

Expectations of the customer contact staff towards the employer and the possibilities of meeting them in banking institutions*

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To retain personnel and motivate them appropriately, banks must comply with the terms and conditions of cooperation specified in employment contracts (such as working hours and where work will be done, compensation, and career development opportunities). Additionally, they must respect the requirements of an unwritten agreement binding the employer and the customer contact staff – a psychological contract. This article presents the results of a survey of this staff working in commercial banks operating in Poland. The survey has allowed identifying the professional needs and expectations of bank staff built into employment and psychological contracts, their hierarchy, as well as the banking staff's opinions on the possibilities of the needs being in their workplace.

*Key words: psychological contracts, employee expectations, mutual expectations, customer contact staff in banks
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1. Introduction

In the opinion of a large group of specialists the banking sector continues to be the arena of intense competition (Hull 2002; Kaynak/Küçükemiroğlu 1992). Banks must compete not only with each other, but also with the shadow banking institutions which offer alternative channels of access to debt and deposit instruments. Another problem making the functioning of the banking sector more difficult is that most of its products and services are usually easy to copy and imitate. Moreover, banks have to manage extensive networks of branches, ATMs and electronic services, and are expected to offer professional customer services of high quality.

As the public trust institutions, banks must meet higher expectations of particularly external customers. Individuals and corporations using banking services assume that the relations between them and the bank will be based on the laws in force and mutual trust.

Consistently high quality of customer service is very important for organisations seeking competitive advantage. The image of a banking institution is created by its employees interacting with the users of banking services (both individual and corporate). Bank personnel in charge of handling these two groups of customers is frequently called ‘a front-office’ – this term encompasses consultants, tellers, assistants, etc., that is employees who are usually the first to contact customers¹. The role they play in ensuring smooth functioning of the banking sector cannot be overrated. Complying with the letter of the law and ethical standards, they provide bank customers with a sense of security even in a time of crisis, and the latter trust that the customer contact employees will always take care of their finances. In practice, in taking business decisions all customer contact employees are guided by the good of the customer, but also by the good of the bank and their own.

The customer contact employees should know and accept the mission, strategy and goals of their organisation, engage in solving its problems, show concern for its good image in the market, have the necessary skills or work on their development, understand their responsibilities, show self-control, a sense of responsibility, tenacity, empathy, and loyalty to the bank, be tactful, creative in thinking, communicative, ready for sacrifice, cooperative and willing to share their knowledge with others (Mazurek-Łopacińska 2002). Finding such individuals and encouraging them into a long-term relationship with the bank is a major challenge for its management.

¹ Because banks have different organisational structures and use different names for customer contact jobs (e.g. front-office employees, customer contact employees, front-desk employees, corporate account consultants or personal account consultants, etc.), which are similar in that all of them involve direct interaction with customers, for the purposes of this article an all-inclusive term „customer contact employee” has been adopted.

Contemporary studies into the quality of relations between employers and employees date back to the works published by March and Simon (1958). According to these authors, every new employee in the organisation seeks to answer the following question: Should I fully engage in the life of the firm? A 'yes' answer means that the individual is ready to do for the firm more than his or her regular duties require, to stay and form a long-term relationship with the employer. The ratio between employees' inputs and the gains of the organisation shows how successful the employer has been in the relations with employees (Barnard/Simon, as quoted in Bowen/Siehl 1997).

The review of the literature has showed that researchers are very interested in the concept of psychological contract arising between an employee and the employer. The notion of a psychological contract built on Homans' social exchange theory (1958) seems to fully reflect the dynamics and interaction of relations between the two parties. The knowledge of how a psychological contract is initiated, fulfilled and modified is instrumental in setting the multicontextuality of human behaviour in the organization in a comprehensible framework.

A psychological contract, particularly the unwritten reciprocal expectations of customer contact employees and of their employer that mainly focus on the attractiveness of what the other party offers, expects and delivers, gives rise to the following questions: What professional needs do the bank personnel have? Do they think they are met? The questions will be answered in the next section presenting the key assumptions of a psychological contract and the results of a survey of bank personnel.

2. Theoretical framework

Trends observed in the international banking sector indicate that important for banks and their economic success are all behaviours of their employees that extend beyond the standard, daily business requirements and routine roles (Herriot/Manning/Kidd, 1997; Herriot 2001).

