

TIP: The Industrial-Organizational Psychologist

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Which Team Are You On? Reflections on the Past, Present, and Future of Work

Myia S. Williams, PhD
Editor



This spring semester, one of the undergraduate courses I am teaching is *Theories of Personality*. It is my first time teaching this course, so I found myself going back to my Psychology 101 days to revisit the major personality theories and refresh my memory. One of the assignments I recently gave students asked them to reflect on which theoretical perspective best describes how they understand their personality: Sigmund Freud, who emphasizes looking back at our past experiences; Gordon Allport, who focuses on future-oriented motivations; or Erik Erikson, who highlights development across the lifespan. As I thought about these frameworks while teaching, I realized that in some ways our field often finds itself operating within all three perspectives at once. This observation became even clearer as I thought about how our field has evolved in recent years.

Hear me out...

Today, many conversations about work are framed in terms of *before* and *after* COVID-19. Before the world shut down in 2020, only about 6% of employees reported working remotely (Coate, 2021). By July 2022, however, at least a quarter of the U.S. workforce reported working remotely at least 1 day per week. In 2026, as organizations continue to navigate return-to-office policies, Gallup reports that about 26% of employees now work fully remote, and 52% operate in hybrid arrangements (Gallup, n.d.). These shifts have fundamentally changed how organizations think about flexibility, collaboration, and the future of work. At the same time, the conversations shaping our field continue to evolve. Only a few years ago, very few of us were discussing artificial intelligence (AI) with the frequency we see today. AI has quickly become a central topic across organizations, raising questions not only about productivity and efficiency (where the evidence is still emerging and debate is still out) but also about how professionals learn, develop, and build expertise in an increasingly automated world. Similarly, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations were having widespread discussions about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. A Glassdoor study reported that the share of companies implementing DEI initiatives increased from 29% in 2019 to at least 43% by 2021 (Terrazas, 2022). However, by 2025, some organizations began rolling back these initiatives, and others shifted their language toward more widely accepted concepts, such as belonging and inclusion for all. As we look ahead, it remains to be seen how conversations about diversity and inclusion will continue to evolve in the workplace and impact the most marginalized employees.

In many ways, these developments reflect the different perspectives represented in the personality theories I have been teaching this semester. Like Freud, our field often looks back at major moments, such as the pandemic, to understand how they continue to shape organizations and employees today; like Erikson, we recognize that the workplace is constantly developing over time, influenced by social, technological, economic, and cultural change; and like Allport, we frequently look ahead, imagining how organizations can adapt and prepare for the future. As I–O psychologists, our role has always involved helping organizations navigate these transitions, whether it be by understanding the past, responding to the present, and preparing for what lies ahead.

This issue of *TIP* reflects many of these ongoing conversations in our field. Some contributions encourage us to revisit and question ideas we may have taken for granted. For example, articles examining topics such as engagement measurement and the proliferation of constructs remind us that even long-standing concepts in our field deserve continued examination and ongoing refinement, particularly as simplified interpretations of psychological ideas increasingly circulate through social media and organizational discourse. Like Freud's emphasis on understanding the past, these discussions push us to reflect on how the theories, methods, and assumptions we have relied upon continue to shape the way we study and understand organizations today. Other pieces focus on development across the lifespan of our profession. Articles highlighting academic–practice partnerships, the development of novice consultants, and the experiences of students entering the field remind us that I–O psychology is sustained not only by ideas but also by people. In many ways, these contributions echo Erikson's perspective that development is an ongoing process. As a field, we continue to grow through mentorship, collaboration, and the sharing of knowledge across generations of scholars and practitioners. At the same time, several articles look squarely toward the future of work. Discussions of artificial intelligence, boundary

spanning across disciplines as highlighted by **President Tannenbaum**, and the evolving role of I–O psychologists in organizations reflect a field that is increasingly future oriented. These conversations align closely with Allport’s emphasis on forward-looking motivations, asking how our science and practice can help organizations prepare for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

As many members of our community prepare to gather at the upcoming SIOP Annual Conference, the articles featured in this issue of *TIP* reflect many of the conversations that will undoubtedly continue in New Orleans. From revisiting foundational concepts in our field to exploring how professionals develop across their careers and considering how emerging technologies and shifting workplace dynamics may shape the future of work, these contributions offer a preview of the discussions that continue to bring our community together. And of course, it doesn’t hurt that this year we gather in New Orleans.

