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# The Role of Motivation in the Knowledge Transfer of Employees

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## Abstract

Human resource management emphasizes significantly more effort in acquiring new knowledge than it does in transferring acquired knowledge. The research aims to determine how much motivation of the individuals can influence to transfer their knowledge to other employees. The research focuses on the meaning of motivation in knowledge transfer. It was conducted by direct survey in 2019 on a quota sample of 110 respondents. Sampling was performed from several medium-sized organizations from different activities in the three counties of North-Western Croatia. The questionnaire was constructed using the five-level Likert's scale model and had 24 items or motivators for knowledge transfer. These are also independent variables: expected reward for knowledge transfer, job satisfaction, training effects, compassionate empathy, personal responsibility, position in the organization, experience in knowledge transfer, loyalty to the organization. The reliability of the scales was tested by Cronbach alpha indicators. The multiple regression analysis methods were applied. It was found that the position in the organization participates most in the motivators for knowledge transfer, followed by the expected reward for knowledge transfer. Interestingly, the variables job satisfaction, experience in knowledge transfer and loyalty to the organization had almost no role in transferring knowledge to other employees.

**Keywords:** employees, knowledge, transfer, motivation

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## Introduction

Two relatively clear trends characterize human resource management in today's organizations. Individuals are encouraged to maximize their potential, develop their abilities to perfection. To show personal competitive spirit and abilities and realize their career plan by rising in the organizational structure. The second trend emphasizes the need to constantly acquire new knowledge, abilities and skills of all employees. Intellectual capital becomes irreplaceable with the role and content in the competitive positions of organizations. Considering these two trends, one of the questions is: How do you encourage individuals who have acquired the necessary knowledge to transfer them to other members of the organization? Or: Why would someone pass on their knowledge as a personal source of career advancement and career advancement to others?

It is not possible to give completely satisfactory answers to these questions since it is an extremely complex matter. It is argued that knowledge transfers will be effective when we become self-aware of our emotions, strengths and weaknesses, only then can we begin to think about how to manage that knowledge to apply them to help us achieve our goals and pass them on to others (Zeidner et al., 2004). People who focus mainly on themselves and lack empathetic preferences and values, do not have enough self-awareness. Some authors point to the need to emphasize the perceived usefulness of acquiring and transferring knowledge, which depends on the extent to which participants in the acquisition and transfer will be able to exercise self-actualization (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). In the acquisition and transfer of knowledge, the importance of learning style indicates that in the management activities of human resources management should intensively work on adopting organizational models and learning styles. This will reduce the possible risks in acquiring knowledge, implementing it more effectively in work and transferring knowledge to others (Tharenou, 2010). Research findings confirm that the effectiveness of training content acquisition and transfer of acquired knowledge is highly correlated with certain employee dimensions that come from characteristics of their personality such as conscientiousness, extroversion, self-control, empathetic orientation (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). The emphasis on self-evaluation should be on the formative use of one's learning or achievement based on a nomothetic or group comparison. This implies that the trainees are compared with several potential achievements themselves (Klein & Buckingham, 2002).

The results of the research now available mainly relate to populations in developed countries and can hardly be implemented in transition countries. The research aims to determine how much motivation individuals with knowledge can influence to transfer their knowledge to other employees? The research focuses on the meaning of motivation in knowledge transfer.

## Motives and motivation for the transfer of knowledge

Motives and motivation for knowledge transfer in organizations can include different internal and external incentives. External (extrinsic) can take the form of salary, incentives, promotion, bonuses, etc. Internal (intrinsic) is intangible such as praise, empathetic inclination, loyalty to the organization etc. Managers are interested in generating both external and internal motives to get the best out transmitted acquired knowledge among employees. Intrinsic motives are becoming increasingly the focus of interest today in management for several reasons. One is that external motives very often prove to be insufficiently effective in transferring knowledge. Besides, knowledge transfer has long been the focus of pedagogy (as a scientific

area primarily concerned with knowledge transfer) on efficiency in the sphere of intangible motives. Whether or not someone transfers their knowledge to another usually depends on a series of motives that are not materially based but have some deeper psychological meanings. There are at least eight intrinsic motives that can be accepted as incentives for individuals to transfer their acquired knowledge to other members of the organization:

1. The expected reward for knowledge transfer
2. Position (rank, role) in the organization
3. Personal responsibility
4. Job satisfaction
5. Empathic values and preferences
6. Effects of training (learning)
7. Personal experience in knowledge transfer
8. Loyalty to the organization

The expected reward for the transfer of knowledge is here understood through intangible forms such as acknowledgements of a successful transfer, praise, gratitude and appreciation expressed by the employer (Ajila & Abiola, 2004). It is quite certain that individuals who have these expectations will be more inclined to transfer their knowledge to others and vice versa. Managers need to be able to create these expectations, because they do not arise spontaneously and spontaneously, but are a reflection of the knowledge and skills of managing expectations. Low expectations of rewards will not successfully create knowledge transfers, as well as unrealistic and high ones that cannot be realized.

