

I/O Practitioner Needs Survey and Practitioner Career Study Proposal

**SIOP Professional Practice Committee
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Practitioner Study Subcommittee

Rich Cober, Maury Buster, Alana Cober, David Dickter, Van Latham, Greg Robinson, William Shepherd, Rob Silzer, Matt Smith, David Van Rooy, Tom Walk

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, most recently, 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 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 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 needs, interests and reinforcers are different from I/O psychologists in academic positions and maybe even from practitioners of 10 or 20 years ago. 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 academics
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In the past SIOP has developed a number of useful tools and programs for practitioners. Both SIOP and PhD Graduate Programs have provided a strong technical foundation for its 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 Consultant Locator System, the Professional Practice Book Series, practitioner-oriented Conference sessions, the new Fall Consortium, the new SIOP Website and many others.

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

- identify the breadth of work currently engaged in by I/O practitioners
- identify those issues that will likely shape our applied field during the next decade,
- tap into the collective experience and expertise of our practitioner community,
- understand SIOP's role in serving the interests and needs of I/O practitioners, and
- identify the experiences and competencies that are related to current and future professional success.

We 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 practitioners the more likely SIOP can continue to be the organization of choice for practitioners and the more likely SIOP can strengthen the collaboration between science and practice, between researchers and practitioners. Given the changes that have happened in the field over the last 10 years and the lack of recent attention given to studying practitioner issues we think that the time is right to proceed with these critical practitioner studies.

Objectives

Therefore the Professional Practice Committee is proposing a comprehensive Practitioner study with two parts:

- 1 – Practitioner Needs Survey - To identify and evaluate the needs and interests of SIOP practitioners with regard to what SIOP, as a professional association, can provide to them.
- 2 – Practitioner Career Study - To 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. This informal group would advise the project team on the research design and on key decisions for both studies. They may also be asked to help with some study tasks.

1. Practitioner Needs Survey

Introduction

The purpose of this survey is to understand the needs and interests of practitioners and the critical practice issues that will shape our field in the future. Now more than ever, the time is right to ask our practitioner members (both full time and part time practitioners) about the issues they face while working in organizations, what they need from SIOP to maintain their professional relevance and how I/O Psychology and SIOP can address future issues. Some possible questions of interest (among others) for this phase of our study include:

- ▶ What are the professional needs of SIOP practitioners (to include full time and part time consultants, internal professionals, leaders, executives, etc) such as:
 - Education and training
 - Access to research and reference materials
 - Networking with colleagues
 - Seasoned mentors, advisors
- ▶ What do current practitioners want from SIOP today and in the future?
- ▶ What professional resources do they currently use? What do they read? Where do they get useful professional knowledge? What additional resources might SIOP provide?
- ▶ What professional visibility do practitioners want from SIOP?
- ▶ Do practitioners have interest in becoming a SIOP Fellow? What forms of professional recognition / professional development are important to them?
- ▶ What are their interests and needs in licensing and certification?
- ▶ What other professional organizations do they find valuable? Which ones should SIOP seek out for stronger collaboration?
- ▶ How are I/O Psychology services typically positioned in the marketplace? Who are the competitors /collaborators to I/O Psychology providers?
- ▶ How do practitioners best provide value and service to our individual and organizational clients?
- ▶ How does the scientist-practitioner approach provide value and where should it be adjusted?
- ▶ To what extent is globalization changing the nature of the work that I/O Psychologists do?

Methodology

This survey study focuses on understanding the professional needs and interests of SIOP Practitioner Members. We are proposing the development, administration, and analysis of a “Practitioner Needs Analysis” survey. The sections below provide a general, preliminary description of the methods, required level of effort, and time estimates for the survey.

Survey Design

The Practitioner Needs Survey will be developed based on the range of issues and questions that have been suggested by Practitioners and Practice Committee members. We will certainly be open to the suggestion of the Executive Committee and other SIOP committees. Our Professional

Practice sub-committee will draft items through a team approach. A general structure of topics to be covered might include:

- Practitioner professional needs
- Practitioners professional interests
- Ongoing practitioner development needs
- Practitioner involvement across professional organizations
- The positioning of our work in the professional marketplace
- Practitioner perceptions of SIOP support and visibility
- The desired value proposition for SIOP membership.

