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The Professional Practice Committee (PPC) is carrying out a project with the overall objective of developing a further understanding of how the careers of I-O psychologists develop over time. PPC members and graduate students from the University of Akron’s Center for Organizational Research (COR) collected and analyzed data from members in both applied and academic settings. The intent is to tie various competencies and critical experiences to career paths within various specialty areas corresponding to academia, consulting, industry, and government. Career paths are differentiated in terms of various developmental or promotional levels including individual contributor, expert individual contributor, manager, manager of managers, and executive.

In this edition of the Practitioners’ Forum, we will provide an overview of the study goals and purpose, a list of the action steps, and a brief overview of results. Also, we would like to thank all of the SIOP members who participated in the study. We had 2,744 responses to our recent survey, which was an impressive participation rate. Thank you to all members who completed the survey!
The study has numerous ties with current SIOP goals, including: creating career support tools for students and members, generating information that allows us to champion the value of applied psychology, and ensuring that SIOP remains the identifiable authority in psychology applied to the workforce. The creation of I-O career paths will likely provide a variety of benefits to SIOP members, student members, and potential members, including:

- Information for academic program leaders responsible for undergraduate and graduate curriculum choices so that they can optimize the education of future recipients of advanced degrees in I-O psychology (Byrne et al., 2014; Zelin, Lider, Doverspike, Oliver, & Trusty, 2014)
- A body of knowledge with direct implications for future versions of the Guidelines for Education and Training at the Doctoral/Master Level in Industrial-Organizational Psychology (Byrne et al., 2014; Zelin et al., 2014)
- Assistance toward lobbying for license and/or certification criteria
- A standard template, protocol, or basis of information for SIOP mentors when working with mentees
- A standard and informed framework from which people with advanced degrees in I-O psychology can consider how to manage their individual careers
- A link with the I-O Salary Survey process to provide additional benchmarks and inform the way future salary surveys are structured

Early in the process a number of steps were identified for completion. The following is a report regarding our step-by-step progress.

**Step 1: Review Current Models and Materials**

Step 1 was completed in spring 2013 and involved collecting and reviewing current career models and source materials from various organizations. This information led to the identification of a potential partition of the sectors in which I-O psychologists work and levels within each sector. Four sectors (academic, consulting, government, and industry) and five levels (individual contributor, expert individual contributor, manager, manager of managers, and executive) were considered the best way to capture existing career tracks for I-O psychologists.

**Step 2: Subject Matter Expert Interviews**

Completed in summer 2013, Step 2 involved graduate students from COR conducting 55 one-on-one interviews with SIOP members selected to represent academic (11), consulting (17), government (12), and industry (15) sectors. Questions posed to subject matter experts (SMEs) included gathering information about their current job and the competencies and critical experiences necessary to successfully execute their job and become a candidate for promotion. Graduate students also obtained information about necessary
competencies and critical experiences at each job level that an I-O psychologist could hold within their current organization. The committee made an effort to contact and interview SMEs involved in various types of organizations, such as targeting those employed by consulting firms of less than five employees and also by firms with over 100 employees.

**Step 3: Design and Administer a Job Analysis Survey**

Data collected from Steps 1 and 2 were combined to launch a careers survey of the SIOP membership during winter 2014. Researchers produced a master list of critical experiences and competencies, categorized by sector and level, from the SME interviews. The survey itself combined all competencies and critical experiences across all levels within each sector to facilitate comparison across levels (e.g., members who indicated a current position of manager in a consulting firm were presented with competencies indicated by the SMEs as important for consulting, regardless of level).

The survey first asked participants about competencies for their current job with the following question, “Please indicate how important these various job-related competencies are in terms of performing your current job.” The second set of questions involved participants providing information about critical experiences for their current job, “Please indicate how important these various job-related experiences are in terms of performing

A “where learned” component was added for the competencies section specifically to address potential needs of the committee tasked with revising the Guidelines for Education and Training at the Doctoral/Master’s Level in I-O Psychology. Members indicated whether they learned the particular competency in graduate school, on the job, or through structured training. Members also answered questions about their background information, such as their current job title and job level, all sectors in which they have worked, and the length of time spent in their current job sector.