An employee who could transfer his / her knowledge to others starts from his / her position (place, rank, role) in the organization. It tries to position its inputs and outputs in the process. What does he potentially gain and lose? Most often it depends on whether the individual who is potentially transferring their knowledge is in a subordinate or superior role to the one to whom that knowledge is to be transferred (Ajila & Abiola, 2004).

The more an employee is personally and directly responsible for the job, the more difficult it is to transfer their knowledge to others. He then estimates what they will gain and what they will lose if they pass on their knowledge to others. Responsibility for the job creates a side not only for the person who needs to transfer their knowledge but also for the person who needs to take them. This fear of job transfer occurs to the person who needs to take that knowledge due to possible skills shortages and adverse opportunities and causes for poor job performance, lack of communication skills and disabilities, and other factors. This is considered to be very important in controlling the situation of how the training was performed and what strategies will be used to transfer knowledge to preserve and maintain responsibility for the work done (Chen et al., 2004; Rowden & Conine, 2005).

A more satisfied associate will more transfer their knowledge to others and vice versa. Therefore, management must always strive to enable trainees to apply the acquired knowledge in their workplaces to increase their satisfaction. Employees who cannot apply the acquired knowledge in their work are generally always dissatisfied. Not only will they not pass on this knowledge to others, but it will also deter them from engaging in training and thus create negative attitudes towards knowledge acquisition in organizations.

Empathic values and abilities of employees are directly related to the acquisition and transfer of knowledge. Donacefard and associates position emotional intelligence as one of the most productive forms of learning in organizations

(Danacefard et al., 2012). These authors also include mental models in the dimensions of learning, placing the learning culture as a key feature of the corporate culture. In their opinion, emotional intelligence reflects on learning and transfer of knowledge through self-awareness, self-regulation, sympathy, social skills and self-stimulation of employees. In a larger study, it was demonstrated that managers who spread positive emotions and create an emotional landscape in the organization toward learning led to the acceptance of learning among all employees and the transfer of knowledge (Pinkley, 1990).

If the trainee did not acquire the expected knowledge himself, then how will he transfer it to others? The effects of training have a significant impact on the transfer of acquired knowledge. Employees transfer their knowledge related to their learning and acquisition only when intrinsically motivated (Chiaburu & Tekleab, 2005; Huysman, & Wit, 2004). Several studies so far confirm and imply that training is the most important factor in gaining knowledge. However, very few authors have demonstrated that the quality and effects of training also affect the success of knowledge transfer (Odigie & Li-Hua, 2008). More authors point to the need to emphasize the perception of the usefulness of training and its research, which depends on the extent to which the trainees will be able to monitor the contents of the training (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). Poor perceptions of training create low effects of the training and thus prevent the transfer of acquired knowledge.

He may have great knowledge, but if he cannot be passed on to others - there is no expected transfer. Experience in knowledge transfer plays a significant role. It has been observed, for example, that introverted training participants are not inclined to transfer the acquired knowledge to their co-workers and team members, as they have no experience in doing so (Tharenou, 2010). There is no longitudinal research on the experience of training participants in knowledge transfer. One of the few studies in this field points to the unquestionable predictive value of training self-evaluation in the acquisition, application and transfer of acquired knowledge, and it is argued that the results obtained can be very useful for decision-makers in engaging trainees for future training (Obach, 2003).

Its members are not only loyal to the organization through time spent in the organization and by identifying their life goals and interests with those of the organization. They also demonstrate this loyalty through their willingness and ability to transfer their acquired knowledge to other members of that organization. In this way, the individual, the employee creates and reinforces his or her views that he or she is an active participant in the source of increasing organizational knowledge as primary capital. Individual participation in the creation of organizational knowledge through the transfer of personally acquired knowledge is one of the essential motives of this transfer (Lucas & Ogilvie, 2006). A higher level of devotion indicates a greater tendency to transfer knowledge to others. The research hypothesis is: Intangible motives influence knowledge transfer among employees. These intangible motives are eight and are explained in the text presented. The author found support for the inclusion of these motives in the research in the study of the results of the cited authors and research, and her judgment.

