0.05	−0.00	−0.02	0.02	−0.00	0.05	−0.14
4. Enjoy	3.12	0.89				0.36***	0.38**	0.33***	0.34***	0.46***	0.21*	0.27**	0.25**	0.34***	0.29**	0.16	0.22**	0.11	0.29**	0.02
5. Available	2.99	1.04					0.28**	0.21*	0.29**	0.23**	0.19*	0.39**	0.25**	0.08	0.14	0.11	0.05	0.14	0.22**	0.11
6. Develop skills	2.89	1.07						0.21*	0.39**	0.26**	0.38***	0.25**	0.19*	0.29**	0.31**	0.10	0.04	0.06	0.32**	0.01
7. Flex managers	3.69	0.94							0.34**	0.31**	0.19*	0.10	0.13	0.19*	0.14	0.07	0.29**	0.06	0.16	0.05
8. Say	2.48	1.06								0.22**	0.29**	0.19*	0.25**	0.38***	0.25**	0.15	0.09	0.19*	0.39***	0.11
9. Skill use	2.69	1.12									0.09	0.17*	0.14	0.31**	0.21*	0.13	0.13	−0.19*	0.21**	0.12
10. Career	2.58	1.16										0.23**	0.08	0.11	0.25**	−0.00	0.07	0.07	0.26**	0.15
11. Resources	2.56	1.08											−0.05	−0.00	0.17*	0.15	0.02	0.25**	0.25**	0.06
12. Flex attitude	4.00	0.73												0.14	0.11	0.13	−0.03	−0.09	0.07	−0.04
13. Creativity	3.07	1.07													0.25**	0.27**	0.33***	0.14	0.23**	0.01
14. Fair rewards	2.21	0.98														0.19*	0.31**	0.09	0.48***	0.05
15. Flex. workload	3.28	1.02															0.26**	0.23**	0.09	0.03
16. Autonomy	3.64	0.95																0.06	0.18*	0.11
17. Outside interests	2.87	1.18																	0.19*	0.02
18. Trans rewards	2.34	0.87																		−0.09
19. Obligation	2.39	0.95																			1.00

Notes: *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$

Table II.
Means, standard
deviations (SDs) and
correlations
for scale items

Item	Pattern Coefficients Component 1	Component 2	Structure Coefficients Component 1	Component 2	Communalities
1. Team	0.749	−0.201	0.703	−0.030	0.533
2. Supportive mgrs	0.770	−0.132	0.740	0.044	0.564
3. Caring colleagues	0.653	−0.380	0.567	−0.231	0.458
4. Enjoy working	0.666	0.180	0.707	0.332	0.531
5. Colleagues available	0.614	−0.041	0.605	0.099	0.368
6. Develop skills	0.539	0.204	0.586	0.327	0.383
7. Flex mgrs	0.559	0.071	0.575	0.198	0.336
8. Say in decisions	0.511	0.304	0.581	0.421	0.425
9. Skills use	0.427	0.196	0.472	0.294	0.259
10. Career	0.398	0.168	0.436	0.258	0.217
11. Resources	0.395	0.127	0.424	0.217	0.195
12. Flex attitude	0.374	−0.058	0.361	0.027	0.134
13. Creativity	0.143	0.600	0.280	0.633	0.420
14. Fair rewards	0.164	0.611	0.303	0.648	0.445
15. Workload	−0.027	0.542	0.096	0.536	0.288
16. Autonomy	0.018	0.565	0.146	0.569	0.324
17. Balance	−0.026	0.393	0.064	0.387	0.150
18. Trans rewards	0.322	0.460	0.427	0.534	0.383
19. Work obligation	−0.043	0.212	0.005	0.202	0.043

Table III.
Pattern and structure matrix for PCA with oblimin rotation of two factor solution of retention items

recommended value of 0.7 but still suggests an acceptable level of internal consistency (Briggs and Cheek, 1986).

