



Golden Handcuffs in the Fortune 1000? An Employee-Organization Relationship Survey of Public Relations Executives and Practitioners in the Largest Companies

Cary A. Greenwood

To cite this article: Cary A. Greenwood (2016) Golden Handcuffs in the Fortune 1000? An Employee-Organization Relationship Survey of Public Relations Executives and Practitioners in the Largest Companies, *Communication Research Reports*, 33:3, 269-274

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08824096.2016.1186624>



Published online: 21 Jun 2016.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

BRIEF REPORT

Golden Handcuffs in the Fortune 1000? An Employee-Organization Relationship Survey of Public Relations Executives and Practitioners in the Largest Companies

Cary A. Greenwood 

This study delivered an employee-organization relationship survey to public relations executives and practitioners in Fortune 1000 companies. Almost two-thirds (64.3%) were the top-ranking public relations executives in their organizations, and most (79.2%) were paid \$100,000 or more. Respondents had significantly higher scores on a majority (66.7%) of relationship outcome measures than did Millennials who worked for public relations agencies. The researcher found a statistically significant difference between salary categories at or above \$100,000 and those below \$100,000 on the combined dependent variables of trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction using a one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance: $F(1, 50) = 4.586$, $p = .003$; Wilks' Lambda = .71; partial $\eta^2 = .29$. Results may be explained by age and workplace variables and/or the higher compensation and benefits embodied in the concept of the Golden Handcuffs. Results also suggest that relationship-type scales are not reliable.

Keywords: *Employee-Organization Relationships; Fortune 1000; Golden Handcuffs; Millennials; Public Relations*

Relationships are a major focus of public relations research (Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzuru, & Jones, 2003), and employee-organization relationships are of increasing interest (Gallicano, Curtin, & Matthews, 2012; Ni, 2007, 2009). However, the

Cary A. Greenwood (PhD, University of Oregon, 2011) is an assistant professor in the School of Journalism at Middle Tennessee State University. *Correspondence:* Cary A. Greenwood, Middle Tennessee State University, School of Journalism, MTSU Box 64, Murfreesboro, TN 37132; E-mail: cary.greenwood@mtsu.edu

relationships of public relations executives and practitioners with their Fortune 1000 companies in the United States have received little attention. This study addresses that gap. In public relations literature, the *Golden Handcuffs* refers to the high salaries, extensive benefits, and power inherent in higher-level positions (Berger, 2005). This study of higher-level executive and practitioner relationships invites comparison to lower-level Millennial relationships reported by Gallicano et al. (2012).

Method

The researcher used e-mail to solicit the highest-ranking public relations executives in the Fortune 1000 companies for an anonymous, online survey about reporting of corporate wrongdoing (Greenwood, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015) that included a relationship component. She compiled the e-mail list from published sources and a commercial database. Of 2,423 e-mails sent and 2,291 presumed delivered, she received 63 complete and partial responses for a 2.7% response rate. Though small, the number was adequate to ensure normal distribution of the sample (Hanke & Reitsch, 1991). Hon and Grunig's (1999) 5-point Likert-type short scale measured relationships quality and type. Six items measured trust, and four items each measured control mutuality, satisfaction, commitment, and communal and exchange relationships.

Results

Respondents to the demographic questions ($N = 56$) were White (91.1 %), middle-aged ($M = 48.40$, $SD = 8.676$) males (60.7%). More than one-third (43.4%) of respondents earned between \$100,000 and \$200,000 annually; one-third (35.9%) earned more than \$200,000 annually; and two-thirds (64.3%) were the top-ranking public relations executive in their organization. Cronbach's alphas for the relationships constructs ranged from .758 for satisfaction to .856 for commitment, with .7 considered acceptable (Hon & Grunig, 1999). The communal relationships scale was acceptable (.706). The exchange relationships scale was acceptable (.771) after the fourth item was removed ("This organization takes care of people who are likely to reward the organization"). Respondents held highly favorable ($M = 4.1$, $SD = 2.48$) views of their relationships with their companies (Table 1). The researcher used a one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance to investigate salary categories (below \$100,000 and equal-to-and-above \$100,000) in the four relationship quality outcomes: trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction. There was a statistically significant difference between the two salary categories on the combined dependent variables: $F(1, 50) = 4.586$, $p = .003$; Wilks' Lambda = .71; partial $\eta^2 = .29$.

Discussion

Gallicano et al. (2012) observed that Millennials at agencies had a similar relationship quality to their employers as respondents of various ages and workplaces had with their employers in previous employee-organization studies. They suggested that "age and workplace are not significant factors affecting relationship outcomes per se" (p. 237). However, this study

Table 1 Relationship Quality Outcomes and Relationship Types Measures

Item	Strongly Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Somewhat Agree		Strongly Agree		M	SD
	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n		
<i>Satisfaction</i>												
Both the organization and I benefit from the relationship.	1.7	1	1.7	1	3.4	2	39.0	23	54.2	32	4.42*	.792
Most people like me are happy in their interactions with this organization.	1.7	1	3.4	2	15.5	9	48.3	28	31.0	18	4.03	.878
I am happy with this organization.			5.2	3	10.3	6	41.4	24	43.1	25	4.22*	.839
Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship this organization has established with me.	1.7	1	1.7	1	13.8	8	39.7	23	43.1	25	4.21*	.874
<i>Control Mutuality</i>												
This organization believes my opinions are legitimate.	3.3	2			6.6	4	41.0	25	49.2	30	4.33*	.870
In dealing with me, this organization has a tendency to throw its weight around. [R]	1.7	1	6.9	4	31.0	18	27.6	16	32.8	19	3.83*	1.028
This organization really listens to what I have to say.			1.7	1	15.5	9	50.0	29	32.8	19	4.14*	.736
This organization and I are attentive to what each other say.					16.1	9	53.6	30	30.4	17	4.14	.672
											4.12	.673

