

I/O Practitioner Career Study Proposal

SIOP Professional Practice Committee September, 2009

Career Study Subcommittee

Rich Cober, David Dickter, Deb Gebhardt

Executive Overview

The Professional Practice Committee is submitting a proposal for a study to examine the evolving nature of I/O Practice. More specifically, this study will seek to fulfill the following objectives:

- document the breath of work currently engaged in by I/O practitioners, and
- identify the experiences and competencies that are related to current and future practitioner success.
- Outline a career progression and development model for practitioners

Over the next year, the Professional Practice Committee endeavors to follow the Practitioner Needs Survey (Silzer, Cober, Erickson, and Robinson, 2008) with a more targeted study of I/O Careers. A number of different data sources and collection methods will be used and the data will require careful analysis to produce the outcomes mentioned above. If this proposal is approved, the team will create a detailed project plan and work with the appropriate stakeholders (e.g., EC, select members of Professional Practice Committee) and an independent Advisory Committee to work out the methodological details of each phase of the project. In short, the study will involve the following steps (more details are provided in the proposal proper):

1. Review of Current Models and Source Materials
2. Subject Matter Expert Interviews
3. Focus Groups
4. Job Analytic Survey Administration and Analysis

This study will involve some cost as the Committee does feel that successfully accomplishing the goals of this study will require some dedicated support (beyond the great intentions of our committee volunteers). To this end, the Committee is proposing a budget for the study that involves hiring two Graduate Students under SIOP Assistantships as well as SIOP's covering other expenses. In total, the committee is asking for up to \$35,000 to sponsor the study.

Rationale

The practitioner community within the Society for Industrial/Organizational Psychology (SIOP) has experienced significant change in the new millennium. Market forces related to globalization, technology, employment law, leadership talent, and fluid & robust labor markets are making the jobs of many practitioners in our field increasingly more complex and influential.

Over the last 10 years we have seen a strong re-emergence of I/O psychologists in companies.

As practitioners have gained organizational influence and responsibility they have significantly expanded their breadth of work. Many hold major organizational positions, including a growing number who are officers of consulting firms and business corporations. These positions are often in management development, leadership development, organizational development, succession planning, HR line positions and, talent management. They are doing more talent assessment, coaching, performance management and development in organizations. They are doing more professional writing and gaining a seat at the table when major organizational issues and strategies are decided. They are often focused on designing and delivering a range of services, products and systems to corporations. This is also true of external consultants, whose revenues are based primarily on providing a wide range of professional services and products, but to a lesser extent on providing research services. Even some of the large consulting firms are moving away from research services.

Simultaneously the professional needs and interests of these practitioners have also evolved (here we are referring primarily to full- time practitioners). They are highly attuned to the needs of the organization, their clients and senior business leaders. Their professional needs, interests and reinforcers are different from I/O psychologists in academic and research positions and maybe even from practitioners of 20 years ago. The recent Practitioner Needs Survey sponsored by the SIOP Executive Committee (Silzer, Cober, Erickson, and Robinson, 2008) brought to light many of the issues facing our practitioners and the differences in their perspectives from those of SIOP's research members. . They are focused on accomplishing specific work objectives which meet the expectation of HR and Business Managers. In general:

- the work of I/O practitioners has changed and expanded
- the evolving interests, needs and reinforcers are different for practitioners than for researchers/ academics.

In the past SIOP has developed a number of useful tools and programs for practitioners. Both SIOP and I/O PhD Graduate Programs have provided a strong technical foundation for scientists and practitioners by developing Guidelines for Education and Training (1999). SIOP has also developed other useful initiatives such as the biannual Salary Survey, that provides meaningful market reference points for both academics and practitioners when they are looking for new positions, or when setting compensation levels within their own organizations. Among other helpful programs are the SIOP Exchange, recent partnerships with SHRM to disseminate I/O Research and Practice thought leadership, Consultant Locator System, the Professional Practice Book Series, practitioner-oriented Conference sessions, and the Leading Edge Consortium.