## Methodology

The primary source of research data was a questionnaire designed for the content of this research. The secondary source is from textbooks and published scientific papers in journals and on the following databases: Internet, Ovid, Proquest, Wiley, Emerald, PsycNet, CAPE and Scielo. The emphasis on the use of secondary sources has been on those generated in the last ten years. The questioning was through a structured

questionnaire directly. It was done in the third quarter of 2019 and was completely anonymous. To protect participants from risk, the survey did not record the names of the participants and the names of the organizations in which they worked. Verbal consent was obtained from each respondent before the start of the interview. All participants were provided with information on the research objectives. The survey was conducted outside the premises of the survey participants.

The survey included 14 medium-sized organizations (employing between 20 and 100 workers) from various activities in the three counties of northwestern Croatia: Krapina-Zagorje, Krizevci-Koprivnica and Karlovac. The survey included 110 respondents, which represented more than 10% of the total number of employees of the surveyed population. Kerlinger argues that a smaller sample of 10% of the total population carries a sampling error and vice versa (Kerlinger, 2006). Among the respondents were 68.40% men and 31.60% women. The respondents were heterogeneous in terms of work experience, level of education and age. Most of them were with secondary education (72.65%), work experience of ten or more years (81.78%), and with a life expectancy of between 30 and 50 years (69.03%).

A random selection of respondents was used based on the alphabetical lists of full-time employees in the organizations covered. The sample size was determined by the statistical formula for the stratified random sampling technique where the population is not homogeneous (Cooper & Schindler, 2008). Only those respondents who have participated at least twice in the type of training organized by the company in the last three years of their work are included in the sample.

The research instrument was a questionnaire consisting of two parts. The first was the statistical characteristics of the respondents: gender, age, qualifications and seniority. In the second part, 24 statements were made, classified into eight groups that were factors of effective knowledge transfer. The claims were constructed based on the following sources:

1. The expected reward for knowledge transfer (Lucas & Ogilvie, 2006)
2. Job satisfaction (Swart et al., 2005)
3. Effects of Training (Chiaburu & Tekleab, 2005; Huysman & Wit, 2004)
4. Compassionate empathy (Chang et al., 2014)
5. Personal responsibility (Chen et al., 2004; Rowden & Conine, 2005)
6. in the organization (Ajila & Abiola, 2004)
7. Experiences in Knowledge Transfer (Lucas & Ogilvie, 2006)
8. Organization loyalty (Basset-Jones & Lloyd, 2005; Chen et al., 2004; Tsai et al., 2007)

Respondents rated the claims with levels of agreement. The items in the scale are designed using a five-point Likert scale model with levels of agreement with the statements: (1) I completely disagree; (2) I disagree; (3) and I agree and disagree; (4) I agree; (5) I fully agree.

The multiple regression analysis method was used (Hox & Roberts, 2011). The dependent variable was the motivation for knowledge transfer. The dependent variable was measured according to the model proposed and used in the research by Cheng (2011). The independent variables (eight of them) were: (1) the expected reward for knowledge transfer; (2) job satisfaction; (3) training effects; (4) compassionate empathy; (5) personal responsibility; (6) position in the organization; (7) experience in knowledge transfer; (8) loyalty to the organization. Cronbach alpha indicators (Cronbach, 1951) and convergence validity indicators (Hair et al., 2010) were used to determine the reliability of the scales. Microsoft Excel software and SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences, 21.0) software were used in the data processing. Regression analysis is a procedure for looking at the impact of eight

included independent variables on the success of knowledge transfer among employees. The independent variables are non-stochastic and represent the regression coefficients in the regression linear equation. The analysis procedure is divided into several steps: evaluation of the consistency of independent variables, assessment of the reliability and convergence of independent variables, evaluation of multicollinearity of independent variables, calculation of regression coefficients, testing the significance of these coefficients.

## Results

Table 1 presents the Cronbach's alpha consistency indicators of independent scales. Of the eight independent variables involved, three have excellent consistency: effects of training, personal responsibility, and experience in knowledge transfer. Two variables show good consistency: compassionate empathy and the expected reward for knowledge transfer. Three variables show acceptable consistency: loyalty to the organization, position in the organization, and job satisfaction. There were no inconsistent variables since all values were above 0.7.

