Job Satisfaction Among

Tennessee Certified Public Accountants

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Introduction

Accounting is a profession that has been made famous for its unusually high rate of employee turnover. The amount of people leaving a position in accounting for another job is always among the highest of all professional occupations. What, then, is the reason for this? Any one of many factors might be cause for changing jobs depending on the person involved. However, one issue that usually plays a key role in the decision of employees to leave their current employer is job satisfaction. Workers who are satisfied where they are tend to stay there even if another opportunity presents itself. Conversely, those who are not satisfied will tend either to notice or actively seek other opportunities.

A study that detailed the level of worker satisfaction among those employed in accounting and accounting related fields could shed some light on the extremely high turnover phenomenon. For if the study revealed widespread dissatisfaction, one could conclude that that is the cause for the frequent occupational changes. If not, additional studies would be necessary.

Objective

The purpose of this study is to investigate what factors contribute to the job satisfaction of Certified Public Accountants (CPAs) in the state of Tennessee. If a comprehensive study looked at the levels of satisfaction experienced by CPAs in different types of environments, a model could be created to predict how important or unimportant particular factors are in the determination of satisfaction.

The conditions affecting job satisfaction are worth studying due to the potential benefits to both employers and employees. By knowing what influences satisfaction levels, employers could make changes to current policies that would not affect productivity but

would raise satisfaction. Also, a potential employee could determine whether or not important satisfaction factors were present before choosing to accept a position. Either way, people can make more informed decisions on matters that could greatly affect the future of their business and/or personal life.

Subjects

The subjects of this study will be CPAs in the state of Tennessee. No preferences or quotas for any demographic profile will be made. This investigation will attempt to cover as many of the different types of people and situations in the state as possible. Use of a large sample size will be essential to the reliability and validity of the conclusions made about the contributing factors of job satisfaction.

Variables

Obviously, the dependent variable in this study is job satisfaction. This qualitative variable will be quantified through a series of calculations into a rating between one and one hundred. The key dependent variables in the study will be hours worked, compensation, benefits, management style, co-workers, challenge of work, size of practice, opportunity for advancement, and many others. Participants will be given an opportunity to add any factors that they feel are especially important to them.

Each dependent variable will be evaluated two ways. The first will be quantitative data, for example a workload of 50 hours per week. The second will be a qualitative evaluation by the subject on that particular item. The person will decide if 50 hours is much too small, too small, about right, too large, or much too large of a workload. This two-pronged measurement will allow proper analysis of the item and its effect on overall job satisfaction.

Methodology

The task of completing this study is divided into three phases. The first phase involves the development of the survey used to evaluate CPAs job satisfaction. Details of this phase are included in the section immediately following this one. The final phase includes statistical analysis of the survey data received. Details of this phase are also included in another area of this report.

Phase II consists of both the distribution of the survey to appropriate persons and the collection of the results from those persons. Several options to accomplish this task were considered. The method that seems likely to produce the most responses at the least expense is electronic mail. Under this method, messages would be sent to CPAs explaining why, by whom, and for whom the research is being conducted. Attached to this message would be a Microsoft Excel file that contains the survey questions. The file would contain a macro (program) that would allow subjects to be guided through the questions with as little confusion as possible. Then the responses are automatically saved by the macro and the only requirement of each subject is to e-mail the file back to the original sender. The use of Excel will benefit not only the subjects by simplifying completion of the survey but the administrator by eliminating the need for data entry.

Survey Research

The information used in this study will come exclusively from data collected in surveys of CPAs in the state of Tennessee. The survey is divided into three sections with the ultimate goal being the accurate determination of overall job satisfaction. The first section is made up of questions designed to be easily answered. Hours worked per week and compensation are examples of these questions that can be answered quickly and evaluated

simply. The second section contains the more difficult and thought provoking questions. An example of a topic in this section would be the management style used by the employer and its effect on the satisfaction felt by the employee. The third and final part of the survey would inquire about certain demographic information. Age, sex, race, marital status, and number of children are a few of the items included in this section.

Statistical Analysis

The data collected by the survey research will be extensively analyzed. Basic statistics of demographic information will be calculated. Average age, single/married proportions, and average number of children are examples of this type of analysis. Also, inquiries into the patterns of answers to individual questions will be made. Most importantly, however, regression and correlation analysis will be performed to see how the data behaves as a whole. This will allow determinations as to exactly what factors have how much influence on the overall feeling of satisfaction experienced. With this information, conclusions could be drawn about the nature of job satisfaction among CPAs in the state of Tennessee.

Possible Limitations

Due to the nature of this report, a few limitations do appear. One of the most important of which involves sample size limitations. This report is based on some information that does not have any sort of absolute measurement and requires large samples to establish noticeable patterns. However, survey research has traditionally been plagued by low response rates. Thus, the sample size has the potential to affect the reliability and validity of the investigation. Another, and potentially even more problematic, limitation deals with the use of quantified qualitative data. This type of information has always been a source of error in data analysis due to its nature of having a non-empirical basis.