

Testing the Signals that Job Seekers Receive From a Recruiting Organization's Community Involvement and Pro-Environmental Practices

Research on employee recruitment shows that job seekers are influenced by several characteristics of a hiring organization, including its corporate social performance (CSP). CSP includes two types of activities that we examine in this study: an organization's community involvement (e.g., giving employees paid time off to volunteer) and pro-environmental practices (e.g., reducing and minimizing the organization's carbon footprint). Research on employee recruitment suggests that because job seekers often have limited information about hiring organizations they use whatever information they possess as signals about the organization's characteristics. Applying this signaling theory to CSP, recent recruitment research has shown that CSP sends at least three kinds of signals that inform job seeker's perceptions and expectations that affect their attraction to hiring organizations: signals about the organization's prosocial orientation that shape their expectations about how they would be treated, signals about the organization's reputation that inform the pride they anticipate experiencing as an employee, and signals about the organization's values that inform their perceptions of value fit (Jones, Willness, & Madey, 2010). Building on these findings, we investigated a variety of potential signals, testing hypotheses about how the type of CSP activity and the degree of employee involvement in it affects the strength of various signals. We used an experimental design in which we manipulated CSP (community involvement vs. pro-environmental practices vs. no CSP) and the presence vs. absence of employee involvement in CSP. Participants reviewed the webpages of two fictitious organizations, one of which included our manipulations, and rated their attraction to each potential employer. We then asked participants open-ended questions about what, if anything, the CSP information suggested to them. Participants also rated the strength of various signals that were suggested by the results from a pilot study. We discuss the implications of our findings for theory, research, and recruitment practice.