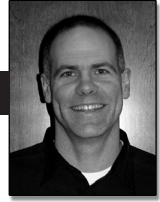


Q&A With a Customer

Scott L. Martin
Payless ShoeSource



Mike Grindell is a seasoned human resource professional and has been at the receiving end of industrial-organizational psychology services for much of his career. Mike started his career as a human resource manager for Rich's Department Stores, a division of Federated Department Stores. He spent some time in sales at CitiCorp and then joined Coca-Cola where he held a variety of human resource roles, including staffing manager, human resource generalist, organization effectiveness director, head of talent acquisition and head of human resources for North America. Mike is now a consultant in Atlanta.

How has organizational psychology helped you?

It has been helpful in a few ways. First, it has provided me with specific tools that have helped me address people issues. For instance, I was charged with coaching a senior executive who tended to dominate conversations. I encouraged her to use specific team building processes, such as building on others' ideas, and she made significant progress. Second, I think I'm more effective in helping organizations achieve their long-term objectives. Thanks to "breakthrough models," I now start major initiatives with the true vision and don't get overly grounded in current reality. Third, it has helped me think more systemically. I'm much better about recognizing all of the possible factors that may be important for achieving the desired result.

You spent some time doing organizational development work. What was that like?

During my time at Coca-Cola, we built a large learning and organization capability team. I had the opportunity to work with organization effectiveness types from all over the world. I received 6 months of organizational effectiveness training and found it to be one of the most rewarding aspects of my career.

Would you say organizational psychologists were service oriented?

Yes and no. The good ones understand that counsel and solutions must drive the results of the organization. Some I have worked with are "cloud control" types—too much into models and theory rather than results.

How might organizational psychologists be more effective?

Take all the excellent knowledge of topics such as change and talent management, and help organizations improve in tangible, "bite size" ways. Orga-

nizational psychologists could have more impact if they were focused on project implementation and seeing things through to completion.

I've also noticed that organizational psychologists have been great at designing selection and development tools for managers and executives. The ones I have worked with are not as good with leveraging technology and designing automated tools for entry-level or nonexempt employees.

Finally, some organizational psychologists approach situations using models and theories, rather than asking questions and really understanding the business context. I believe that organizational psychologists can be most effective by understanding the current situation, understanding the destination, building a plan to close the gap, and driving great project implementation.

Any opportunities with respect to the design of systems?

I think organizational psychologists are excellent at this. The only opportunity I see is that they really need to determine whether management has the time and courage to implement processes they are proposing. For instance, is management really prepared to differentiate performance in the way they are proposing?

Any advice for external consultants?

I think they have to be careful not to rush to selling off-the-shelf products. I've seen many cases in which the consultant started off asking good clarifying questions and then moved too quickly into selling mode. This immediately turns off senior executives.

Aside from the selling issue, do you think organizational psychologists are good at diagnostic work?

Yes, I think they're genuinely curious, and simple approaches such as continuing to ask "why" can get to the root cause.

Would you consider organizational psychologists to be strategic partners?

Yes. The best ones can be trusted and help form and drive strategy.

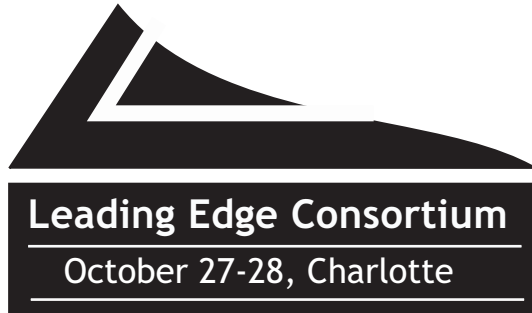
How would you compare organizational psychologists to other human resource professionals?

Compared to human resource generalists, organizational development professionals are in a much better place to challenge the client. Human resource generalists are trained to satisfy customers, and this is generally good, but organizational psychologists also serve important scientific principles. Organizational psychologists also usually work with a variety of customers so they have more "political freedom" than the human resource generalist who is generally assigned full time to one or a few business leaders.

Have you noticed any changes in organization psychologists over the years?

In the past 5 to 10 years, I've seen more knowledge transfer from organizational psychologists to their customers. This was less common many years ago.

I thank Mike for sharing his time and insights. As always, if you have thoughts on the above or other comments, please let me know at Scott_L_Martin@payless.com or 785.295.6801. Thanks very much!



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