Drucker (2000) stresses that the 21st century is changing employers' expectations towards their personnel. Employees gradually become more autonomous and independent in defining their tasks and start to consciously create their own „philosophy of work". They take initiative in designing their personal and professional development, and in improving elements of their work. They feel an increasingly strong desire to be part of the life-long learning culture. At the same time, because of higher employee turnover, they are assigned new responsibilities for training the less experienced or temporary personnel. The quality of work is given more and more emphasis, and quality control shifts from rigid external supervision towards individual responsibility for performance. Organisations striving to increase productivity should perceive their personnel as an asset and capital rather than cost. Firms, including banks, take more and more effort to attract key employees and then to motivate them to win their commitment.

It can be posited that the organisation and its personnel have obligations, expectations and requirements as to the shape of relations between them. A set of all these elements (explicit and implicit) is called a psychological contract (Rousseau 1989).

Unlike the economic contract focusing on selected legal, formal and financial benefits offered by the employer, the psychological contract appears to be the main link between the adaptation needs of individual employees and the organisation's need to be competitive in the labour market. Because of its fluid boundaries, the contract may constitute a bridge between the employee's need for stability and security of employment on the one hand and the need for the organisation to be always flexible and responsive to the rules imposed by its competitors and the demands of the environment on the other (Makin/Cooper/ Cox 2000).

The term „a psychological contract” was used for the first time by Arrays in 1960, who applied it to describe and explain the behaviour of organisations. Soon afterwards it gained recognition from researchers such as Levinson, Schein, Rousseau, Herriot and Pemberton, and Guest (Marks 2001; Coyle-Shapiro/Kessler 2000). Its first definitions based on the descriptions of how the participants of the employment contract – the employee and the employer – perceive their reciprocal obligations and expectations. Later definitions focused on the subjective character of the psychological contract consisting in that „the organisation forms employee's personal beliefs about the rules of exchange between the employee and the organization” (Rousseau 1995).

The basic social rule underlying employment relationships relationships is reciprocity (Gouldner 1960; Rousseau/Parks 1993). If the employees are to fulfil the expectations of their organisation, the employer must deliver on the promises that were made to them. Each employment relationship consists of a string of interactions involving exchange. Employees may offer for exchange the time they will spend in the firm, the quality and quantity of work, their efforts and commitment, honesty, loyalty, concern for employer's property, flexibility and availability, competencies and knowledge. In return, they expect that the employer will appropriately introduce them into the organisation, clear rules and principles, training and support for personal development, fair treatment, attentiveness to their personal needs (including leisure, the care of a sick child, the necessity to handle official matters), information and consultation on vital organizational issues, discretion, social responsibility, recognition of their efforts, fair working conditions, adequate pay and security (Herriot et al. 1997).

The above definition of a psychological contract gives an insight into the process and contents of reciprocal expectations of employers and employees concerning their additional rights rather than the provisions of the formal agreement between them, and into the character of employment relationships. With passing time, employment relationships can be renegotiated and modified (Guest 2004)

to ensure the flexibility of response to various contextual stimuli affecting both formal and informal agreements between an employee and the employer. The contents of a psychological contract depend on the subjective judgements and beliefs held by the members of the organisation. This means that the parties to the contract (e.g. the superior and the subordinate) may differently perceive it, understand and evaluate. A psychological contract is „understood” and not written down. It is informal and goes far beyond the official and legal regulations of employment relations set out in the Labour Code, collective agreements, management contracts, employment contracts, company rules, etc.

Both the employer and customer contact employees are interested in their psychological contract going on. Whether it will be so depends on equivalent exchange and the attractiveness of the offers made by the parties. There are three possible types of relations between the goals of the organisation and the expectations of its employees: 1) the organisation and the employee have the same goals, 2) the employee treats the organisational goals as a means of achieving his or her personal goals, 3) the employees’ goals are secondary to the goals of the organisation or vice versa (Sikorski as quoted in Listwan 2004).