**Step 4: Initial Results**

Participants completed surveys in March 2014 with responses from 2,744 SIOP members holding advanced degrees in I-O psychology. The breakdown was as follows:

- Academia (N = 476, 35%)
- Government (N = 91, 7%)
- Industry (N = 347, 25%)
- Consulting (N = 458, 33%)

Members of the committee presented initial results at the 29th Annual Conference of the Society for Industrial Organizational Psychology in Honolulu, HI, and also in an article published in Industrial and Organizational Psychology:
Perspectives on Science and Practice (Zelin et al., 2014). The committee created initial career path models for each sector by comparing and contrasting important competencies and critical experiences for each level within a sector.

For instance, within the consulting sector, written communication skills and interpersonal skills were important competencies for success at all levels of the organization. Participants considered decision making and strategic thinking as the most critical competencies for someone in a manager of managers position within a consulting firm, but these competencies were not included as some of the most important competencies one needs to have to be successful in other levels of the organization.

Within the academia sector, teaching ability was a critical competency for associate, assistant, and full professors, but fairness and leadership became more critical as one advanced to department chair, dean, or provost. We also noted that it was common for members to step into the department chair or dean positions for part of their career before returning back to their previous professorship duties.

In alignment with the government general schedule (GS) levels, responses from those in the government sector suggest that the final results of the government sector should be split into two levels: individual contributor (i.e., individual contributor and expert individual contributor) and manager (i.e., manager, manager of managers, and executive). Both levels are responsible for demonstrating that their project work adds value to the organization. Individual contributor professionals indicated that completing high-visibility assignments was a critical experience for success, whereas managers indicated that managing performance of subordinates, leading project teams, and monitoring work to ensure it adheres to federal law, regulations, and policies are critical experiences for success.

Survey participants who worked in the industry sector indicated that establishing and maintaining relationships with various organizational stakeholders was critical for success. The manager of managers level participants considered actually delivering the presentations to organizational stakeholders as a critical experience essential for success.

In addition, researchers compared and contrasted competencies and critical experiences for the four sectors. Participants listed oral communication and ethical behavior as two of the top five competencies for academia, consulting, government, and industry regardless of level.

**Step 5: Creating Final Career Path Models**

The next steps in this project are to finalize and report the results through a series of articles in The Industrial-Organizational Psychologist (TIP), ordered by proportion of SIOP membership (academia first, followed by consulting, industry, and government), and ending with a final scheduled paper discussing similarities across all four sectors. All articles will also
be available on the SIOP website. Each article will present an I-O career path that highlights the most critical competencies and experiences at each level of a given sector. This will enable readers to pinpoint which of their own competencies need more development and what experiences they should pursue in order to succeed at the next level. In addition, we will solicit the perspective of those who completed the survey regarding the “where learned” component, contributing to the discussion on revising the Guidelines for Education and Training at the Doctoral/Master’s Level in I-O Psychology. Finally, our plan is to have interactive career path models available for members and visitors to view on the SIOP website. These interactive models will assist members with career planning by exploring the most critical competencies and experiences one should have to be successful at each level of a given sector. They will also help individuals interested in pursuing a career in I-O psychology understand the broad array of career paths available.

The results of the project and corresponding interactive career models we believe offer the potential to provide a great career resource for all SIOP members, including:

• For graduate students and faculty advisors:
  o Exploring career options
  o Determining internship objectives
• For early career I-O psychologists:
  o Charting a career path/trajectory
  o Framework for seeking new experiences and developing competencies
  o Considering individual contributor versus managerial career tracks
• For mid- and late career I-O psychologists:
  o Considering career transitions by matching necessary competencies/experiences to current state
  o Setting expectations and managing other I-O psychologists

References
