

New Local I-O Group in Los Angeles Leads With its Purpose: The People Experience Project

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“Have you ever wondered what would happen, if all the geniuses—the artists, the scientists, the smartest, most creative people in the world decided to actually change it? Where, where could they even do such a thing?” –Hugo, Tomorrowland Movie (2015)

In recent issues of *TIP*, the SIOP Local I-O Groups Committee has highlighted the successes of several established local I-O groups such as METRO in New York (Shapiro, Erickson, & Farmer, 2016) and MPPAW in Minnesota (Erickson & Rutigliano, 2016). In this article, we will shift our focus to a local group that is just getting started.

On November 14, The People Experience Project hosted its first chapter meeting in Los Angeles, California. This local I-O group is led with one big dream: to build a strong I-O community in Los Angeles where passionate researchers and practitioners can collaborate and share actionable insights to help enhance the ways people experience work. The group’s founding members were moved by **Dr. Steve Kozlowski’s** opening keynote at SIOP 2016 where he proposed a top-down and bottom-up multilevel approach in order to maximize the impact of I-O psychology. To execute Steve’s vision for a bottom-up approach, the founding members wished to establish a local I-O presence of commune, discussion, and networking in the Los Angeles metro area. The group was spearheaded by graduate students Naz Tadjbakhsh, Evan Kleiman, and **Melissa Steach** of Alliant International University-Los Angeles.

As a newly established local grassroots I-O group in Los Angeles, the founding members of The People Experience Project knew they had to provide a compelling reason for people to join. Having liaised with the SIOP Local I-O Group Committee, Naz, Evan, and Melissa had strong examples of other successful local groups to pull from for their own group. After gathering insights and best practices from SIOP’s Local I-O Groups Committee members and the [Toolkit for Local I-O Groups](#), the founders knew that they not only wanted this group to promote and advance I-O psychology as a discipline and career but also to facilitate meaningful connections between industry professionals and students in the field looking to grow and make an impact. The Toolkit for Local I-O Groups was particularly helpful in determining the structure of the group and the meeting format. Naz, Evan, and Melissa decided to use a blended approach, kicking off with socializing and networking for the first 30 minutes followed by a speaker to discuss the future of workplace design.

The group has attracted interest from professionals in various stages of their careers, from graduate students to seasoned professionals working in *Fortune* 500 companies. Those who join the The People Experience Project believe in its purpose to use evidence-based practices as a mechanism for developing actionable tools and insights to augment the employee experience through I-O psychology practices.

The greatest challenge in getting the group established has been finding a date and location that would be convenient for enough people to attend. Having established a time and location, there were a number of individuals intending to join the inaugural event with over 50 people included on the mailing list. Despite some last minute cancellations, those in attendance were actively engaged, resulting in an incredible evening full of thoughtful discussion and genuine connection. For the first event, it was successful in the eyes of the officers as they had accomplished their goal of initiating a strong community for members to grow together and discover how they can each make a bigger impact in their organizations and communities.

The local group’s quarterly meetings are hosted at Herman Miller’s showroom in Los Angeles, an atmosphere that is as aesthetically appealing and tranquil as it is functional and collaborative. It is evident in each member’s reaction when arriving that the connective space sets the mood of relaxed inspiration and excitement. Members naturally convene in the indoor central plaza, a communal space with comfortable seating and refreshments. The coffee shop-like setting facilitates spontaneous discussion in a safe space where members are able to truly engage and connect with one another. As people share their unique experiences, ideas begin to merge together, and this manifests into an impromptu brainstorming session. The iteration of ideas steadily materializes into actionable insights. This is what The People Experience Project is all about—building a strong community that inspires worthwhile discussion and growth amongst its members who want to make an impact. Those who join are thrilled to come along for the ride and see how far it will go.

The members of the SIOP Local I-O Groups Committee are especially excited about this local group because it serves such an important need within the profession. During the 2016 SIOP conference, we asked attendees stopping at our table to indicate Local I-O Group membership or interest in membership by placing a colored pin on a map. Nearly one quarter (23.3%) of individuals expressing an interest in joining or starting a local group indicated that they were from California, and half of those were from Los Angeles.

If you would like to learn more about The People Experience Project, please contact Naz Tadjbakhsh at ntadjbakhsh@alliant.edu. Membership is free and the group meets once a quarter. The meeting format blends networking, a guest speaker, and round table discussion. If you are in the Los Angeles looking to push the boundaries in a supportive community where members grow together and make an impact, join us!


References

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- See more at: <http://www.siop.org/tip/jan17/groups.aspx#sthash.ynuj17Gf.dpuf>

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