Abstract

*Determinants and Implications of Recruitment to a "Quality Initiative"*

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Many attempts at organizational change take the form of "orchestrated social movements," where elites seek to set social movement-like processes in motion rather than establishing new organizational rules or roles. Programs are rolled out with symbolic support and references to long-term career and organizational benefits, but few material resources. A small cadre of professionals play the role of activists, involving workers and managers in training sessions and problem-solving teams. The hope is that positive feedback between the converted and the unconverted will lead new behaviors to diffuse and become self-sustaining.

We examine one such process, that of a "quality initiative" at a global financial services corporation. A survey of bank employees is analyzed to develop insight into a characteristic social movement question: what are the determinants of recruitment? We examine how support for the initiative is related to the impact of organized mobilizing efforts, prior involvement in related programs, the attitudes of supervisors and co-workers, and the interests of different sorts of employees. We then consider the implications of who was recruited (and who wasn't). The usefulness and difficulties in taking a social movement perspective towards this sort of internal organizational phenomenon are discussed.