As an introvert, I will admit that the conference environment can sometimes feel a bit overwhelming, yet at the same time, it is incredibly energizing. There is something powerful about being at the SIOP conference and being surrounded by people who care deeply about the same questions we ask in our research, our classrooms, and our organizations. Each year, I leave the conference feeling both proud to be part of this profession and eager to bring new ideas back to the organizations and communities we serve. If this will be your first time attending the SIOP conference, welcome. We have an article in this issue specifically dedicated to helping you navigate the conference experience. And if this is your first, second, or perhaps even your 41st SIOP conference, be sure to check out the article from our current Program and Conference Chairs, which offers a sneak peek at what to expect.

Until next time, I look forward to seeing many of you in NOLA as we continue reflecting on where our field has been, where it is today, and where it may go next.

Warmly,

Myia

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Be a Boundary Spanner—For You, Your Organization, and I-O Psychology!

Scott Tannenbaum
SIOP President



I've worked with organizations in most major industries, as well as in government, the military, and academia. Regardless of the locale, a consistent complaint I have heard over the years is about working in silos. Leaders complain about how employees and teams aren't collaborating, while employees bemoan the barriers that impede their ability to connect with others.

We can “muddle by” while working in silos, but it is only a matter of time before it limits our success. Individuals, teams, and organizations (including professional societies!) that work in isolation are at risk. Fortunately, boundary spanning can help bust silos. For example, a recent meta-analysis (Leicht-Deobald et al., 2025) confirmed that teams that engage in better boundary spanning (vs. boundary protection) are more effective. On a personal level, being a strong bridger or connector is career enhancing.

Boundary Spanning

Boundary spanning refers to actions that connect or bridge distinct groups, for example, across teams, functions, industries, or professions. Sometimes it is done to meet an immediate need, for example, to exchange information, overcome a problem, coordinate work, seek advice, clarify roles, or negotiate expectations. At other times, it serves a longer term purpose: to build a relationship, increase agility, stimulate creativity, or perhaps open a future door.

A Challenge

My challenge to you is to continue strengthening your **boundary-spanning capabilities** and expanding your **network** in 2026. Relevant capabilities include demonstrating empathy, showing diplomacy, translating your expertise, building trust, resolving conflict, and representing your team or organization. Honing these will make you a better bridger and a more valued collaborator.

Of course, you should continue to connect with your core group: your grad school colleagues, coworkers, and people with whom you share work and/or research interests. They are your core group for a reason! But in 2026, I encourage you to cast a broader net as well. Look for opportunities to be a bridger or connector, and build a few new cross-functional, cross-unit, cross-company, cross-industry, or cross-profession connections. **Building and sustaining a deeper, wider network makes it easier to be a bridger when needed.** Your network can be a force multiplier for you, or a limiting factor. In some ways, “you're only as strong as your network.”

Within SIOP. Reach out to members with whom you usually don't interact. This can be at the conference, through our website, via social media, or by email. If you are a researcher, engage with a few people who use different methods or study an adjacent topic. If you are a practitioner, reach out to people who do similar work as you but in a different industry, or who work in your industry but perform different work. And I challenge all of us to add at least three SIOP members to our networks who have chosen a **career path different from our own**, whether in research, teaching, or practice.

Outside of SIOP. Let's all be ambassadors for I-O psychology! When you span boundaries beyond our profession, it benefits our field and can pay dividends for you personally. Engage with people in adjacent fields such as human resources, talent analytics, learning and development, and human factors. Look for opportunities to connect with people from other disciplines, such as finance, legal, technology, customer service, R&D, marketing, and manufacturing. Engage with researchers from different scientific disciplines.

To be an effective bridger, ask about their work, listen intently, and learn what keeps them up at night. Be on the lookout for ways that you, your company, or I-O psychology can help or partner with them. **As an I-O ambassador, explain what we do and how we can help.** Translate what we do into their “language” and describe situations where I-O psychology can make a difference. When you find out what resonates with them, offer evidence-based advice using their terminology.

A Final Thought

I leave you with this final thought. There are two types of companies. ***Those who need I-O psychologists and know it, and those who need us but don't know it yet!*** Let's reduce the number of people in the second set by being great boundary spanners, expanding our networks, and sharing our message. As a bonus, it might just create a future opportunity for you or another SIOP member!

Until next time...