The first relation omits the question of equivalent exchange and the third one is a pathological case of corporate cult, i.e. of degenerated corporate culture where organisational success is pursued at the cost of the workforce (Arnott 2000). The second relation involving instrumentality is the only one to offer equivalent exchange between a customer contact employee and the employer. It helps employees develop a belief that their payoff from the exchange will exceed costs and that they will be able to pursue their personal aims and needs as long as they contribute to the success of their organisation. Accepting this exchange, they expect that the employer will meet their higher and lower, material and non-material needs will be met. The employer should remember, however, not to concentrate on employees’ needs forming the bottom of Maslow’s pyramid (related to security and physiology), because social needs, the need for respect and self-realisation must also be identified and fulfilled. Some of the needs may be felt by all employees (although with different intensity), while others may be specific to only some of them. How strongly a customer contact employee feels particular needs may depend on 1) the employee profile (demographic characteristics, position in the organisation, the type of contract with the employer); 2) the duration of the relationship with the employer and the particular stage in the employee life cycle; 3) the employees’ role and scope of responsibilities in the organisation that depend on the employee’s contribution to the fulfilment of organisational tasks, intellectual potential and professional experience, etc.; 4) the assistance the employee needs to carry out his or her tasks in the optimal manner, for instance the type and amount of necessary information, physical and financial resources, the setup of the work area; 5) the employee’s level of satisfac-

tion that may affect his or her loyalty, commitment and functioning in the organisation (Baruk 2005).

In return for meeting employees' needs, the employer expects them:

- to comply with high quality standards of work;
- to be loyal to their supervisors, colleagues, customers and suppliers;
- to show loyalty and concern for the good of the organisation, which is perceived as the foundation of a long-term relationship with the employer, as well as for its resources, property, economic interests, image and reputation;
- to maintain appropriate appearance i.e. to ensure that one's image, style of dressing and social label meet the employer's requirements;
- to be flexible, i.e. to be always available for work, particularly in cases of emergency critical for the organisation (Herriot et al. 1997).

An organisation that shows respect to its employees, for instance by giving information about its restructuring plans, about the introduction of various forms of flexiwork or the availability of skills development opportunities may expect that the employees will demonstrate in return their sense of "organisational membership" by showing commitment and readiness to work overtime, promoting a positive image of their organisation as an employer, or by supporting the fulfilment of its mission and strategy.

The literature shows that in interaction with employers respect and recognition are ranked high by employees, while employers appreciate employees' sense of membership and loyalty (Rousseau/Schalk, 2000). The fine-tuning of a psychological contract that leads to the fulfilment of both parties' basic expectations relieves tensions arising from uncertainty, a frequent feeling in today's workplaces. A well-defined contract makes it easier for both parties to predict what the partner may do and to understand common goals and challenges in the organization (see Table 1).

The main outcome of a psychological contract should be lower uncertainty between an employee and the employer acting in a changeable socio-economic environment.

A psychological contract emerges when the employer and an employee meet for the first time. Each new member of an organisation brings in their own set of values, competencies, knowledge, social norms, cognitive patterns, habits, and personal characteristics. However, the new situation may dramatically differ from the beliefs the employee has brought from earlier workplaces. This means that particular employees may have different views on the fulfilment of the psychological contract, even if all contracts are governed by the same general rules.

Table 1: Reciprocal expectations between employers and employees

Type of contract	Employees expect	The organisation expects
Economic (transactional, financial, formal)	Monetary rewards, in-kind rewards	Doing one's work, presence at work, fulfilment of tasks, compliance with performance standards
Psychological (relational, informal, unwritten)	Respect, honesty, fulfilment of personal needs	Membership, participation, commitment, acceptance of roles, norms and standards in the organisation

Source: developed by the author based on Makin et al. (2000) and Rousseau and Schalk (2000).

A psychological contract is not etched in stone. As the main link between the employer and an employee it is subject to constant change and revision. According to Makin, Cooper and Cox (2000), the longer employees work for an organisation, the more the employer and employees expect of each other. Changes occurring in the organisation's environment may force employers to update their implicit expectations towards employees. They may expect for instance (see Poczowski, 2003) that the employees will accept flexible employment relationships (new rules of employment, working time and compensation) and will show independence in acting, responsibility for their careers, readiness for and adaptability to changes (Poczowski 2003). The expectations of the employees also evolve, as they increasingly appreciate fair and ethical treatment, respect for their dignity, the status of stakeholders and not merely of subordinates, recognition and reward for their contribution to the organisation, feedback, being supported by the employer in developing their competencies, which is important for their consistently high employability, and the employer's understanding of the fact that the employment relationships they form are subordinated to the needs of their careers.

The character of a psychological contract is formed by the beliefs of its participants, but mainly by the level of maturity of the organisation, changes in the environment and the corporate culture (Makin et al. 2000). The contents of a psychological contract are also determined by macroeconomic processes that frequently lead to cuts in the organisation's overheads, reengineering, outsourcing, or the use of temporary labour. New developments may make both the employer and employees redefine their expectations. This means that psychological contracts vary with changes in the reality in which the employer and employees function. It must be noted, however, that „a violation” of the contract's key provisions may send a signal to its participants that they no longer share the same set of values or aims, and that their further cooperation is actually pointless.