Table 1

Cronbach's Alpha Consistency Indicators of Independent Scales

Independent variable	Calculated alpha	Rank*	Reference alpha	Consistency
Expected reward for knowledge transfer	0.8261	5	0.8 to 0.9	good
Job satisfaction	0.7402	6	0.7 to 0.8	acceptable
Effects of training	0.9102	1	0.9 to 1.0	excellent
Compassionate empathy	0.8941	3	0.8 to 0.9	good
Personal responsibility	0.8253	4	0.9 to 0.9	excellent
Position in the organization	0.7108	8	0.7 to 0.8	acceptable
Experience in knowledge transfer	0.9026	2	0.9 to 1.0	excellent
Loyalty to the organization	0.7314	7	0.7 to 0.8	acceptable

\*rank indicates the structural order in the magnitudes of the calculated alpha values

Table 2 presents the results of the factor analysis. Factor analysis (a function of the PLS algorithm) extracts the reliability and convergence validity of the independent variables. The values of the factor weights of all six variables are above 0.5, indicating that indicators of the same converge well according to the latent constructs. The convergent validity of the variables involved is also satisfied since the composite reliability of the variables (CR) is greater than 0.7. All composite values are greater than the AVE value.

Table 2

Indicators of Reliability and Convergent Validity of Independent Variables

Independent variable	Composite reliability (CR)	The average variance extracted (AVE)	Factor weights
Expected reward for knowledge transfer	0.9467	0.7052	0.8163
Job satisfaction	0.8203	0.7369	0.9270
Effects of training	0.7916	0.6403	0.7338
Compassionate empathy	0.8015	0.7604	0.8079
Personal responsibility	0.9023	0.8376	0.7624
Position in the organization	0.9681	0.7492	0.6025
Experience in knowledge transfer	0.7060	0.6106	0.9391
Loyalty to the organization	0.8286	0.7911	0.7082

To determine whether there was a statistically significant relationship between the independent variables, degrees of linear dependence were determined. The Pearson coefficients shown (Table 3) indicate that all values obtained are statistically significant at a significance level of 0.01. The correlation is strongest between the expected reward for knowledge transfer and experience in knowledge transfer, personal responsibility and job satisfaction, experience in knowledge transfer and personal responsibility. A strong correlation was found between expected reward for knowledge transfer and job satisfaction, job satisfaction and the effects of training, job satisfaction and position in the organization, effects of training and personal responsibility, compassionate empathy and personal responsibility, personal responsibility and loyalty to the organization. The weakest correlation was found between the effects of training and compassionate empathy and positions in the organization and experience in knowledge transfer.

Table 3

Correlation Matrix of Independent Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	1							
2	0.7144	1						
3	0.4810	0.7162	1					
4	0.5226	0.6025	0.2926	1				
5	0.4028	0.8379	0.7301	0.7214	1			
6	0.6193	0.7074	0.6228	0.4309	0.5020	1		
7	0.8225	0.4171	0.4181	0.5226	0.8141	0.2877	1	
8	0.3901	0.5284	0.3022	0.7801	0.7305	0.5919	0.6726	1

Meaning: 1 = expected reward for knowledge transfer; 2 = job satisfaction; 3 = training effects; 4 = compassionate empathy; 5 = personal responsibility; 6 = position in the organization; 7 = experience in knowledge transfer; 8 = loyalty to the organization

Table 4 presents the results of the multicollinearity of independent variables. The values of the VIF coefficients (variance inflation factor) were calculated methodologically based on the procedure presented by Field (2000) and Yoo et al. (2014). The calculated values of all six independent variables are less than 5.00 which implies that the calculated data are suitable for the application of multiple

regression analysis and that there is no multi correlative problem among the included variables.

Table 4

Multicollinearity of Independent Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>VIF</b>	0.2601	0.4648	0.3580	0.2913	0.4105	0.2296	0.3733	0.2055

Table 5 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis. The coefficient of determination shows that the eight included independent variables in this study influence the motivation for knowledge transfer with 42.86% of the variance. This percentage of the sum of the total squares of deviations was interpreted by the relationship between the included independent variables and the dependent variable, which can be accepted as a significant result.

Among the independent variables involved, the most significant correlation with the motivation of knowledge transfer in organizations is the position of employees in the organization ( $r= 0.2641$ ,  $t = 2.8496$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), followed by the expected reward for knowledge transfer ( $r= 0.1753$ ,  $t = 1.2738$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Third is personal responsibility, which correlates with the motivation for knowledge transfer ( $r= 0.0930$ ,  $t = -0.7715$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), followed by the training effects ( $r= 0.0512$ ,  $t = 0.6347$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Other relevant correlations are Experience with knowledge transfer ( $r= 0.0506$ ,  $t = 1.5502$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), Organizational loyalty ( $r= 0.0418$ ,  $t = 1.5207$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Two variables showed symbolic association with the motivation for knowledge transfer: job satisfaction ( $r= 0.0374$ ,  $t = 2.4015$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and compassionate empathy ( $r= 0.034$ ,  $t = 1.8253$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

Six independent variables have a statistically significant effect on the motivation for knowledge transfer (since  $p < 0.05$ ), while two variables (training effects and experience in knowledge transfer) have no statistically significant effect ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Table 5

