The Impact of Counterproductive Meeting Behaviors on Meeting Effectiveness, as moderated by Meeting Attendee Personality

A. Description of the Project

Meetings are a vital part of the workplace that is often overlooked (Rogelberg, Shanock, & Scott, 2012). In the United States, around 11 million meetings are held every day, and upper level managers tend to more than half of their time in meetings or performing tasks related to meetings (Cohen, Rogelberg, Allen, & Luong, 2011). Meetings often play a role in an organization’s overall effectiveness (Rogelberg et al., 2014). Yet, over half of the time spent in meeting time is wasted (Van Vree, 1999), and this problem costs business over $37 billion annually, in the United States alone (Sheridan, 1989). One way that time is wasted in meetings is through counterproductive meeting behaviors (CMBs). These behaviors include: walking in late, having side conversations, being absent, arguing, going off on tangents, etc. (Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012). When other meeting attendees observe these types of behaviors occur, processes in the meeting suffer and employees are likely to have worse experiences in the meetings. Thus, the following is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 1: Counterproductive meeting behavior is negatively related to meeting effectiveness.

Although it is intuitive that bad behaviors in meetings lead to bad meeting outcomes, this study seeks to understand if there are individual differences that could exacerbate this effect. Specifically, I investigate the extent to which the personality of an individual impacts the degree to which others’ counterproductive meeting behaviors continues to negatively relate to their perceived meeting effectiveness of their most recent meeting experience. To that end, the proposed study focuses on two personality traits likely to influence this relationship: neuroticism and conscientiousness.

Neuroticism may be defined as broad dysfunction, accompanied by sadness, anger, and excessive anxiety (Liu, Robinson, Ode, & Moeller, 2013). Research shows that employees who are more neurotic display higher levels of counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs) (Hitlan & Noel, 2009), but research has not yet investigated whether levels of neuroticism affect the impact that CMBs have on meeting effectiveness. Because those who are neurotic are a bit more self-absorbed, it is anticipated that others’ behavior will be perceived as more problematic when it interferes with their goals/aims in the meeting context. Thus, the following is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 2: The negative relationship between counterproductive meeting behaviors and meeting effectiveness is moderated by individual neuroticism such that the relationship is more negative for those higher in neuroticism.

Conscientiousness is measured by the degree to which an individual is disciplined, detail-oriented, reliable, and competent (Robert & Cheung, 2010). Research has shown that those who display higher levels of conscientiousness often engage in less CWBs. This study will examine how this translates to CMBs. Because those who are more conscientious are highly organized and task oriented, it is believed that others’ counterproductive behavior in meetings may more dramatically negatively affect these individuals. Thus, the following is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 3: The negative relationship between counterproductive meeting behaviors and meeting effectiveness is moderated by individual conscientiousness such that the relationship is more negative for those higher in conscientiousness.

Thus, the overarching purpose of this study is to better understand the impact of bad behavior in meetings on perceived meeting effectiveness and illustrate how personality of those both more neurotic and conscientious exacerbates this negative effect. The hope is that this research can help meeting leaders
understand the detrimental impact of bad behavior in meetings and motivate them to engage in facilitator behaviors designed to mitigate such behavior.

B. Methodology

After the IRB is completed, a survey will be designed that will administered to participants recruited through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk) and given a compensation of $0.50. Mturk is a service through which members of Amazon can complete research studies, such as surveys, online in exchange for small monetary incentives (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). There will be 600 participants, at a minimum, who will take this survey. The survey will include measures of meeting effectiveness (Nixon & Littlepage, 1992), counterproductive meeting behaviors (Odermatt, König, Kleinman, & Bachmann, 2013), personality (Ehrhart, Roesch, Ehrhart, & Kilian, 2008), and demographics (e.g. age, gender, education, race, etc.). Participants will be asked to reflect on their most recent meeting when making self-report ratings of others’ counterproductive meeting behaviors and their perceptions of meeting effectiveness. Those whose meeting occurred more than a week prior to taking the survey will be removed from the data due to concerns with remembering the meeting experience.

The survey will be available for participants to complete for approximately two weeks. Upon closing the survey, the researcher will clean and analyze the data under the direction of Dr. Joseph Allen. In order to test Hypothesis 1, 2, and 3 hierarchical regression analyses will be conducted in the SPSS statistical software program. The study will then be written up for presentation at a national conference (e.g. SIOP) and for publication in an academic journal (e.g. Journal of Business and Psychology).

C. Timeline

April/May, 2015 – Complete IRB
June 1 thru 7 – Upload survey to Qualtrics
June 8 thru 14 – Begin data collection on Mturk
June 15 thru 30 - Data collection
July 1 thru July 15 – Code data
July 16 thru 31 – Run statistical analyses in SPSS
August, 2015 – Prepare for research fair and draft SIOP submission
Spring 2016- Present at the UNO Research & Creative Activity Fair

Student/Faculty Mentor Roles

Dr. Joseph Allen, PhD will be supervising and advising the project. He will provide ongoing guidance throughout the project, meet regularly with the research, and keep track of the study’s progress. In addition, he will oversee the analysis of the data and study write-up. The researcher will be responsible for writing the IRB, designing the survey, collecting the data, analyzing the data, and writing up the results, under the guidance of Dr. Allen.

Budget Justification

A. Salary and Wages

A wage of $10 an hour for 20 hours per week (for 10 weeks) is requested. Duties will include data collection, analysis, and assimilation. This researcher is responsible for attending all meetings associated with this project. Dr. Joseph Allen will provide guidance and monitor my progress.

B. Equipment

This researcher is requesting $300 for materials pertaining to this project. Participants will be rewarded $0.50 for completing the survey. 600 individuals will be taking the survey.

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References


January 28, 2015

FUSE Committee,

It is my pleasure to write this letter of support for Johanna Jones, who is applying for FUSE funding to support her research. I have known Johanna for some time as both a student in my class and a researcher in my lab. Her work ethic and desire to create new knowledge through her research efforts is exemplary of the best and brightest students here at UNO.

Johanna quickly developed an interest in Industrial/Organizational Psychology because of the possibility of helping improve the well-being of employees in organizations. Specifically, her research focuses on how to improve meetings in organizations. Interestingly enough, she has gravitated toward the all too common bad behaviors in meetings. Additionally, she was curious if there are individual differences that make those bad behaviors particularly problematic to deal with. This area of research is truly cutting edge and would likely have practical benefits for managers in organization and meeting attendees generally.

It is truly a pleasure to work with Johanna. She intends to continue to engage in research as she prepares for graduate school in either IO Psychology or Clinical Psychology.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Best regards,

Joseph A. Allen, Ph.D.
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