Retention
A one-way between groups multivariate analysis of variance was performed to investigate the role of the organisational and job factors in the retention of professional workers. Two dependent variables were used: organisational and job. The independent variable was intention to quit. There was a statistically significant difference between those who were currently looking for a job and those who were not looking for a job $F(1, 137) = 7.55$, $p = 0.001$; Wilks' $\lambda = 0.89$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.12$. When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately both reached statistical significance, organisational, $F(1, 117) = 13.02$, $p = 0.000$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.10$; job, $F(1, 117) = 7.47$, $p = 0.007$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.06$. An inspection of the mean scores showed that those who were currently looking for a job scored slightly lower on the organisational subscale ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 0.09$) than those who were not currently looking for a job ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 0.54$). Those who were currently looking for a job also scored lower on the job subscale ($M = 2.67$, $SD = 0.52$) than those who were not looking for a job ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 0.61$).

In order to further test the model the questionnaire items were grouped according to the eight retention factors and were correlated with scores on the organisational and job subscales. The results are shown in Table IV. Management ($r = 0.73$, $p = 0.000$), conducive environment ($r = 0.37$, $p = 0.000$), social Support ($r = 0.78$, $p = 0.000$) and development opportunities ($r = 0.68$, $p = 0.000$) all had significant positive correlations with the organisational subscale. Autonomy ($r = 0.79$, $p = 0.000$), compensation ($r = 0.71$, $p = 0.000$), crafted workload ($r = 0.52$, $p = 0.000$) and work-life balance ($r = 0.52$, $p = 0.000$) all had significant positive correlations with the job subscale.

Direct logistic regression was performed to assess the impact of a number of factors on the likelihood that respondents would report that they were currently looking for a job.

Retention factors	Environment	Social support	Development opportunities	Autonomy	Compensation	Crafted workload	Work-life balance	Organisational	Job
Management	0.42**	0.50**	0.34**	0.35**	0.23**	0.32**	0.05	0.73**	0.25**
Environment		0.56**	0.41**	0.37**	0.37**	0.37**	0.16	0.78**	0.37**
Social support			0.36**	0.25**	0.20*	0.21*	0.06	0.78**	0.17
Development opportunities				0.28**	0.39**	0.27**	0.08	0.68**	0.31**
Autonomy					0.43**	0.45**	0.24**	0.48**	0.79**
Compensation						0.32**	0.16	0.45**	0.71**
Crafted workload							−0.03	0.53**	0.52**
Work-life balance								0.09	0.52**
Organisational									0.41**

Notes: *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$

Table IV.
Correlation matrix of
retention factors

The model contained four independent variables (sex, age, organisational level scores, job level scores). The full model containing all predictors was statistically significant, $\chi^2(4, 110) = 18.89$, $p = 0.001$, indicating that the model was able to distinguish between respondents who were currently looking for another job and those who were not. The model as a whole explained between 15.8 per cent (Cox and Snell R^2) and 22.3 per cent (Nagel Kerke R^2) of the variance in intent to remain. As shown in Table V the strongest predictor of intention to remain in the organisation was scores on the organisational subscale recording an odds ratio of 4.29. This indicated that respondents who were not currently looking for a job were over four times more likely to score higher on the Organisation subscale.

Discussion

The "retention scale" developed from the characteristics of the eight retention factors identified from the literature was shown to be a reliable measure of intention to remain within an organisation with an α of 0.80. However, as one of the items (work obligation) failed to load on either of the two factors, for future research it is proposed to reduce the scale to 18 items.

The factor analysis revealed that the retention factors identified as being at the organisational level all loaded strongly on the first factor and those retention factors identified as being at the job level all loaded strongly on the second factor. The MANOVA demonstrated that high scores on the "organisational" and "job" subscales predicted individual employees' intention to remain in the organisation. The results of the logistic regression suggested that high scores on the "organisational" subscale were better predictors of an individual employee's intention to remain in their organisation than scores on the "job" subscale. This suggests that characteristics such as leadership style, management support, an enjoyable/fun place to work, flexibility, having adequate resources, feeling part of the team, having friendly and caring colleagues, the opportunity to develop new skills and promotion prospects, are important features of employee retention.

