THE IMPACT OF MANAGERIAL VIRTUALITY ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

By

Alisa H. Watt

An Abstract of a Thesis Submitted to the Graduate

Faculty of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major Subject: Management

The original of the complete thesis is on file
in the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Library

Examining Committee:

Tim Golden, Thesis Adviser

Robert Baron, Thesis Adviser

Lois Peters, Member

Michael Kalsher, Member

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Troy, New York

November 2007
(For Graduation December 2007)

ABSTRACT

While extant literature suggests that virtuality alters interpersonal interaction, little is known regarding how a manager's degree of virtuality may affect subordinate employees. This thesis viewed this issue in terms of the manager's changed ability to positively influence employee self efficacy beliefs, and the subsequent detrimental effect on employee creative and in-role job performance. Managerial virtuality was considered as (1) geographic distance, (2) the degree of virtual tool use, and (3) the degree of face-to-face interaction the manager had with the employee. This study also addressed the potential of supportive behaviors exhibited by the supervisor (LMX and Manager Support for Innovation) and by coworkers (TMX and Coworker Support for Innovation) to moderate the relationship between managerial virtuality and employee performance. For the current sample, LMX and Manager Support for Innovation loaded onto a single factor (Managerial Supportive Behaviors), as did TMX and Coworker Support for Innovation (Coworker Supportive Behaviors). The results discussed in this thesis are based on analyses conducted using these single factors of supportive behaviors.

The results of the study indicated that managerial virtuality differentially impacted employee creative and in-role performance. Managerial virtuality in the form of geographic distance positively impacted employee creativity (when examined within the context of manager support), while at the same time negatively impacting employee in-role performance. Overall, virtual tool use appeared to have a positive impact on employee creativity, while the degree of face-to-face interaction had a negative impact on employee creativity (for those employees experiencing low levels of support from their manager or coworkers). The impact of managerial virtuality in the forms of virtual tool use and face-to-face interaction was limited to creative performance, and did not affect in-role job performance, a finding which was likely due to the limitations of the current sample. Manager Supportive Behaviors and Coworker Supportive Behaviors moderated some of the relationships between managerial virtuality and employee outcomes, but not always in the predicted directions. Additionally, results of analyses comparing these relationships for teleworkers (0 hours/week in office) versus office workers (40 hours/week in office) are presented and discussed.

2