

Organizational climate study: attitudes and perceptions among Society for Theriogenology active and inactive members

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Abstract

A survey was given to active and inactive members of the Society for Theriogenology (SFT) to gauge the level of organizational and job satisfaction. Results from the survey showed that members are generally satisfied with the conference, though small animal practitioners showed slightly higher levels of satisfaction than large animal practitioners. Large animal practitioners suggested more large/food animal presentations at the conference. There was strong support for DVD sales of the conference, both from current members and former members. Suggestions were made for SFT to combine efforts with other organizations to help span a wider range of species specialties and to relieve competition between the various organizations. Active members showed high levels of commitment to the organization with high intentions to remain active indefinitely. A majority of inactive members reported contemplating rejoining, but only a small percentage cited they had intentions of rejoining. Both active and inactive members had high levels of work engagement, but both groups cited similar areas of discontent (available resources, client compliance, work/family life balance, etc.) that could possibly be addressed by the SFT.

Keywords: Organizational climate study, job satisfaction, membership

Introduction

Organizations, whether places of employment, unions, volunteer groups, memberships, clubs or informal associations, all create a climate from the energy and focus of the individuals who participate. Climate studies can measure a multitude of components that make up an organization's climate, which is typically defined as the agreed upon perspective of the organization.

The Society for Theriogenology, comprised of individuals—certified and not—working in the field of animal reproduction is an organization that promotes scientific exchange in the field, provides resources to practitioners, raises awareness of the specialty and creates the standards which those in the field should uphold. The SFT boasts more than 2,000 active members worldwide. By assessing the attitudes and perceptions of the active members and comparing that to the inactive members, SFT can better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the organization.

Statement of problem:

The SFT received suggestions for altering certain services provided by the organization, including the annual conference. Before embarking on any changes, the SFT wanted to explore the level of satisfaction, organizational effectiveness and personal perceptions of its members to better understand what changes, if any, are necessary.

Statement of purpose

This study evaluated the perceptions and attitudes active members have toward organizational effectiveness of the SFT. The organizational effectiveness can gauge the degree to which the members are engaged, committed and satisfied with the SFT and its subsequent services. The study of human behavior suggests that perceptions and attitudes are among the major predictors of behavior.

Methods

The methods for this research were quantitative in both design and analysis. A survey was created using validated scales to assess various components of organizational effectiveness: organizational identity;¹ perceived organizational support;² affective commitment.³ Various demographic questions, including category of membership, species specialty, age, etc. allowed for a comparison of groups across the different constructs. Other questions were asked of the participants that are specific to the interest of

the Society of Theriogenology, including questions specifically about the annual conference and its various components. Additionally, a scale measuring work engagement/job satisfaction⁴ was used to measure the extent to which theriogenologists are engaged and satisfied with their current practice. Frequency analyses were computed to measure the responses for each question.

Responses

There was a 26% (N=384) response rate for the active SFT members and a 13% (193) response rate for the inactive SFT members. Of the active member responses, 33% (124) are board certified and 67% (252) are not. Of the inactive member responses, 8.5% (16) are board certified and 91.5% (172) are not. The average length of membership is 13 years among active members. Of the active respondents, 56.5% (209) were in private practice; 1.6% (6) in research; 23.2% (86) in academia; 0.5% (2) retired; and 17.8% (66) citing “other.” Of the active respondents, 12.8% (49) were in a small animal practice; 26% (100) in a large animal practice; 13.8% (53) in a mixed practice and 47.4% (182) cited “other.”

Results and discussion

Overall, the results of this study have presented a positive perspective of the Society for Theriogenology. In general, there was strong neutrality among the responses to questions specifically about SFT and its services. Looking specifically at the major sections of the survey to assess the results shows:

SFT conference

Results from questions concerning the SFT conference were generally positive. A strong percentage (43%) of respondents noted that they planned to attend the upcoming conference. A strong majority of respondents (65%) agreed that the conference was a great place for academic exchange and (57%) agreed the conference was a great place and time to interact with colleagues. There was a moderate (56.4%) overall satisfaction rate.