Several writers have commented upon the importance of management style (e.g. Tremblay *et al.*, 2006; Duffield and O'Brien-Pallas, 2003) as a feature in the retention of professional workers. This is supported by the results obtained in this study. Other key factors such as opportunities for personal and professional growth (Horwitz *et al.*, 2003; Rolfe, 2005; Stichler, 2005) and a conducive environment (Horwitz *et al.*, 2003) have been found to be important features in this study. However, whilst the factors at the level of the job such as autonomy, work-life balance, compensation strategies and job crafting were important, the key influences on retention would appear to lie at the organisational level. It is interesting to note that the factors found to be important for the retention of professional workers are those factors that are often mentioned in relation to psychological contract breach (see, e.g. Robinson (1996)).

Thus the model developed from the literature appears to have withstood preliminary testing (George, 2009). The retention measure was based on the characteristics of factors that have been identified from the literature as important for the retention of professional workers. The existence of two levels of factors – organisational and job – was supported by the results of the factor analysis. The links between the factors and intention to quit were demonstrated by the results of the MANOVA and also of the direct logistic regression. However, the factors at the organisational level were more likely to predict intention to remain.

	B	SE	Wald	df	p	Odds ratio	95.0% for odds lower	CI ratio upper
Sex	0.35	0.48	0.52	1	0.47	1.41	0.55	3.63
Age	0.01	0.02	0.04	1	0.84	1.0	0.96	1.05
Job	0.52	0.40	1.69	1	0.19	1.69	0.77	3.71
Organisational	1.46	0.49	8.78	1	0.00	4.29	1.64	11.24
Constant	−5.37	1.73	9.57	1	0.00	0.01		

Table V.
Logistic regression
predicting likelihood
of intention to stay

Thus to briefly summarise the model suggests eight broad factors which are important for the retention of professional workers. The overall recommendations for practitioners would appear to be that professional workers are more likely to stay in organisations where the management style is deemed appropriate, where the working experience is pleasant, resources re adequate, there is a degree of flexibility, where people feel part of a team with friendly and caring colleagues who are available and where there is the opportunity to learn new skills or to obtain promotion. This is at the organisational level. At the level of the job, professional workers are more likely to stay in jobs where they have some degree of autonomy, where there is flexibility in workload decisions, where pay decisions are transparent and fair, where there is some opportunity for individuals to craft their jobs and where there is a suitable work-life balance. These are mostly areas where HR practitioners have some influence within organisations.

This is a preliminary look at factors important for the retention of professional workers and as such has several limitations. Whilst the model developed appears to have some validity, the development of a robust model would need to be based on a more comprehensive review of the literature on retention, rather than focusing purely on the retention literature concerned with professional workers as was done here. The sample size of the current study is relatively small and the model requires further testing with a much wider range of professional workers. Links with the literature on the psychological contract also need to be more fully explored. For example, how does perceived violation or breach of a professional worker's psychological contract interact with the various retention factors proposed here. The issue of the psychological contract is a complex one in relation to professional workers as they may feel that their contract is more with their profession than their employing organisation.

There are also issues for HR practitioners with a possible shift of focus from why are people leaving organisations to what makes them stay. Once a person has left the organisation knowing why they left does not really help the situation it makes much more sense to find out the levers that make people stay.

Due to the relatively small sample size in the present study it is difficult to give the proposed model definitive support. Further testing of the model is needed in a wide range of organisations and with a wide range of professional workers. One of the items in the original questionnaire did not load on either of the two factors and it is proposed to omit this item in future research. However, this preliminary testing of the model has produced useful results that may have important implications for practitioners. There are obvious links between employee retention and concerns about employee engagement. Also the factors that have been found here to be important for retention are also similar to some of the factors used to identify the best companies to work for such as "support for professional development", "fairness", and "camaraderie". Fulmer *et al.* (2003) found that companies on the 100 Best list enjoy not only stable and highly positive workforce attitudes but also display performance advantages. Future research could investigate links between employee engagement, employee retention and organisational performance.

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