(Continued)

Table 1 (Continued)

Item	Strongly Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Somewhat Agree		Strongly Agree		M	SD
	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n		
<i>Commitment</i>												
I feel that this organization is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to me.	1.6	1	4.8	3	15.9	10	38.1	24	39.7	25	4.10	.946
There is a long-lasting bond between this organization and me.	6.6	4	4.9	3	13.1	8	42.6	26	32.8	20	3.90*	1.121
I can see that this organization wants to maintain a relationship with me.	3.4	2			13.8	8	39.7	23	43.1	25	4.19	.926
Compared to other organizations, I value my relationship with this organization more.	1.8	1	3.6	2	8.9	5	41.1	23	44.6	25	4.23*	.894
<i>Trust</i>												
This organization treats me fairly and justly.	1.6	1	3.2	2	7.9	5	34.9	22	52.4	33	4.33*	.880
Whenever this organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about me.	3.3	2	21.7	13	26.7	16	38.3	23	10.0	6	3.30	1.030
This organization can be relied on to keep its promises.	1.7	1	1.7	1	19.0	11	37.9	22	39.7	23	4.12*	.900
I believe that this organization takes my opinions into account when making decisions.			5.2	3	12.1	7	53.4	31	29.3	17	4.07*	.792
I feel very confident about this organization's skills.			10.5	6	5.3	3	45.6	26	38.6	22	4.12	.927
This organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.			3.5	2	5.3	3	42.1	24	49.1	28	4.37*	.747
											4.05	.678
											4.1	2.48

<i>Communal</i>										
This organization does not especially enjoy giving others aid. [R]	8.1	5	6.5	4	21.0	13	64.5	40	4.42	.933
This organization is very concerned about my welfare.	8.6	5	12.1	7	51.7	30	27.6	16	3.98	.868
I feel that this organization takes advantage of people who are vulnerable. [R]	6.9	4	12.1	7	15.5	9	65.5	38	4.40	.954
I think that this organization succeeds by stepping on other people. [R]	5.2	3	6.9	4	13.8	8	74.1	43	4.57	.840
<i>Exchange</i>										
Whenever this organization gives or offers something to me, it generally expects something in return.	8.5	5	10.2	6	35.6	21	33.9	20	11.9	7 3.31 1.087
Even though I have had a relationship with this organization for a long time, it still expects something in return whenever it offers me a favor.	12.3	7	17.5	10	38.6	22	28.1	16	3.5	2 2.93 1.050
This organization will compromise with me when it knows that it will gain something.	24.6	14	5.3	3	54.4	31	12.3	7	3.5	2 2.65 1.094
This organization takes care of people who are likely to reward the organization.	15.8	9	40.4	23	43.9	25	4.28	2.98	.899	

N = sample size after pairwise deletion for missing variables. [R] = reverse coded. [*] = Means greater than Millennials'.

suggests that age and workplace could be factors at play since the senior practitioners in Fortune 1000 companies had significantly higher scores on a majority (66.7%) of relationship outcome measures than Millennials had. Alternately, high salaries, extensive benefits, and power could account for the difference in relationship outcomes, rather than age and type of workplace. The study also suggests that the relationship-type scales are not reliable. The primary limitation is the response rate. Future research should explore age and workplace variables, the *Golden Handcuffs*, and the relationship-type scales.

ORCID

Cary A. Greenwood  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0962-3856>

References

- Berger, B. K. (2005). Power over, power with, and power to relations: Critical reflections on public relations, the dominant coalition, and activism. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 17(1), 5–28. doi:10.1207/s1532754xjpr1701_3
- Gallicano, T. D., Curtin, P., & Matthews, K. (2012). I love what I do, but ... A relationship management survey of millennial generation public relations agency employees. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 24(3), 222–242. doi:10.1080/1062726x.2012.671986
- Greenwood, C. A. (2009, August). *Whistleblowing in public relations: Call for a research agenda*. Paper presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication annual conference, Boston, MA.
- Greenwood, C. A. (2011). *Killing the messenger: A survey of public relations practitioners and organizational response to whistleblowing after Sarbanes-Oxley* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/907550960?accountid=4886>
- Greenwood, C. A. (2012, August). *Whistleblowing in the Fortune 1000: Ethical dilemma or role responsibility?* Paper presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication annual conference, Chicago, IL.
- Greenwood, C. A. (2013, June). *Whistleblowing in the Fortune 1000: What did public relations practitioners tell us?* Poster presented at the International Communication Association annual conference, London, UK.
- Greenwood, C. A. (2015). Whistleblowing in the *Fortune 1000*: What practitioners told us about wrongdoing in corporations in a pilot study. *Public Relations Review*, 41(4), 490–500. doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2015.07.005
- Hanke, J. E., & Reitsch, A. G. (1991). *Understanding business statistics*. Boston, MA: Richard D. Irwin, Inc.
- Hon, L. C., & Grunig, J. E. (1999). *Guidelines for measuring relationships in public relations* (p. 40). Gainesville, FL: The Institute for Public Relations.
- Ni, L. (2007). Refined understanding of perspectives on employee-organization relationships. *Journal of Communication Management*, 11(1), 53–70. doi:10.1108/13632540710725987
- Ni, L. (2009). Strategic role of relationship building: Perceived links between employee-organization relationships and globalization strategies. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 21(1), 100–120. doi:10.1080/10627260802520512
- Sallot, L. M., Lyon, L. J., Acosta-Alzuru, C., & Jones, K. O. (2003). From aardvark to zebra: A new millennium analysis of theory development in public relations academic journals. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 15(1), 27–90. doi:10.1207/S1532754XJPRR1501_2