
Preface

Little did I know when I agreed to supervise Natalie Allen's dissertation on commitment more than 30 years ago that the investigative journey would be so long, yet enjoyable, and help to connect me to such a committed international network of scholars. As I contemplated the structure of this book and who I might contact to contribute chapters, I was struck by the breadth of interest in, and applications of, commitment in the fields of organizational psychology, organizational behavior, and management. From its beginnings as an 'attitude' toward one's organization that helped to reduce turnover, it has expanded to other targets, including unions, occupations, supervisors, teams, customers, goals, and change initiatives, to name but a few, and has been linked to a wide variety of important outcomes for both organizations (job performance, successful implementation of change, financial performance) and their employees (health and well-being). It has been incorporated into a broad range of theories including leadership, strategic human resource management, organizational trust and justice, employee engagement, stress and coping, and the like as a key outcome, moderator and/or mediator. It has been studied at multiple levels of analysis – individual, group, unit, and organization – and in numerous countries around the world. It has stimulated numerous debates, including those pertaining to the nature of the construct itself, its distinction from related constructs, its unique contributions to the understanding and prediction of work behavior and organizational effectiveness, and its continued relevance in the ever changing world of work.

My objective in putting this *Handbook* together was to provide readers with a flavor of all of the above. To accommodate as much breadth as possible, I asked authors to write chapters that were much shorter than what they were capable of, and probably would have liked. I also asked them to address their topics in such a way that they would be of interest to both academic and practitioner audiences, and I believe they have been successful in doing so. Consequently, I believe there is something for everyone with an interest in commitment in this *Handbook*. For those who are new to the field, there is both history (for context) and up-to-date reviews of the latest developments in theory and research. For those looking for research ideas, the experts in the field outline what they consider to be the biggest gaps in our understanding of commitment and describe the latest tools at our disposal for addressing those gaps. For practitioners interested in understanding the 'business case' for investments in commitment and/or looking for guidance in developing an evidence-based approach to fostering commitment, there are sections devoted to both the outcomes and drivers of commitment. Finally, for those curious about how well the theory holds, and/or the practical implications generalize, outside North America, there is a section focused specifically on the implications of culture on commitment.

There are many people I want to thank for their help in making this *Handbook* a reality. First and foremost, I want to thank the authors who agreed to contribute chapters to this volume, and continued to participate even after I informed them that they would need to convey their wealth of knowledge in approximately 7000 words. I also want to thank the broader community of commitment scholars who contributed indirectly to the content

of this book, with special thanks to my graduate students and collaborators over the years; it was the stimulating and enjoyable interactions with you that kept things fresh and helped to sustain my attention for such a lengthy period of time. Finally, I want to extend my thanks to Edward Elgar Publishing for the invitation to edit this *Handbook*, and in particular to Francine O'Sullivan, Amber Watts, and Chloe Mitchell who were the faces of Edward Elgar Publishing for me and so ably guided me through the production process.

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