Based on the above, it has been assumed that one of the key factors determining mutually beneficial relationships between the employer and an employee is the parties' understanding of what they expect of each other and what they can do to fulfil the partner's needs. The results of the survey conducted with customer contact employees in banks may therefore prove interesting to their management.

3. Method

The survey was financed from the research grant „A Human Resource Management Model Based on a Psychological Contract” no UMO-2013/09/B/HS4/00474 which was awarded by Polish State Committee for Scientific Research (NCN). The respondents were customer contact employees working in four commercial banks based in Łódź and Warsaw. The purpose of the survey was to determine the needs and expectations of bank employees, as well as obtaining their opinions on the possibility of the needs being met by their present employers.

In the context of a psychological contract, but particularly taking into account the implicit reciprocal expectations of employees and employers as to the attractiveness of the offer to be presented, expected and delivered by the other party, the following questions were asked:

- What are the professional needs of customer contact employees in banks?
- Which of them are the crucial to the respondents and which are secondary?
- Do the employees think the needs are fully met?

The research started with the identification and prioritisation of the professional needs of bank employees. In the next step, the respondents were asked to evaluate the degree to which particular needs were met in their present workplace.

The survey respondents were recruited from among bank employees that the author met personally during the training “Modern Customer Service Techniques in a Bank”. The survey was anonymous and voluntary. The consenting employees were first asked to provide written answers to the following open-ended question: „What are the professional needs and expectations of customer contact employees in banks?” Based on the answers, a set of 12 most common needs was created.

Subsequently, the survey questionnaires were distributed among the respondents, either personally or by mail. The questionnaires were designed in such a way as to help the respondents arrange the 12-item set of professional needs by their importance and indicate the degree to which they were satisfied in their workplace. To make prioritisation easier, the respondents were asked to give weights to the needs ranging from 0 to 5, where 0 denoted „not important at all”, and 5 „very important”. The scale was introduced because in the pilot survey

many respondents had had a problem indicating the importance of particular professional needs. Several bank employees had skipped this task completely and changed their mind only after the scale was provided. The same scale was used by the respondents to evaluate the degree to which particular needs were met in their present workplace.

A total of 286 questionnaires were distributed, of which 187 (64%) were returned completed. Some questionnaires were omitted from analysis because of incomplete data in the “respondent description” section.

The answers given by the respondents were analysed using descriptive statistics and statistical inference methods. The methods were applied to analyse correlations and to evaluate the significance of the correlation coefficients (at $p < 0.05$). The Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient was used to determine if the correlations between the ordinal values were positive or negative. The coefficient is given by the following formula:

$$r_s = 1 - \frac{6 \sum_{i=1}^n D_i^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

where: r_s – Spearman’s coefficient,

D_i – the difference between the ranks of the i -th pair of values,

n – the number of observations.

The coefficient takes values in the range $[-1, 1]$ and its sign indicates whether the ratings assigned to the distinguished characteristics are correlated positively or negatively; the value of the coefficient shows how strong the correlation is. A value lower than 0.33 shows weak correlation between the analysed variables; if it ranges between 0.34 and 0.66 correlation is moderate, and if it is equal to or higher than 0.67 correlation is strong (Starzyńska 2000).

Most of the surveyed customer contact employees were women (79.28%). The mean age of a respondent exceeded 37 years ($\bar{x} = 36.27$). Almost all respondents (98.16%) had tertiary education and only less than 2% (1.84%) had secondary education. At the same time, 23.35% of respondents in the first group completed or were enrolled in post-graduate studies. More than half respondents in the second group were tertiary students (52.0%).

More than half respondents (52.27%) had substantial professional experience judging by the number of years they had worked. Most of them had worked 11-15 years (32.0%), 6-10 years (20.8%) and 21-30 years (26.37%). Other respondents had worked less than 5 years or longer than 30 years (20.83%). The number of times the respondents had changed employers pointed to their occupational mobility. Almost half of them (47.52%) had already had at least two employers. Every fourth had worked in one or three firms (25.74% in both cases) and only

few (1.0%) in four or six. This implies that because of their young age respondents preferred short relationships with employers.

