

Martin N. Davidson and Lynn Foster–Johnson, in “Keeping Color in Corporate America: What Generates Organizational Commitment for Managers of Color,” explore what factors generate high levels of organizational commitment for managers of color.

Many U.S. organizations experience trends in which people of color are recruited into the organization, but leave shortly thereafter, and it is unclear why. Based on prior findings on critical success factors for African American managers, we hypothesized that the opportunity for developmental or “stretch” assignments, the opportunity to gain accurate job performance feedback, the opportunity to build relationships with both mentors and peers of the same race, and freedom from experiencing racism would generate greater levels of organizational commitment.

Four hundred and seventy–three U.S. managers of color responded to a survey designed to assess antecedents of commitment. A path analysis model revealed that organizational commitment was predicted directly by (1) access to job developmental opportunities; (2) the effectiveness of feedback processes; (3) opportunities for same–race collegueship; (4) level of compensation increases; and (5) overall firm performance. Also, perceptions of discrimination and racism diminished commitment. Counter to expectations, mentoring and the firm’s commitment to diversity did not predict commitment. For feedback effectiveness and firm commitment to diversity, significant indirect

effects were also observed. Indirect effects analyses revealed that the absence of perceived racism in the organizational system strengthened the impact of developmental opportunities and effective feedback on commitment.

This study underscores the critical role of developmental opportunity and of feedback for the success for managers of color. It also highlights the continued persistence of experienced racism as a factor in decision making for people of color in predominantly white corporations.

Few companies can thrive without designing ways of retaining successful employees at all levels of the company. But this need poses a dilemma for firms that seek to broaden the cultural diversity of their managerial ranks in the U.S. Programs and policies designed to equalize employment opportunities have been instrumental in hiring traditionally underrepresented people for managerial positions in predominantly white and male organizations over the past three decades. However, such programs have proven less effective in insuring that once these individuals are in the organization, they remain in the organization. Certainly some of this turnover results from the high demand for a specific segment of the labor market. As more companies place a value on diversifying their management racially and ethnically, more intense competition exists for talented people of color. But this effect is, in fact, quite small. Like any other group, managers of color are attracted to firms that provide sought-after professional experiences, and once those

firms demonstrate consistency, managers will remain loyal. In this paper, we attempt to identify what those sought-after experiences are.