Results of Multiple Regression Analysis

Dependent variable: Employee motivation to transfer their knowledge to other employees

Independent variable	$\beta$	t	p
<b>Expected reward for knowledge transfer</b>	0.1753	1.2738	<0.05
<b>Job satisfaction</b>	0.0374	2.4015	<0.05
<b>Effects of training</b>	0.0512	0.6347	>0.05
<b>Compassionate empathy</b>	0.0304	1.8253	<0.05
<b>Personal responsibility</b>	0.0930	-0.7715	<0.05
<b>Position in the organization</b>	0.2641	2.8496	<0.05
<b>Experience in knowledge transfer</b>	0.0506	1.5502	>0.05
<b>Loyalty to the organization</b>	0.0418	1.5207	<0.05

$\beta$  - Regression coefficients of independent variables; t-test of significance of regression coefficients, p - the significance of estimation of the independent variable

$R^2= 0,4286$

## Discussion

This research aimed to provide an answer to the question: what motivates (encourages) employees to transfer their acquired knowledge to other members of the organization? The results that came out provide a clear answer. Of the eight variables included, the most pronounced motives for knowledge transfer in

organizations are the position of employees in the organization, the expected reward for knowledge transfer and personal responsibility. The position of respondents in the organization as a motive for knowledge transfer was not directly determined, but respondents perceived it as the most important factor in knowledge transfer. In doing so, they highlighted the role of management that is expected to initiate the acceptance of learning among all employees and the transfer of knowledge to one another. This confirms the results of Pinkley's research (1990). The transfer of knowledge as a second-ranked factor in some way confirms the previously stated statement. Managers need to constantly meet the expectations of individuals who transfer their knowledge to others as this is a highly ranked motive for knowledge transfer. This confirms the results of the research obtained by Ajila & Abiola (2004). Respondents indicated that the transfer of knowledge carries both the responsibility of both the person who transmits this knowledge and the person who receives it and pointed to Chen et al. (2004) and Rowdens et al. (2005).

Three variables showed a weak correlation with the motivation for knowledge transfer; loyalty to the organization, job satisfaction and compassionate empathy. The low ranked employee loyalty motive to the knowledge transfer organization did not confirm the views and results pointed out by Lucas & Ogilvie (2006). This can also be interpreted in the way that the respondents did not form, and thus strengthened their position that they were active participants in the source of increasing organizational knowledge. This does not have to mean that they are not loyal to the organizations they belong to, but that there are no such social attitudes in the organizations. Respondents do not consider themselves to be the primary creators of organizational knowledge but consider themselves managers. It also does not have to mean that the respondents are dissatisfied with the job they are doing, but have failed to relate that satisfaction to the need for this motive to be the driver of the transfer of acquired knowledge. It is also possible that the structure of the respondents was dominated by the under-extroverted, who, to Tharenou's knowledge (2010), was not inclined to be personally and self-initiated to impart their knowledge to others. These characteristics of the respondents were not included in the research, so in some of the subsequent research, they should certainly be included to gain new knowledge. The support for these claims is also found in the empathic preferences and values of the respondents, as compassionate empathy is the last factor identified in the ranking of influence on the motivation for knowledge transfer.

The hypothesis was confirmed that the motivation for knowledge transfer is multifaceted and involves eight intangible factors.

## Conclusion

There are two limitations to this research. There is no (as far as the author is aware) research of the same content on the surveyed population, so it is not possible to compare the results of this research with the same, which would certainly be qualitatively desirable. In addition to motivation, other factors, especially organizational ones, were not included in the research on knowledge transfer, which would provide a greater basis for considering knowledge transfer issues. It is certainly worth doing in some of the following research. The results presented in this research do not just indicate the structure and rank of the motives that drive knowledge transfer in organizations among employees, although this was the aim of the research. They also point to several discrepancies and cracks that exist in that motivation. They also point to the structural gaps that exist in transfer motives in organizations in Croatia as a country of transition, as opposed to published research

on knowledge transfer in developed countries. The research results clearly show that there are still poorly built organizational cultures and that there are forms of organizational behaviour in which employees do not take active and self-initiated roles in knowledge transfer. This is what is most expected of the manager, which certainly needs to change in the future. Therefore, one of the essential tasks of managing human resources in the creation of psychological capital is to involve the construction of several elements in employees such as compassionate empathy, extroversion, social positive attitudes towards knowledge acquisition and transfer. In this way, through intangible motives, it will encourage members of organizations to transfer knowledge more effectively and directly strengthen intellectual capital as the primary one in organizations of the future.

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