Before items are finalized and loaded into the survey engine for administration, some Executive Committee members will be asked to provide a review and sign off on the survey content.

Estimated Level of Effort – The development and approval of items may take approximately eight weeks (taking into account the availability of our volunteer committee workforce and review time for the Executive Committee).

Sampling and Programming of Survey

SIOP currently has approximately 1800 members that have identified themselves as full time practitioners, as opposed to those holding academic positions (by primary employment). Of course we will also want to sample those members whose secondary employment is practice. We propose using a census approach to this survey administration effort to capture as many perspectives on these important issues as possible. We will try to identify SIOP practitioners and other members who practice. If these groups can not be easily identified ahead of time then we may survey all members to find these target groups.

One benchmark for practitioner survey administration within SIOP is our regularly administered Salary Survey. According to Dave Nerishi, the response rate for that effort, also administered via a census, is around 34%. The goal of this project is to obtain input from all of our members who practice. Given the importance of this survey we expect a higher response rate than the salary survey. Every effort will be made to support the survey administration with effective pre-survey communications and to create a survey that is an efficient data collection tool from the perspective of the survey taker.

We plan to utilize SIOP's relationship with Questar to support the administration of this survey. It is our understanding that resources from the SIOP administrative office can facilitate both the loading of items into the Questar survey engine and the access to member email addresses that will be required for survey distribution.

Estimated Level of Effort – We anticipate that it may take four – six weeks of time for the development of communications to members, item loading into survey tool, and loading of email address for administration. This effort can be run, in part, simultaneously with survey item development. We would begin developing member communications for the survey once the draft survey goes to the Executive Committee for review and approval.

Administration and Analysis

Survey administration will follow the approach outlined by Dillman (2000) with regard to pre-survey communications and communication efforts during the survey. However, to minimize cost, we suggest keeping the distribution of messages to an email format – and leveraging existing SIOP publication space such as TIP and the SIOP web site to do some promotion of the survey effort in different formats (without adding additional postage and printing costs).

Actual survey administration should take place over a two to four week timeframe (to be determined by the administration team – partially based on response rate during that period). We would also consider doing a follow-up email with members to try to boost the response rate. It is expected that the Practitioner Needs Survey can be analyzed and a report created for presentation to the EC, distribution to members, and publication in TIP and on the website in a relatively short timeframe (e.g., two months – again using volunteer committee members and the SIOP Administrative Staff). We also think that the results might be ready to be presented at the SIOP conference in San Francisco at the EC meeting and as part of the general program.

Estimated Level of Effort – Assuming a survey administration window of two – six weeks, we anticipate total time for completing the practitioner survey is approximately three – five months. This timing would start at the point of EC approval of the Study and end with the submission of a summary of results for Executive Committee review and possible subsequent publication on the SIOP web page and in TIP.

Estimated Costs

We anticipate that the costs associated with the Practitioner Needs Survey will be minimal. This is based on several assumptions:

- The Professional Practice committee members and an advisory group of SIOP members will volunteer their time to help develop and administer the survey and to analyze and communicate the survey results.
- We will be able to utilize SIOP's relationship with Questar for the administration and results analysis of this survey.
- The SIOP administrative office can facilitate both the loading of items into the Questar survey engine and access to member email addresses that will be required for survey distribution and follow up.
- There should be minimal out of pocket costs associated with communicating the results – in TIP, on the SIOP website, at the SIOP conference, etc.

Given these assumptions we anticipate that the costs to SIOP for the Practitioner Needs Survey will be minimal. If the Executive Committee requests a presentation of survey results at an EC meeting then there might be travel costs associated with two people attending the EC meeting and making that presentation.

We suggest SIOP might put \$1000 into the budget for miscellaneous costs associated with completing the Practitioner Needs Survey.

2. Practitioner Career Study

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. Work for 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 and could also help address licensing issues.