Given the evolving nature of I/O Practice we think the time is right to:

- document the breath of work currently engaged in by I/O practitioners, and
- identify the experiences and competencies that are related to current and future practitioner success.
- Outline a career progression and development model for practitioners

The Professional Practice Committee would like SIOP to take this opportunity to document and help extend that breadth of our work and our influence. Our proposal presents SIOP with the opportunity to identify and meet the needs of this growing and increasingly influential professional practice. The more informed SIOP is about the needs and work of I-O practitioners

the more likely SIOP can continue to be the organization of choice for practitioners and strengthen the collaboration between researchers and practitioners. Given the changes that have occurred in the field over the last 10 years and the issues brought up in our recent Practitioner Needs Survey that highlighted a need to better understand the occupational needs of the I/O practitioner, we think that the time is right to proceed with a Practitioner Career Study focused on documenting the work and career progression of today's I/O Professional.

Therefore the Professional Practice Committee is proposing a comprehensive Practitioner Career study with the following objective:

Conduct a job/career/ occupational analysis in order to formally document the breadth of work engaged in by SIOP practitioners and the competencies and experiences required to succeed in various practitioner roles.

We would appoint an Advisory Group of experienced SIOP members to provide thought leadership and professional insight for the project. This group should function completely independently of the Executive Committee or SIOP Administrative office to allow for full discretion over research methodology and the ultimately interpretation of findings. In addition we request that SIOP provide funding to support the employment of advanced-level Graduate students to support much of the work required for this study, under the direct supervision and management of the sub-committee members. Finally, we anticipate the engagement of additional members in the project to serve as both Subject Matter Experts and support for data collection throughout the various phases of the project.

Introduction

The primary objective of the Practitioner Career Study is to conduct a job/career/ occupational analysis and to formally document both the breadth of work engaged in by SIOP practitioners and the competencies required to succeed in various practitioner roles. The Career Study is a natural follow up to the Practitioner Needs Survey, which should help to inform the Career Study. The Career Study will utilize multiple methods of data collection to arrive at a robust picture of the professional work and competency requirements for today's I/O Psychology Practitioners.

An important step in building a sound practice and career foundation is to formally document the professional standards, educational requirements and necessary competencies for our Professional Practice. No profession knows how to do this better than I/O Psychologists. Yet little work has been done to create formal job and career models for I/O psychology practitioners. This would be extremely useful to the profession and would benchmark the career experiences, competencies, and developmental activities that map career progression in I/O Psychology. It also would have numerous benefits to SIOP such as laying the foundation for more targeted conference programming and other resources used to support practitioners. The results of this study could also help address professional licensing issues.

This Study would encompass the full range of practitioner work and roles including full time and part time Consultants, Researchers who also practice, Practice Leaders, HR Managers / Executives, etc. Some of the interesting questions that can be addressed include:

- What is the frequency and importance of various work tasks and activities?
- What are the different competencies and levels of proficiency required for different roles and different career levels?
- What education, knowledges and training are needed for different roles and career levels?
- What professional standards can be established for practitioners?
- What place to I/O Psychologists have in the broader HR Community?
- How can SIOP help practitioners who want to get licensed? What certifications, licenses, etc do our practitioners hold or need?
- What characterizes the work environment of practitioners in different roles and at different levels in organizations (e.g., decision authority, independence, interaction with colleagues / clients / executives, involvement in organizational strategic issues, frequency of travel, etc.)?
- What is the broad occupational model for I/O practitioners?
- What is the career model for practitioners in different roles and organizations? What advancement opportunities do they have? What are typical career progressions?

We are aware of one study that tried to document the “job” of I/O Psychologists (Blakeney et al, 2003). However, Blakeney and colleagues’ job analysis only involved I/O Psychologists in the state of Texas, a state unique for its licensing requirements. About a decade ago Borman and Cox (1996) documented the work activities of Practice in I/O Psychology. Since then the work of practitioners has changed and expanded. The American Board of Professional Psychology has outlined competencies for Organizational and Business Consulting. Work by other professional organizations such as the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM) has provided a framework for professional development of its members and has also structured a process by which professionals can earn certifications that represent meaningful career milestones for professional practice. As SIOP’s ongoing posturing regarding the American Psychological Association’s (APA) licensure requirements continues, the findings from this study can serve as a primary benchmark for the professional activities, standards, and requirements needed by an applied I/O Psychologist.

