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Service Development and New Service Performance

Abstract

Ongoing new service development represents a critical resource for survival and growth, both in service industries and in manufacturing. Goods have become a qualifier, whereas the services offered have become the order winner. Human resources make a difference in both the delivery and the development of services. Well-designed and carefully applied HRM practices are therefore of utmost importance to service firms.

This thesis presents the results of a cross-sectional, project-level study into the relationship between HRM practices and the performance of new services. Data analysis shows that both firm-level and project-level HRM practices indirectly contribute to new service performance. Autonomous and functionally diverse development teams outperform teams having low or moderate autonomy and teams composed of a limited number of functional disciplines. In addition, the study shows that job analysis, rewarding and selection practices in service development projects have positive performance consequences. This means that it makes sense to analyze the characteristics of new service development jobs ex-ante, to specify team member profiles accordingly, to select project managers and team members carefully, and to reward them after a successful market introduction.

The results of the HRM-New Service Performance study reported in this thesis point to the relevance of embedding HRM practices in project management, in particular in innovation projects. These results complement those of studies claiming the importance of creativity, technological synergy and uncertainty reduction for the performance of new products and services. HRM practices stimulate employees to integrate and elaborate creative and market-driven ideas and they push their commercialization. Further research is required to test the external validity of the results, that is, to test the meaning of HRM practices in different projects and in project-based organizations.