For this issue of the International Practice Forum, we reached out to our colleagues in Australia to give us some insight on what the industrial-organizational psychology landscape looks like. In Australia, it is more commonly referred to as organizational psychology. Past Chair Peter Zarris and current Chair Tim Bednall of the Australian Psychological Society College of Organisational Psychologists provide us with an overview of the strategic aims of the college, ongoing progress, and potential opportunities.

**A Look Down Under: Organizational Psychology in Australia**

The College of Organisational Psychologists (COP)

The College of Organisational Psychologists (COP) is one of nine colleges. It operates under the jurisdiction of the Australian Psychological Society (APS), the professional association representing psychologists in Australia.

COP’s primary purpose is to ensure that we provide members with the support and information to meet their basic regulatory and legal requirements. A core function is to provide advocacy on behalf of our members, especially when faced with regulatory changes that are likely to have an adverse effect on the profession. We ensure that members have the information and support to maintain their professional recognition as an organizational psychologist (referred to as area practice endorsement here in Australia).

While these fundamental services define what the college does to support members, ultimately the college has greater aspirations. We aspire to promote not only the services and capabilities of our individual members but ultimately the strategic benefits that our skills, training and knowledge can provide organizations to ensure a healthy, effective, high performing, and people focused business.
As such, COP has evolved from a focus on representing members’ needs around core requirements into seeking to build a value proposition for our members and a strong external brand.

In simple language, this means focusing our primary purpose on building an understanding of what organizational psychologists do. It involves building an understanding of the benefits of working with organizational psychologists and developing our influence within the business community. Our ultimate goal is to ensure that the services we offer, particularly around our core competencies, are seen to be fundamental to the development of a sustainably effective organization.

In short, our aim is now to move our focus from the internal requirements of being a psychologist and an organizational psychologist to a focus on building an external awareness of what it is we offer.

**The Future**

To achieve these strategic aims, our college is currently focusing on four key initiatives to build an awareness of who we are and what we do.

These initiatives are:

1. The development of our brand, especially with the introduction of our Workplace Excellence Awards
2. The creation of a member value proposition to ensure the college is providing value for all members
3. The development of websites and other materials to assist us in developing an awareness of what we do and provide members with up to date access to ongoing information
4. A national professional development and training plan
5. An international stakeholder management plan: in essence, building alliances with our international counterparts to promote the profession and our individual members

**The Workplace Excellence Awards**

Part of the College’s key focus over the last 2 years has focused on developing a strong external brand. The aim of our branding exercise was to address three core issues that were identified by the National Committee. The first issue was that, outside of the profession, there was not a common understanding of what the term “organizational psychologist” meant. The second was a lack of understanding about how organizational psychologists’ core competencies and expertise were crucial to business success. The third was that historically, organizational psychologists found it difficult to communicate what they did in simple language to laypeople.

The result of this process was the college’s introduction of the Workplace Excellence Awards, with our inaugural awards taking place last year. The concept of the awards was twofold: (a) to identify best practice in our set of competencies, and to recognize organizations in which they had been expertly applied, (b) to use the awards to build our brand by linking the college with excellence in these areas.
The seven areas chosen were: (a) assessment of individuals, teams, and organizations; (b) coaching of leadership, career, and performance; (c) organizational change; (d) workplace health and well-being; (e) recruitment and selection; (f) organizational design; and (g) performance management.

In the inaugural awards, there were 45 organizations that made applications for the awards. In all but one category, we identified suitable winners who met the criteria of achieving excellence. Presented at a dinner as part of the college’s 2015 conference, the awards were a resounding success.

Ultimately, they achieved the college’s aims of not only explaining the core and therefore differentiating competencies of organizational psychologists but also linking excellence as an organizational psychologist to those core areas.

Our ambition is to continue to grow the Workplace Excellence Awards and to continue to grow the awareness of what the college does and what benefits organizational psychologists can provide by continuing to build on this event and to continue to build the linkage between the college and these core areas as our core communication strategy with the external world.

As we prepare ourselves for the second Workplace Excellence Awards, the college and the various contributing members have taken great pride in the strides that this event has allowed for our core purpose, which is the development of the brand of organizational psychology in Australia.

The Member Value Proposition

The Member Value Proposition is the second key platform and strategy that the college is focusing on in the future.

This initiative is based on the identified need to develop a cradle-to-grave strategy to deal with members’ needs at all stages of their career. It recognizes the need to align the college’s activities to meet the needs of all members.