In order to provide constructive job information for building career development resources as well to identify useful work information to our discussions with APA, we feel it is critical that we undertake professional examination of the “jobs” of I/O Psychologists as soon as possible.

This study would be a comprehensive examination of I/O practice. Some of the possible benefits from this study include:

- Documentation of the full range of work tasks and roles of I/O Practitioners.
- Competency models for different roles and levels of Practice
- Career progression models for different Practice career paths
- An Occupational model for Practice
- Understanding of how I/O Psychology is leveraged within organizations and specifically within the HR function of an organization
- Training and development goals for different roles and levels including early career development needs
- Recommendations to SIOP on
 - Education and Training suggestions for Practitioners

- Performance standards for Practitioners
- Recognition guidelines for Practitioners

Methodology

We anticipate that the Practitioner Career Study will be more a complex endeavor than the Practitioner Needs Survey completed in 2008 (Silzer, Cober, Erickson, and Robinson, 2008), and subsequently anticipate the Career Study requiring a greater work effort. A number of different data sources and collection methods will be used and the data will require careful analysis to produce the outcomes mentioned above. The sections below provide a general, preliminary description of the methods, required level of effort, and time estimates for the Career Study. If this proposal is approved, the team will create a detailed project plan and work with the appropriate stakeholders (e.g., EC, select members of Professional Practice Committee) and an independent Advisory Committee to work out the methodological details of each phase of the project. In short, the study will involve the following steps (detailed in the sections to follow):

1. Review of Current Models and Source Materials
2. Subject Matter Expert Interviews
3. Focus Groups
4. Job Analytic Survey Administration and Analysis

Review of Current Models and Source Materials

The results of the Practitioner Needs Survey provided many insights that will help inform the Career Study as well as some of the expected outcomes such as a Practitioner Competency Model. Data is still being analyzed that can provide very tangible guidance for the direction of this study. More specifically, sections of the Practitioner Needs Survey that focused on measuring the frequency and importance of Work Activities that I/O Professionals engage in as well as the Developmental Needs identified by respondents to that study provide a rich starting point for this study. Our team will leverage the data from that study and conduct additional analyses to examine sections of the Practitioner Needs Survey related work activities to years of experience.

Professional organizations (e.g., American Board of Professional Psychologists), consulting firms, and business organizations/government agencies with internal groups of Industrial/Organizational Psychologists have developed professional standards and competency models for practitioner standards and development. In most cases, these models have been developed by I/O Psychologists. As we look to develop our own Practitioner models for growth, development, and excellence, we will conduct a benchmark of the content and rigor of other related models. This review will include:

- Certification models that might be relevant to our profession (e.g., the American Board of Professional Psychology's model for certification in Organizational Business Consulting)
- Practitioner models developed by I/O consulting firms and Corporate Human Resource I/O groups
- Other models that have been developed by organizations targeted at related groups (e.g., the Society for Human Resource Management's current competency model for HR Practitioners, etc.).

Other recommendations by the Executive Committee, members of our Practitioner Needs Study sub-committee as well as other SIOP colleagues will be incorporated in this study. This review will help us create version 1.0 of a Practitioner Job Analysis Survey as well as development of the protocols for use during the next two steps – SME interviews and Focus Groups.

Estimated Level of Effort – This phase is estimated to take approximately 3 months of coordination and effort. The final timetable for the entire study will be outlined in the final research design. We anticipate employing two advanced-level graduate students working approximately 25% time (based on 40 hour work weeks). We will develop explicit time deadlines on approval of this project to ensure that work progresses against specific milestones and we will put time boundaries on various steps. However these time boundaries are not intended to curtail depth of review, but rather to ensure a systematic, effective and efficient process for progressing through the study.

