

## **TREATING EMPLOYEES DIFFERENTLY: THE OUTCOMES OF IDIOSYNCRATIC DEALS (I-DEALS)**

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Many HR professionals focus on developing or implementing policies and procedures that ensure that employees are treated in the same way or behave similarly in performing aspects of their job. Although HR policies and procedures are beneficial, they should not prevent differential treatment of employees. Differential treatment or customized work arrangements in the workplace focuses on customizing employees' jobs or conditions of employment based on their performance or unmet needs. Recent scholars have referred to customized work arrangements as "idiosyncratic deals," or i-deals, defining them as personalized work arrangements of a nonstandard nature that employees and their employers negotiate for mutual benefit. While i-deals come in many forms, the four most common are:

1. **Schedule flexibility i-deals** – Modifying an employee's schedule to accommodate his or her needs
2. **Location flexibility i-deals** – Allowing an employee to work from a location outside of the office
3. **Task i-deals** – Allowing individuals to negotiate to create or alter the content or responsibilities of his or her job
4. **Developmental i-deals** – Special opportunities an individual negotiates in order to use or expand his or her knowledge and skills.

The current study examined employee outcomes associated with i-deals. Based on surveys completed by 961 employees and their managers from 71 restaurants of a U.S. chain, Dr. Chenwei Liao, Dr. Sandy Wayne, Dr. Robert Liden, and Jeremy Meuser found

- Individuals who received i-deals were more likely to engage in helping behaviors such as volunteering to assist coworkers
- Individuals who received i-deals reported higher levels of overall job satisfaction
- Individuals who received i-deals viewed their supervisors as more fair

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### **Implications of the Results:**

I-deals involve a negotiation process between employees and their managers. It typically begins with the employee taking the initiative and requesting a flexible schedule, special tasks assignments, or unique career development opportunities. Employees who receive i-deals perceive their managers to be more fair than those who do not receive i-deals. This likely occurs because when they are allowed to participate in the process of modifying their work arrangements, they see their manager as listening to their concerns and being open to

addressing them. Through participating in this process, employees see that they have some sense of control over their employment conditions, enhancing employees' perceptions that their manager is fair.

High perceptions of supervisory justice contribute positively to employees' helping behavior and satisfaction with their jobs. Therefore, managers are encouraged to consider granting i-deals as a means to promote employee justice perceptions and motivate employees.

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