

Freelancer's Personal Development In the Industry of Meeting, Incentive, Convention, and Exhibition (MICE)

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Abstract: **Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to examine freelancers' strategies and how they develop themselves in order to be hireable assets and qualified enough to meet the requirements in the industry of MICE, depending on the event being conducted. **Design/methodology/approach** – This research started with a literature review building the knowledge basis for the topic. The primary data were gathered through several in-depth interviews with MICE freelancers. Secondary data were collected from event publications and freelance advertisements. Results and collected data were sorted, reduced, and displayed. Finally, a conclusion was drawn to answer the research question. **Findings** – Freelancers were motivated by several factors, namely: working hours' flexibility, higher earning potential, diversity of work, less commuting and more travel. Freelancers are eager to learn new things as part of their personal development process. Should freelancers wanted to change their interest from freelancing at conference event, which requires the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) of business English, to freelancing at exhibition event, they must develop and upgrade themselves, so that they have the KSA on how to deal with exhibitors and visitors during the exhibition. **Research limitations/implications** – Freelancers who were interviewed are those who have been working at MICE industry. Follow-up interviews with companies were conducted in order to find out whether they provide further training and development for their freelancers. **Practical implications** – The findings of this study suggest that freelancers who are interested in working at MICE industry must have a basic knowledge of event organizing for starters. Different kind of events will require different knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) as well. Thus, freelancers need to identify where their competencies would fit best at certain kind of event.

1 INTRODUCTION

An increasing workforce quota is witnessing a shift from stable and linear career systems into transitional and fluid ones and is taking charge of its own career development, seizing opportunities for career development without the traditional company boundaries. This does not imply that the traditional career path is dead but it is certainly no longer the norm for a sizeable segment of the workforce (Baruch 2006).

The individual responsibility for finding sources of work and remaining employable, and therefore competitive, holds particularly true for contingent workers (Auer *et al.*, 2014) and especially freelancers, who also have to cope with fewer formal

rights and greater uncertainty compared with traditional workers (Osnowitz, 2010). In exchange of higher autonomy and personal choice compared with wage employees, freelancers, who also have to cope with fewer formal rights and greater uncertainty compared with wage employees, freelancers or portfolio workers, or those "who charge fees for services and are independent of their clients in employment terms" (Fraser and Gold, 2001), have to perform a series of critical enterprising actions to survive and succeed in the modern, information-intensive economy. These critical behaviours include the thorough understanding of their marketplaces, customers, strategy development, and the enactment of activities related to marketing and branding themselves (Storey, Salaman, and Platman, 2005).

One of industries that relies its company's success on freelancers is MICE industry. This industry has been growing rapidly in Indonesia. For that reason, the government created a bureau right under the country's Tourism Ministry to handle everything related to MICE industry in Indonesia.

To understand the magnitude of this rapid development, let's take a look at the statistics from the World Tourism Organization. There are more than 1.1 billion trips being made worldwide, and at least 14% of said trips are categorized as business trips. On top of that, records also show that there are more than 83.16 million of trips related to various MICE events. The potential that our country's tourism holds combined with serious effort from both government and industry practitioners such as booth contractors, event organizers, exhibition organizers, event services companies, etc. result in a boost in our MICE industry (CPI, 2017). Most of those parties achieve their goals by hiring professional freelancers who have specific competencies and abilities related to the MICE industry.

Despite this occupational group being at the cutting edge of new ways of working, its representation in the literature has been minimal, barring a few exceptions. Recognising that the significant presence of freelancers in the MICE industry demands a more thorough conceptualisation of career success, this research attempts to present deeper insight into the ways in which employability, professional commitment, and attitudes towards one's career are associated with subjective career success in a sample of freelancers in the industry of MICE.

2 METHODOLOGY

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods are important in the fields of organisation studies and human resource management (Creswell 2009). The two research directions differ from each other in their basic epistemological assumptions. Quantitative research assumes regularities in social contexts that can be analysed objectively and explained theoretically by data. In contrast, qualitative research assumes that there are no general regularities in social contexts. Such research is therefore oriented more strongly to individual cases and cannot claim to depict the research object completely and in all its facets (Creswell, 2009). However, the different individual interpretations enable the researcher to gain a deeper understanding

of, and some initial information about, the research object (Bluhm et al., 2011).

For this study, authors firstly conducted a literature review of the current state of research. Secondly, several freelancers working in the field of MICE were contacted to be interviewed. Chosen freelancers are working in different sectors related to MICE industry. The primary data were gathered through in-depth interviews.

This research used the concept of career development to analyse the process done by MICE freelancer while developing themselves in order to fit the requirements of MICE events they are trying to work at.

3 STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

Personal development is basically the continuous process of developing oneself by building your competencies and realizing your potential (Rothwell 2010). Different from regular workers who receive training from their employers, freelancers are responsible to develop and upgrade their skills, competencies for their own benefits. But interestingly, in the industry of MICE, companies are relying their success mostly on the freelancers' performance. In this study, question to be answered is; how freelancers who are working in the MICE industry develop themselves to fulfil the event's need?

4 CAREER DEVELOPMENT

In the context of freelancing, objective career success (*e.g.*, pay and promotions) becomes less relevant as it is often hard to obtain throughout an instable and multidirectional career path (Verbruggen, 2012). Objective career success is obtained through direct comparison with stable and predictable metrics, which are unavailable both to freelancers as well as those who study them. In the light of this, subjective career success, entailing feelings of satisfaction and accomplishment regarding one's career, should be put under a greater scrutiny.

There are four steps in career development, namely; self-assessment, reality check, goal setting, action planning (Kaswan and Akhyadi, 2015).

Self-assessment is the process of determining interest, value, personality, and skill. Self-

assessment is often a psychological test. Assessment may also include exercises that allow the individual to consider whenever and when they want to be in the future. Each individual can do this on his own, with the help of a supervisor, or with others in the field of coaching or career counselling.

In carrying out a **reality check**, an individual collects information to determine whether the self-assessment is realistic and how the assessment fits the needs of the company / organization to the workforce in the future. Meeting someone in the targeted work environment may be a good way to test assumptions about what the job is like.

Goal setting involves determining progress or achievements for the future, such as the position achieved, the skills acquired, and the pursued developmental efforts.

In **action planning**, individuals make plans for how they achieve their goals. In many cases, action planning means choosing developmental opportunities that are appropriate for the purpose.

5 FINDINGS

MICE freelancers were motivated by several factors: working hours' flexibility, higher earning potential, diversity of work, less commuting and more travel. Freelancers are eager to learn new things as part of their personal development process. Should freelancers wanted to change their interest from freelancing at conference event, which requires the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) of business English, to freelancing at exhibition event, freelancers must develop and upgrade themselves, so that they have the KSA on how to deal with exhibitors and visitors during the exhibition.

Freelancers tend to start their development process by seeing their skill then looking for events that fit their personality and passion. Freelancers will constantly develop themselves in accordance to the needs of the event.

6 CONCLUSION

MICE freelancers' personal development started by identifying their own knowledge, skill, and ability related to the MICE industry. Since every MICE event requires a specific skill and competency, freelancers must develop themselves in order to fit the requirements. The continuity to develop themselves directly linked to the development of the event itself. Should the event they are working at

needs to advance its goal then the freelancers would have to upgrade their skills and competencies.

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