Of the two concerns raised about problems in attending the conference—location and time of year—the location was a *slightly* greater factor in discouraging attendance. Diving further into these concerns, an open-ended question shed light on the topic.

Location. Many respondents cited the need for a more family-oriented location so that they could use the conference as a family vacation as well. Some respondents noted the need for a more exciting location to encourage them to take time off of work and spend money to attend. Other respondents mentioned the cost associated with certain locations, and to keep in mind that expense is often a factor in attending.

Time of year. Numerous respondents cited that holding the conference in the fall or winter months would be far better than in the summer. Reasons for this primarily included family time in the summer and difficulty with the start up of school (for academic theriogenologists, others with children starting back at school, DVM students).

Other. Other responses for how to encourage attendance included offering more bovine and equine information, a better balance between the academic and practical information presented, more socialization time with colleagues, and perhaps joining forces with other organizations such as the American Association of Equine Practitioners, the American Association of Bovine Practitioners and other local veterinary medical association chapters so that individuals do not have to choose between the two.

DVD sales. Almost half of both the active and inactive members agreed or strongly agreed that they would purchase a DVD of the SFT Conference. DVD sales may be marketed successfully to the inactive members as well as the active members.

More than half of the respondents disagreed that they would purchase a DVD in place of attending the conference. Further, only 20.8% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. This response suggests that a DVD would not greatly discourage those who already were planning to attend the conference. Note that this question was asked without the respondents' knowledge

of how much a DVD would cost. A DVD could be profitable if sold to the inactive members who would not be attending the conference and might be purchased by active members who would otherwise not attend the conference.

SFT communication

Responses from questions concerning SFT communication outlets showed that 43.9% of active member respondents sometimes, often or frequently use the listserv. Nearly 65% of active member respondents use the website sometimes, often or frequently and, most notably, 79.9% of active member responses cited that they read *Clinical Theriogenology* sometimes, often or frequently. Despite the high level of readership for the SFT journal, 80.9% of active member respondents and 93.3% of inactive member respondents cited that they had never submitted to the journal. Respondents for this survey showed 1.6% in a research related field and 23.3% in an academic setting. This indicates that the journal is the most used, though least interactive, means of communication between the SFT and its members. Additionally, 49.2% of active member respondents cited that they sometimes, frequently or often use Facebook, while 62.7% of inactive member respondents cited that they sometimes, often or frequently use Facebook. This difference might be explained because some of the inactive members are currently students or recent graduates. Facebook might be a good outlet for SFT to use to promote events or to further connect SFT members.

Continuing education credits

Both active and inactive members most frequently cited other conferences as their means of obtaining continuing education credits. Local chapters of veterinary medical associations were cited. Most commonly cited were the American Association of Equine Practitioners and the American Association of Bovine Practitioners, which aligns with the fact that large animal practitioners made up the largest portion of respondents. Other respondents cited at home course work, such as reading or a class.

Membership

Active members. When asked if they intend to continue their SFT membership, 93.2% of active member respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. When asked if they intend to continue their membership indefinitely, 80.7% of active member respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they did. As the field of psychology assesses, *intention* is the biggest predictor of behavior. Active members show commitment to their membership and intend to remain members.

Inactive members. When asked if they ever considered obtaining their membership again, 48.9% of inactive member respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had. However, when asked if they *intended* to obtain their membership again, only 23.3% of inactive member respondents agreed. With such a strong percentage considering renewing their membership, this might be an opportunity to market membership to inactive members.

Further exploring why members stopped their membership, inactive members responded in a variety of ways to the open-ended question. Most responses pertained to the cost of the membership. Others mentioned that they had no interest in theriogenology, theriogenology wasn't the focus of their practice, or their specialty had changed. Some responses mentioned that they belonged to so many other organizations and SFT was not as useful to them as the more specific and practical organizations.