4. Survey results

The survey allowed the professional needs of customer contact employees in banks to be identified and their hierarchy to be created. Its findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: The hierarchy of professional needs presented by the staff of the branches of Łódź and Warsaw banks with indication of their fulfilment in the respondent's workplace

Professional needs	A The hierarchy of bank employees' professional needs \bar{x}	B The degree of fulfilment of a professional need in the present workplace \bar{x}	B-A
Stability and security of employment	4.78	3.71	-1.07
Attractive compensation	4.62	3.00	-1.62
Good relations with the supervisor	4.60	3.99	-0.61
Nice atmosphere in the workplace	4.60	4.02	-0.58
Promotion (vertical)	4.36	2.09	-1.46
Steady professional development (unlimited access to training)	4.16	3.48	-0.68
Safe (innocuous) working conditions	4.12	3.70	-0.42
Attractive (personalised) working hours	4.04	3.37	-0.67
Comfortable working conditions – equipment	4.03	3.89	-0.47
Attractive perquisites (non- financial)	4.01	3.56	-1.23
Independence	3.86	3.42	-0.44
Prestigious position	3.52	2.91	-0.61

Source: prepared by the author based on the survey outcomes.

The results show respondents appreciated not only attractive (because of their amount and form) remuneration (\bar{x} =4.62), but also the meeting of needs which are usually excluded from formal employment contracts, for instance involving some aspects of teamwork and good interpersonal relations with the superior and colleagues (\bar{x} =4.60). This shows that their need for belonging, being respected and recognised was met to a high degree. At the same time, the respond-

ents were the most dissatisfied with the amount of financial compensation they received (-1.62).

The key thing for the respondents was stability of work guaranteed by the employer and the certainty of continued employment. They wanted to be sure that they would not be dismissed overnight ($\bar{x} = 4.78$), but many of them found the need not to be fully met. High ratings given to stability in the workplace and the certainty of further employment were the most strongly correlated with the need for vertical promotion ($R_s=0.51$) and the need of comfortable working conditions ($R_s=0.44$).

For many respondents, the certainty of stable employment, of the firm still being in place when they come the next day, is essential, because it allows them to enjoy life and not to worry ahead of time. People who focus too much on security of employment cannot enjoy work in a place where solid employment contracts are not guaranteed. This attitude respondents' continued attachment to „old-style psychological contract” (Pocztowski 2003) offering stability of employment. This attitude respondents' continued attachment to „old-style psychological contract”.

It is also very probable that the respondents were affected by the economy-wide financial crisis and this made them more fearful of losing their jobs in the banking sector and thereby of a source of livelihood for themselves and their families. Acquisitions and mergers which are frequent in the banking sector, and the redundancies they cause, may have reduced the comfort and satisfaction with work of these customer contact employees who retained their jobs. It is also possible that the same factor contributed to a steady decline in their performance. To counteract the situation, banks should convincingly demonstrate that these employees are still needed, show them trust and encourage them to be ethical, honest and loyal to their employer.

The precariousness of the situation also calls for a nice and friendly atmosphere to be restored in the workplace ($\bar{x} = 4.60$). The survey results showed that the respondents had a strong desire to participate in the social life of the organisation, to meet with colleagues, and to feel that they were one team, but also that the need for a nice atmosphere in the workplace was best met in their present workplace (4.02). This implies that many respondents still appreciate the old-style psychological contracts stressing the formation of permanent relationships in the organization. It must be noted, however, that banks commonly outsource IT, cash handling, and security services, etc. Persons who come to the organisation to do short-term, outsourced jobs are usually not attached emotionally to the permanent staff, who in turn do not have a reason to make close acquaintance with the temporary personnel (Rogers 1995). Regular employees are frequently reluctant and lack in motivation to mix with employees working under an outsourcing arrangement that come and quickly disappear. As a result, the latter

may feel that they are cut off from support and other socio-psychological benefits that are usually available to employees with traditional employment contracts.

The availability of advancement opportunities was ranked fifth by the respondents ($\bar{x} = 4.36$). This indicates that the need for promotion was relatively important, but not crucial. The fulfilment of this need was ranked second (-1.46). High ratings that were given to the need were correlated the most strongly with the need to have a prestigious position ($R_s=0.51$) and attractive non-salary perquisites ($R_s=0.44$). Other, less important factors that could motivate the survey participants to seek professional development included attractive compensation ($R_s=0.38$), comfortable working conditions ($R_s=0.35$), as well as independence and participation in team decisions ($R_s=0.37$).

