Environmental Citizenship Behaviour

Baya worked long tiring days in the hotel industry on Bamburi Beach. He managed a renowned resort right on the Indian Ocean. Each day he would arrive at work early, interact with tourists, manage his staff, ensure quality standards exceeded expectations, and left his job late into the evening.

Upon arriving home, Baya often felt discouraged by his children’s nanny. She would often leave the lights on in a room that no one sat in. He frequently politely reminded her to turn off lights when no individual utilized a room. However, Baya felt as if the nanny just ignored him or did not care about his electricity bill. So he endeavored to hold a meeting with her to show stronger emotion over the issue.

Commensurate with his irritation over his home electricity bills, Baya started to notice the staff at the resort he managed also show disregard for environmental concerns. The issue went deeper than merely forgetting to turn off lights in offices or leaving air conditioning units running in guest rooms after they had left, but hotel staff also discarded rubbish irresponsibility so that light plastics could roll out into the road or down the beach and at times resort vehicles were left idling with the engine on while loading or unloading visitors.

Baya started to tally the possible business losses from environmentally unfriendly workplace practices. He also pondered the negative effects to the Kenyan environment and decided to take action.

Given all the global media attention focused on the environment and the detrimental impact that human actions cause to the planet thus hurting our own future, little attention spotlights on workplace pro-environmental measures that employees take. Companies receive the limelight as do our behaviors in our own homes, but not at the work place. Researchers in the past several years began to look at the term environmental citizenship behaviour at work to describe discretionary optional behaviors that employees perform whereby they show their willingness to cooperate with their company and coworkers by engaging in behaviors in the workplace that help the natural environment.

Interestingly, while the employee behaviors help or hurt the broader natural environment, as in Baya’s situation above, research found that employee’s feelings with regard to their own work situations actually determine how they behave towards the environment at large while doing their duties.

First, research showed that if employees perceive that their organization supports them, then they will in turn put in extra effort to support the natural environment and the cost savings and broader implications for the planet. Employees feel supported or not in various ways. Staff compare their benefits to those of competing entities. Employees also desire employers to value their opinions and listen genuinely to their
ideas. Comment boxes placed around the office with no public responses to suggestions simply does not cut it.

Also, do the employees hold opinions that the organisation has their best interests and well-being at its core? Workers need to feel a sense of being watched out for amongst a difficult world.

Additionally, perceived organisation support encompasses whether the company provides assistance when a staff member needs it. Types of assistance include sick leave, paid leave, salary advances, and funeral support for loved ones, flexible time off, study leave, among others. Whether or not an employee ever asks for a special favor or not, staff want to feel as if the entity would be there for them if they needed it. Overly rigid policies often turn off staff from seeking support and, therefore, lower their opinions of perceived organisational support available.

Second, Jessica Mesmer-Magnus researched that another variable impacts whether employees behave in positive ways towards the environment. The second main variable involves an employee’s commitment to the organisation at large. Committed employees feel that they could easily spend the rest of their careers with the company. They also enjoy discussing the company with those from the outside. Do your workers enjoy talking about your firm to others? If not, then they will easily waste your electricity and water bills without worrying about it.

Committed employees also feel that their employer’s problems are also their own. They do not believe that they can attach as easily to another company as they do to their current one. Employees with high organisation commitment also feel great personal meaning in their work at the firm as well as significant emotional attachment as part of the work family. These crucial organisation commitment indicators will determine as the second variable whether employees act for or against the environment while at work.

During Baya’s environmental implementation plan as discussed above, he also realized that both his children’s nanny and his resort employees felt that their emotional work contracts were violated in the past twelve months. Similarly, researchers discovered that if an employee feels that their work conditions are not what was promised or agreed, then they will act with disregard to not just cost savings, but against the natural environment as well. However, environmentalists spend little to no efforts informing employers how to modify staff behaviour.

Have examples of when your employees harmed the environment at your expense? Discuss your personal experiences with other Business Daily readers through #KenyaFairness on Twitter.

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**Professor Scott** serves as the Director of the New Economy Venture Accelerator (NEVA) and Chair of
the Faculty Senate at USIU-Africa, www.ScottProfessor.com, and may be reached on: This email address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it." > info@scottprofessor.com or follow on Twitter: @ScottProfessor.

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