Subject Matter Expert Interviews

Based on findings from the research review and Practitioner Survey, our team will conduct a series of interviews with select Practitioner Members. The anticipated number of interviews for this stage would range between 12 and 20 and will be determined when the study begins. Selection of members for these interviews will be based on :

- Career stage (mix of early, middle, and advanced career stages)
- Level of success (focusing on individuals who, by metrics available to our team and community, would be judged to be successful at their respective career stage)
- Professional focus (Practitioners who have continued to publish and those that have focused energy more on career and organizational advancement)
- Type of practitioner job and role (e.g., external consultants, internal practitioners, academics who consult, practitioner managers, HR professionals and executives, etc.)

The final target list of interviewees will be reviewed by the study Advisory group. Interviews will be designed to take no longer than 60 – 90 minutes and will be structured using a protocol to be reviewed and agreed upon by our study team. Interviews will be conducted, to the extent possible and practical, with two of our team members interviewing one SIOP member so that one individual can focus on taking notes during the session (likely a conference call) and the other can focus on interview questions and follow-up. In addition, we would want to record interviews for archiving and research purposes and would require the use of an appropriate conference calling system to do so. The content of these interviews is to be determined. Possibilities include a traditional job analysis interview, a future looking interview about the I/O jobs in organizations, or a behavioral events interview (or perhaps a mix of all three) .

Estimated Level of Effort – This step in the process should take approximately eight weeks, anticipating some logistical challenges in arranging interviews between interviewers and interviewees.

Focus Groups

All data collected to this point in the Career Study will be used to create a focus group protocol. It would be the intent of this committee to be able to conduct Practitioner Competency model focus groups during the upcoming 2010 SIOP conference in Atlanta. Targeted timing for these sessions will depend on when we get approval for this study and the final research design and timetable.

Assuming our team is able to conduct Focus Groups at SIOP, we would first identify a targeted list of practitioners and invite them to participate in one of several (perhaps two or three) time periods for focus groups. Our invited participants would be identified based on the mix of criteria used for identifying interview SMEs as well as SME plans to attend the SIOP conference.

In addition, we might publicize the focus groups in both pre-SIOP communications and in a brief update article in TIP – so that others interested in providing input into this project can do so at select times. Focus group participants must be secured before sessions are to be held to ensure the appropriate mix of representation based on career stages and type of practitioner position. Focus groups would be designed to fit a 90 minute session. These sessions would be facilitated by at least two and perhaps more committee members so that discussion can be easily facilitated (accounting for the potential of a large number of participants wanting to participate in these sessions) and the discussion can be adequately captured and possibly tape recorded.

An alternative approach to collecting data would be to conduct a virtual focus group using web and/or conference-call technology. The committee recommends that we utilize our opportunity for face to face focus groups at the conference to take advantage of the relative richness of dialogue that can occur in such a setting. However, pending the progress of the study and available to secure space and appropriate SMEs for SIOP, we may have to be flexible in our methodology.

Estimated Level of Effort – Organizing, facilitating, and analyzing the results of this effort should take place over a six week time period (**this is not enough time to also analyze the results which could easily take 2 – 3 months by itself) surrounding the conference event that will be targeted for these groups. Logistically, planning for this effort should start soon so that the focus group sessions can be adequately planned within the conference program for next year, if that is a possibility.

Confirmatory Survey Administration and Analysis

The final step for this phase of the Career Study will be the creation and administration of a job analysis survey based on the findings to this point in the study. The study by Blakeney and colleagues (2003) provides some foundation from which to create this survey since they focused on evaluating the extent to which professionals in the state of Texas engaged in various workplace activities. The core study team on the Professional Practice committee includes practitioners employed in consulting and internal professional capacities. Given its representation, this team will be responsible for the final list of tasks, competencies, and certifications to be included in the survey. They will also have the information and data from the Practitioner Needs Survey, the benchmark competency model review, the SME interviews, and the focus groups to create a job analytic survey that will provide a robust picture of the practitioner competency and proficiency requirements for success in today's business world.

Items from this survey will be developed, reviewed, and loaded into an online survey engine, following the same approach as the Practitioner Needs Survey. The draft survey will be reviewed by the Study Advisory Group and then approved designated EC members. We advocate the use of a census approach to survey administration for this effort, and expect, due to anticipated length of survey (approximately 45 minutes) that getting a high response rate may be challenging. Due to the length of this survey, we might consider ways to incent survey participation (SIOP T-shirts, or a raffle for free conference registration or personal follow up calls).