The need for vertical promotion was one of the unwritten expectations that raised most doubts in the respondents regarding whether they can be fulfilled in their present workplace ($\bar{x}=2.09$). Their doubts may have come from changes in the bank's environment and the resulting reduction of personnel and the flattening of the organisation (Raport o sytuacji banków 2012). Because banks too are affected by the main trends in the labour market, their causes need to be discussed openly and honestly, because they determine the fulfilment of psychological contracts founded on reciprocal, unwritten expectations of employees and the employer. Otherwise, the customer contact employees may develop a feeling that the terms and conditions of the psychological contract they concluded when accepting their jobs were violated. Employees should also be informed that modern „lean” banks offer horizontal promotions involving greater authority, autonomy at work and responsibility.

Training needs were less important for the respondents ($\bar{x}=4.16$). The survey showed that even though some of them participated in many training courses, their training expectations were not always fully met ($\bar{x}=3.48$). This points out how important it is to identify employees' training needs and to adjust the scope of training to the interests and financial capabilities of the bank, as well as to the needs of individual employees. Banks start training their customer contact staff as soon as they are recruited in order to improve their skill and to make it possible for them to do jobs requiring strong commitment. Another purpose of training is to encourage employees to reflect on their job-related problems, because the knowledge of behaviours, attitudes and skills appreciated by their organisation allows them to reach professional maturity faster. The awareness of the organisation's preferences is a key factor leading to the fulfilment of the psychological contract.

It was also important for the respondents to be able to work in a safe, non-hazardous environment ($\bar{x} =4.12$). For many of them, their present workplace

fulfilled the need to a high degree (-0.42). It is not surprising, because banks act in strict compliance with the health and safety regulations and rules. They also frequently take measures to prevent the incidence of occupational and other workplace-induced diseases (e.g. banks partially refund the cost of employees' spectacles and buy high-quality computer monitors), keep their premises safe and hygienic, and make sure that the employees observe health and safety standards at work. They also train their employees in responding to crisis situations such as robbery or fire.

The survey revealed that the respondents were less focused on comfortable working conditions and attractive (personalised) working hours ($\bar{x} = 4.04$ and 4.03 , respectively), and on non-salary (non-financial) perquisites ($\bar{x} = 4.01$) such as free access to a swimming pool and private medical care, life insurance, free theatre passes, integration outings, a company-provided mobile phone, laptop or a car, etc. Even so, a personnel policy should not avoid identifying and fulfilling these three categories of needs, because some of the respondents considered them insufficiently met. This fact may weaken employees' motivation to work (special attention should be given to the availability of non-salary perquisites (-1.23). Autonomy at work and having a prestigious position ($\bar{x} = 3.86$ and 3.52 respectively) were the least important needs for the respondents. A high degree of independence and freedom at work, participation in team decision making and the social status associated with a job only indirectly stimulated their commitment to work.

5. Conclusions

Trends observed in the labour market today place stress on the quality of relationships between the employer and employees. Human resource management must take account of the terms and conditions of cooperation agreed in employment contracts (e.g. working hours and where work will be done, compensation), but also the provisions of psychological contracts representing informal agreements between the employer and an employee. A psychological contract „is a major determinant of human behaviour in the organisation” (Makin/Cooper 2000.). In return for meeting the employees' need for security, self-realisation or a sense of belonging that they build into the contract, the employer expects them to show strong commitment to work, flexibility, and responsibility for their career in the bank. However, the employer must be aware that the employees may not be „forever faithful” to the organisation. This by no means should be understood that investing in the needs of the customer contact employees is unprofitable and pointless. If such investments are not made, employees will not be interested in working for the organisation at all or their relationship with it will be fairly short.

The survey of the customer contact employees in banks showed their professional needs and the odds of the needs being met by their present employers. It also allowed arranging the needs by their importance and provided the respondents with an opportunity to evaluate the fulfilment of particular needs.

The top needs were stability and security of employment and good compensation for performance. The fulfilment of needs other than included in formal employment contracts (including some aspects of team work and good interpersonal relations with superiors and colleagues) was also considered important.

Some of the respondents thought that their personal needs and professional expectations (particularly regarding attractive compensation, stability and security of employment, advancement opportunities, and attractive non-financial perquisites) were not fully met.

It is possible, however, that the new reality in the market has changed the hierarchy of bank employees' needs. Faced with the financial crisis, banks stopped seeking new employees and have made cuts in employment, so the need for stability in the workplace expressed by many customer contact employees working in banks may be even stronger today. Because their present employers cannot meet that need, they may feel less satisfied with their jobs, less loyal, and less motivated and committed to solving problems in their organisations.

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