Scott

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Max. Classroom Capacity: Let's Recognize Our Students

Loren J. Naidoo
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Dear readers,



Thanks for reading Max. Classroom Capacity! A few days ago, I watched the 1984 movie [Supergirl](#) with my kids. On occasions, when my wife is away, my three boys and I have made a habit of watching old movies that I remember as a child, most of which turn out to be much worse than I remember them. The list, so far, includes the four Christopher Reeve Superman movies—they are *shockingly* bad—as well as Disney's 1979 Star Wars ripoff "[The Black Hole](#)," which was enjoyable because it was *hilariously* bad. Anyway, *Supergirl* fell somewhere in the middle, and it failed to keep anyone's attention for very long.¹

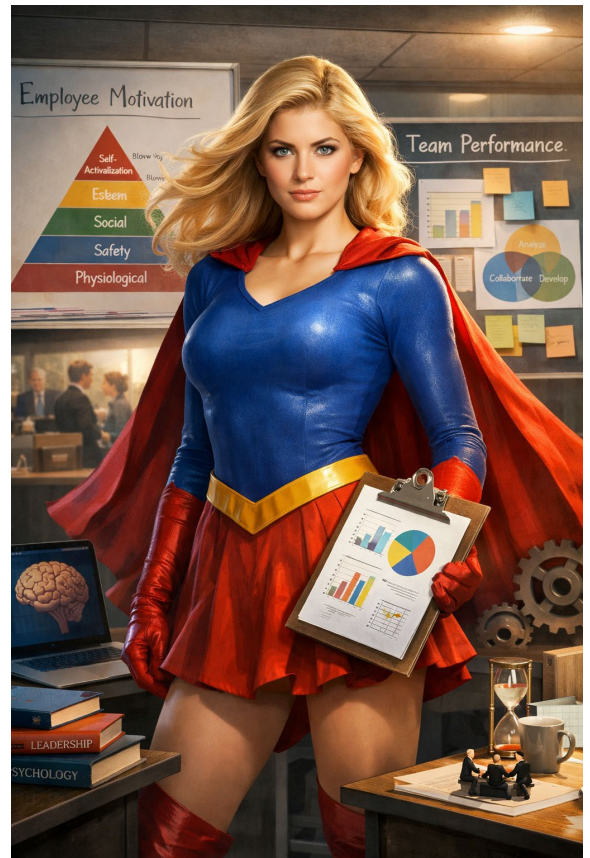
However, one scene did stand out: One of the villains, a teacher of a class on computers (yes, this existed in the 1980s when computers were harder to use and most people didn't know how to use them) at Supergirl's adopted private girls' school, says to his students: "Now then, focus your tiny minds on the kind of problems that used to take weeks of thought before the computer. Even now, it can take a long time without certain algorithms, which, if you behave for two seconds, I might reveal to you." I thought to myself, that's just bad teaching! Rather than insult and belittle students, we should praise and, uh, *bebiggle* them.²

OK, maybe it's unreasonable to expect a depiction of *good* teaching from a villain in a comic book movie. Still, it made me think, in most contexts, expressing appreciation will create better and more sustainable outcomes than not doing that and is certainly better than being rude and abusive! It's remarkable how few supervillains recognize or express appreciation for the invaluable work of their lackeys, henchmen, sidekicks, and cronies! Perhaps the power dynamics at play (in both supervillainy and teaching) make the individual with more social power less likely to consider recognizing those with less social power. Let's not let this happen to us as teachers! As a simple example of student recognition, at the end of every class, I thank my students for attending and engaging in the class. More on this later.

At this point, I expect that your training in I-O psychology is making you ask, "Does expressing appreciation *actually* lead to better outcomes? What evidence exists concerning this claim?" These are great questions!

From a theoretical standpoint, there are many reasons to expect that students who are recognized by their teachers will experience psychological benefits. Here are three primary ones:

1. In line with behaviorist theories of reinforcement, recognition can act as a social incentive (Luthans & Stajkovic, 2000) that encourages desirable behaviors.
2. Recognition that concerns specific actions may act as performance feedback that shapes behaviors to improve performance (Peterson & Luthans, 2006).



This image of Supergirl as an I-O psychologist was created using ChatGPT with instructions not to violate copyright.