Final results from this study will be synthesized into a report for the EC, publication in TIP, and direct communications to SIOP members. We would suggest that a communication and results utilization plan be developed that would outline a communication strategy and the steps that SIOP can take to fully leverage the results. We believe that the results from this study will provide the foundation for numerous SIOP tools, resources and decisions that can directly support and advance the interests of SIOP members

Estimated Level of Effort – Development of this survey, administration, and subsequent analysis should take approximately four – six months, assuming timely reviews of item content, ability to load and administer the survey in a timely manner, and strong response rates that allow for effective data analysis and interpretation.

Estimated Costs

Similar to the Practitioner Needs Survey we anticipate that the costs associated with the Practitioner Career Study will be relatively low. This is based on several assumptions:

- The Professional Practice committee members and an Advisory group of SIOP members will volunteer their time to complete various project tasks and reviews.
- We anticipate being able to utilize SIOP's relationship with Questar for the administration of this survey and preliminary preparation of data for analysis. Committee members and part time graduate students would be involved in the work related to analysis.
- The SIOP administrative office can provide access to member email addresses that will be required for contacting the membership and for survey distribution and follow up; for helping to collect and distribute review materials and models, and for other administrative support.
- To accomplish this study, there is a need for a devoted attention to project activities. To this end, the committee recommends providing two assistantships to Advanced-level graduate students. Specific costs will be detailed below.
- SIOP will absorb the telephone costs of conference calls associated with SME interviews, project team discussions, advisory group meetings, etc. In addition SIOP will provide a meeting space for focus groups at the SIOP conference.
- The out-of-pocket costs associated with communicating study results should be minimal given the availability of TIP, on the SIOP website, at the SIOP conference, etc. SIOP would absorb any costs associated with printing any reports and results including graphs, tables, bound copies, etc.

Career Study Cost Overview

| Project Cost | Cost |
|--|----------------------------|
| SIOP funded SIOP Assistantship – Two Advanced-Level Graduate students (750 work hours at \$ 20 per hour) (probably should be at least \$20 / hr) | \$15,000 – 20,000 |
| Travel costs for core project team members (notably SIOP assistantship students and anyone involved who may not otherwise have attended SIOP due to economy and lower organizational support for conferences) to SIOP Atlanta (assuming focus groups in Atlanta) – includes flights and hotel costs for four nights @ approximately \$250/night for four people | \$6,000 - \$7,000 |
| Project incidentals (e.g., room costs at SIOP, incentives for participation in project phases, conference calls, etc) | \$4,000 - \$8,000 |
| Total | \$25,000 - \$35,000 |

Conclusion

The Practitioner Career Study will provide information that is central in our understanding of SIOP practitioner career patterns and needs. The results can inform SIOP services and initiatives for years into the future and address the future educational, licensing and career needs of SIOP practitioners. This data will also provide tangible evidence of the work and influence of I/O Psychologists in organizations and help to differentiate our profession from others.

In addition by taking a more rigorous approach to these studies we will also will be able to demonstrate our distinctive skills and contributions. We may want to consider ways in which we can publicize the results to business organizations and consulting firms by leveraging our association’s connections with SHRM and Academy of Management to further communicate the competitive distinctions and advantages of our profession.

References

Borman, W. C. & G. L. Cox (1996). Who’s Doing What: Patterns in the Practice of I/O Psychology. The Industrial-Organizational Psychologist.

Blakeney, R., Broenan, R., Dyck, J., Frank, B., Glenn, D., Johnson, D., & Mayo, C. (2003). Implications of the results of a job analysis of I/O Psychologists. The Industrial-Organizational Psychologist, 29-37.

Silzer, R., Cober, R., Erickson, A, and Robinson, G. (2008). Practitioner Needs Survey: Final Study Report. Submitted to the SIOP Executive Committee. October, 2008.

Society for Industrial/Organizational Psychology (1999). Guidelines for education and training at the doctoral level of Industrial/Organizational Psychology. Bowling Green, OH.