This Study would encompass the full range of practitioner work and roles including full time and part time Consultants, Researchers, 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
- 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 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 conducted their job analysis only involving 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. Currently the American Psychological Association (APA) is undertaking an examination of licensing requirements that may affect many of our SIOP members. This study can be useful in identifying the standards and requirements that might be helpful to practitioners who want to get licensed.

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 “job” of I/O Psychologists as soon as possible.

This would be a comprehensive study 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
- Professional Standards for Practice
- 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

The Practitioner Career Study will be more complex and require a greater work effort than the Practitioner Needs Survey. A number of different data collection methods will be used and the data will require careful analysis to produce the outcomes mentioned above.

Once we get preliminary approval from the Executive Committee to proceed with this study we will outline a more complete study design. We will seek out our colleagues in SIOP who are experts on doing occupational analyses, career modeling etc. The sections below provide a general, preliminary description of the methods, required level of effort, and time estimates for the Career Study.

Review of Current Models and Materials

The results of the Practitioner Needs Survey will yield some insights that will help inform the Career Study as well as some of the expected outcomes such as a Practitioner Competency Model.

Some professional organizations, consulting firms and internal HR staff groups, have started to develop professional standards and competency models for practitioner standards and development. In many 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:

- Practitioner models developed by I/O consulting firms and corporate Human Resource staff groups
- 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)
- 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 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 think that having explicit time deadlines will ensure that work progresses against specific milestones and will put time boundaries on various steps such as the breadth of the review conducted by our team. In no way are time boundaries intended to curtail depth of review, but rather to ensure a systematic and effective 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 at the time of engaging in this study. There are a few considerations that we will use to guide invitations to members for participation in this phase. These include:

- 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, etc.)

The final target list of interviewees will be reviewed by an advisory group of Executive Committee members, Dave Nershi, and the Professional Practice Committee chair. 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. The content of these interviews is to be decided.

Possibilities include a traditional job analysis interview, a future looking interview about the profession or a behavioral events interview.

Estimated Level of Effort – This step in the process should take about 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 SIOP conference in San Francisco and possibly during the subsequent Leading Edge Forum in the Fall of 2008. 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 one or both of these conferences, 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.

In addition, we might publicize the focus groups in both the SIOP program 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 groups would be designed to fit within 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.

An alternative approach to collecting data in this way 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 to take advantage of the relative richness of dialogue that can occur in such a setting.

Estimated Level of Effort – Organizing, facilitating, and analyzing the results of this effort should take place over a six week time period 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 the Questar survey engine, following the same approach as the Practitioner Needs Survey. The draft survey can also be subject to approval from an Advisory group of Executive Committee members (a small select group of interested 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).

Final results from this study will be synthesized into a report for publication in TIP and, perhaps, in 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 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 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.
- We will be able to utilize SIOP's relationship with Questar for the administration and results analysis of this survey. We may also solicit the support of talented data analysis experts in our membership to help with any unusual data analysis that is needed.
- The SIOP administrative office can facilitate: the loading of items into the Questar survey engine, access to member email addresses that will be required for sampling the membership and for survey distribution and follow up; for helping to collect and distribute review materials and models, and for other administrative support.
- 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 the four focus groups at the SIOP conference.
- There should be minimal out of pocket costs associated with communicating the results – in 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.

Some anticipated costs include:

- Estimated costs associated with purchasing a copy of the SHRM Competency Model material as well as for copying and mailing collateral material from other current benchmark models and materials (e.g., collateral materials used by consulting firms, other professional societies such as ABPP). \$1000.
- Estimated costs associated with recording and transcribing subject matter expert interviews and focus groups \$3000.
- Estimated costs for any extra computer time needed to run any data analyses beyond straight forward data tabulation \$3000

Given these assumptions and the estimated costs we anticipate the budget for the Practitioner Career Study should be approximately \$10,000. A more precise budget can be outlined once there is agreement with the advisory group on the final research design.

Conclusion

These studies, the Practitioner Needs Survey and the Practitioner Career Study are critically needed to fill gaps in our understanding of SIOP practitioner needs and to create a foundation of knowledge about Practitioner work, professional standards and careers. 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 to further communicate the competitive distinctions and advantages of our profession.

References

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