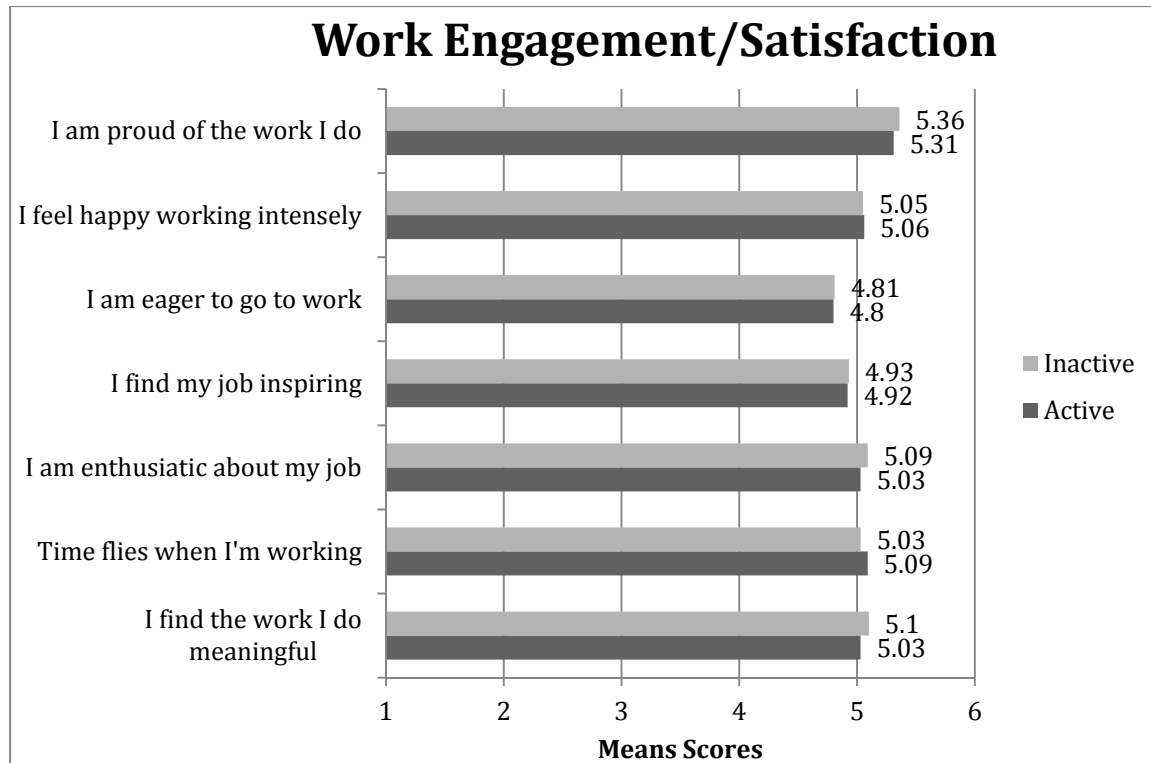
Organizational effectiveness

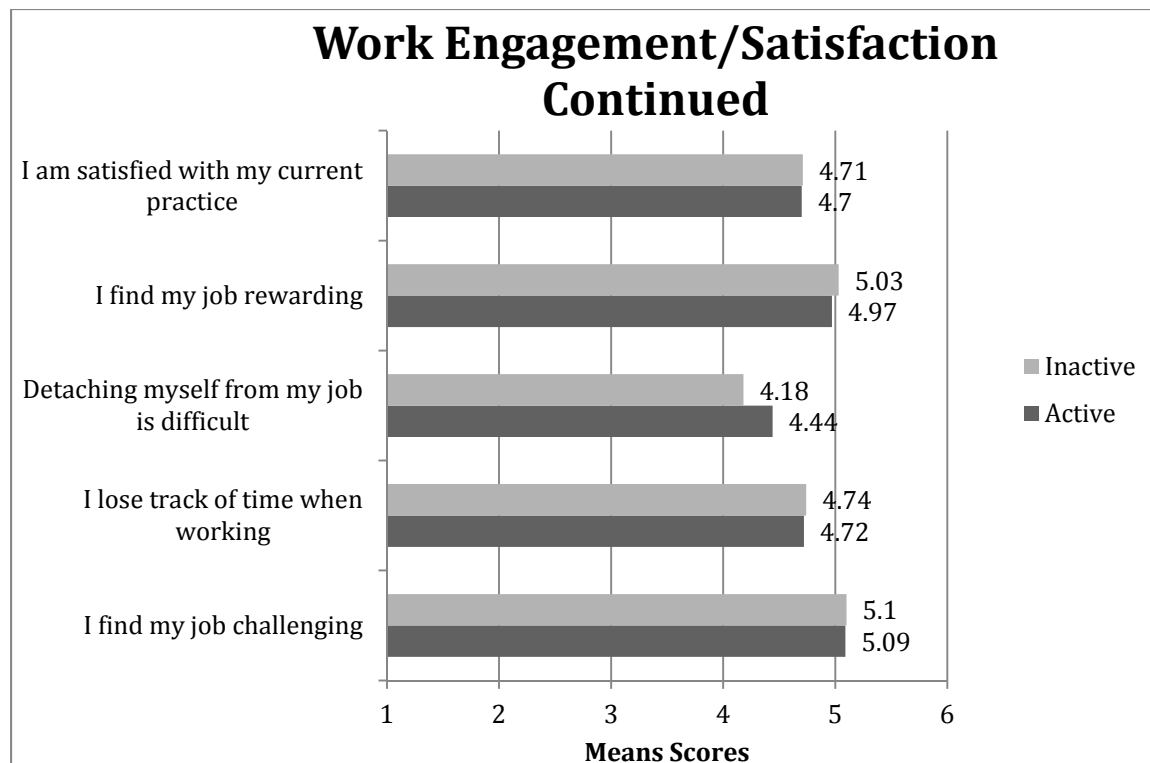
The survey's section on organizational effectiveness sought to assess if the members identified themselves with the organization, if they felt supported by the organization and if they felt commitment to the organization. While active members scored slightly higher than inactive members on organizational identity and support, their scores were still in the moderate range. The active members showed the highest levels of affective commitment, showing that they are highly committed members of the organization. Fragmented memberships (spanning across geography and species) might show lower levels because of the lack of intensity of the membership. Members might have higher levels of identity

and perceived support if they were involved in more SFT activities, but due to the nature of SFT, this may not be possible.

Work engagement/satisfaction

Work engagement is defined as “a positive fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption”.⁴





Active and inactive members showed high levels of work engagement and satisfaction. All items on the scale were ranked above a 4 by both groups, suggesting high levels of personal job satisfaction. There was no statistical difference between the active and inactive members' work engagement and job satisfaction. Though both groups showed high levels, the open-ended responses pointed to some frequently cited problems in respondents' current practices. Most responses pertained to financial matters, including income and resources for expanding technology in their practice. Suggestions were made for SFT to create a database or medium for theriogenologists to buy or sell equipment or notify members of where such equipment can be purchased. Aside from income and lack of resources, finding balance was also a frequently cited issue. Respondents noted that it was difficult to find time for family, and to time manage their practice with their personal lives. Another frequently mentioned issue was client compliance. This is manifested in difficulty getting clients to comply with their medical plan or feeling a lack of respect for their field of expertise. Additionally, physical demands of working with large animals, feeling hampered by the politics and bureaucracy of the field, and the need for research time were among other, less frequently cited responses.

Conclusion

The results of this survey showed that members are generally satisfied with the SFT, though there are areas upon which the organization can improve. The high levels of work engagement and job satisfaction among practicing theriogenologists sheds a positive light on the field. Future research would include further examination of theriogenologists' attitudes and behaviors about their practice, clients and other field-related aspects.

References

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