Research indicated that some of the key issues members wanted addressed include:

1. Understanding the relevant information about our members’ professional needs and their regulatory responsibilities around their professional needs.
2. Creating a process that provides members with an ongoing continuing professional development process that takes into account their previous development in the stages of their careers.
3. Making relevant courses, conferences, and other learning activities accessible and broadening this accessibility to international learning opportunities.
4. Providing opportunities for our members to extend their professional community and networks and to gain value and a sense of belonging to the college and in being organizational psychologists.
5. Leveraging the brand and reputation of organizational psychology to enhance both the reputation of our members in the marketplace and promote and develop the opportunities for our members to practice and grow their professional and business careers.
The central aim of the Member Value Proposition strategy is to build a close alliance between our members and the services that the college offers.

**Our Communication and Website Strategy**

The third strategic pillar is the development of our communication and website strategy. Ultimately, the aim of this portfolio is to create a strong internal community of organizational psychologists and to facilitate the sharing of knowledge.

This portfolio aims to connect members to relevant information, services, resources, and events. It also aims to connect our profession to relevant businesses and communities.

Key activities in this portfolio include the development of a stronger social media presence, in order to facilitate two-way communication between ourselves and our members. It also allows us to easily share content and to keep people up to date with the most recent developments in organizational psychology.

We are also in the process of establishing an online knowledge management system in order to share resources among our committees and to keep track of information about our members’ professional development needs.

This portfolio also oversees the development and promotion of the college’s academic journal, *The Australasian Journal of Organisational Psychology*. This is a regional journal that publishes organizational psychology research from Australian institutions.

**Our National Professional Development Strategy**

The purpose of this portfolio is to provide easily accessible, timely, up-to-date and relevant professional development (PD) activities for members. An additional aim of the national portfolio is to inform on the specific activities provided by the states, in terms of membership needs as well as contemporary workplace and societal trends. The portfolio also aims to facilitate knowledge sharing between members at different locations.

A key action in this portfolio will be the development and national rollout of a system for the electronic delivery of remote PD activities. These will include video recordings from local PD activities in addition to original content produced by ourselves (e.g., podcasts).

Also, this portfolio supports the development of additional professional supervisors for both university students and graduates. Doing so helps build the numbers of our members who are able to attain professional recognition as organizational psychologists.

**International Stakeholder Management Plan**

The National Committee of the College has long understood that because of the volatile regulatory environment we have been operating in and because of the unique challeng-
es in meeting the regulatory requirements as an organizational psychologist that it has been difficult for us to focus on building the types of national and international stakeholder networks to meet our desires, particularly around our branding and our member value proposition strategies.

The fifth plank therefore of the college is the development of a stakeholder management plan, which essentially will be to build specific alliances with international organizational psychology bodies and develop not only relationships and alliances with those, but ultimately to develop an international coalition of like-minded professionals with similar professional interests and with similar professional challenges.

This particular initiative is in its infancy stage, but does represent a great opportunity for the college to take our development to the next level.

We believe that our first step in moving our college from being an internally focused entity (particularly within the APS) to communicating with the external community via the Workplace Excellence Awards will be enhanced by a further strategy in building international alliances and an international community of organizational psychologists, particularly with SIOP in the USA.

At this stage, this is an aspirational strategy, but it is our fervent hope that as we embed our Workplace Excellence Awards, Member Value Proposition, national professional development plan, and communication strategy then we can focus more heavily on our international stakeholder strategy.

**In Summary**

The College of Organisational Psychologists in Australia has made giant strides over the last 10 years, and it is a great source of pride to the myriad of people who have served in a variety of positions on the National Committee.

Over the last 10 years we’ve established ourselves at running outstanding events, a highly profitable college with a highly committed and active constituency.

Developing a lifelong value proposition and developing our brand via the Workplace Excellence Awards (such that being an organizational psychologist has enormous efficacy and value) and a communication strategy we are hopeful that we can rebuild a strong desire to become a practice endorsed organizational psychologist.

In the meantime, we look forward to building our international alliances, continuing to promote our professional development events, and creating an environment where our members continue to be passionate, engaged, and active in our various activities.

We look forward to building our alliances with our international brothers and sisters in the coming years!

WE NEED YOU AND YOUR INPUT! We are calling upon you, the global I-O community, to reach out and submit topic ideas for future columns. Give us your insights from lessons learned in your practice. We are always looking for contributors and always on the lookout!
To provide any feedback or insights on the International Practice Forum, please send an email to the following address: lynda.zugec@theworkforceconsultants.com

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