3. Recognition can be a form of social support (James et al., 2011) and, from a self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) standpoint, can improve motivation by helping to satisfy individuals' fundamental needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

On their part, organizations have substantially invested in systems to formalize and facilitate the delivery of recognition to employees (WorldatWork, 2019), presumably because decision-makers appreciate the value of recognition. There is evidence to support the beneficial effects of employee recognition on work engagement (James et al., 2011), health (Renger et al., 2020), contextual performance (Yang et al., 2022), and task performance (Scherbaum et al., 2022). But this literature is messy because recognition as a construct remains inconsistently defined. Recognition can contain many features: It can be formal or informal, financial or symbolic, public or private, specific or general, rare or frequent, and so forth. These different features may have complex or contradictory relationships with outcomes. I define employee recognition as an expression of appreciation or gratitude for work-relevant behaviors or accomplishments; in the classroom, substitute "education" for "work" in this definition.

Some research in higher education contexts shows that instructors' appreciative behaviors can have positive effects on student outcomes, though this literature is small and the quality of the research is variable.

- Harder and Abuhamdieh (2015) surveyed students and found that their self-reported ratings of the quality of faculty–student interactions were positively related to their self-reported ratings of how much they learned and how much effort they exerted toward learning in the class.
- Using a retrospective longitudinal mixed methods design, Bliven and Jungbauer (2021) found that students who received a formal excellence award felt more motivated to persist in their studies and were less likely to withdraw from them.
- Li and Singh (2023) interviewed female students in STEM fields and, using qualitative analysis, found that the students rarely reported receiving recognition from their instructors and, in contrast, often reported being belittled, not believed in, and marginalized by them. Those few who *did* perceive that they were recognized expressed higher self-efficacy, interest, and persistence in their studies and choice of field.
- Using a within-subjects experimental design with a sample of undergraduate intro psych students, Weinstein et al. (2009) found that performance on a post-test pop quiz on "brain and behavior" that followed the instructor greeting students with "Hello, I'm glad you're in class today" was significantly higher than performance on a pre-test pop quiz on "research methods" 4 days earlier. The authors concluded that the results supported the notion that greeting students increased their academic performance. Speaking (ironically) of research methods, no mention was made in the article of any potential confounds or limitations of the methodology!³

In sum, the evidence suggests that recognition has beneficial motivational and health effects on employees and may have similar positive motivational effects on students. In part, this is because recognition can be a form of performance feedback, and we have known for decades that well-designed performance feedback can be beneficial (e.g., Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Consistent with best practices in performance feedback, recognition should be **specific** to the behaviors/outcomes that merit the recognition and delivered in a **timely** manner so that the receiver has the best chance of associating the recognition with the relevant behaviors/outcomes.

However, recognition can also provide social/motivational benefits that go beyond those of performance feedback. One necessary feature for recognition to provide these social benefits is that it must be **authentic**. If you don't *feel* appreciation for your students, then don't try to thank them—unless you're a great actor, it may backfire! Recognition that is perceived as inauthentic may inadvertently convey many undesirable, damaging messages to students: that you are fake, don't mean what you say, don't really care about them, are manipulative, are trying to control them, are self-serving, and so on. Recognition that becomes rote or routine, never varies in its form, or is not conveyed with appropriate emotions, also risks backfiring. For example, when praising or thanking a student in class, make sure that you use their preferred name.⁴ Failing to do so may convey the message that you don't care about them enough to learn their name, rather than conveying the intended recognition. In the table below, I provide a few examples of recognition that target the different theoretical bases for recognition effects.

Theoretical basis	Examples of instructor recognition
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Incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When a student participates in class by answering a difficult question, express your appreciation of the student for his/her willingness to answer. • At the beginning of class, thank students for arriving on time. • Publicly acknowledge classroom-level improvements in behavior (e.g., more students contributing to class discussions).
Performance feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In written assignment feedback, highlight specific strengths or instances where the student has demonstrated a desired competency. • During class discussions, reinforce students' high-quality analytical thinking; identify specific behaviors that were performed well. • Acknowledge when students have demonstrated specific, effective presentation skills.
Social/motivational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize and celebrate persistence after students experience setbacks. • In private, thank a student who supported a classmate during group work or who provided useful feedback to you as an instructor. • Validate students' efforts during challenging circumstances (e.g., high workload around midterms).

There are many classroom contexts that provide opportunities to deliver recognition to students: During transition points like at the beginning and ending of class, in formal written feedback on assessments of learning, during classroom discussions where you want to encourage more students to participate, in email exchanges with students, and so on. On the last day of class in my MBA course, I bring in treats from a popular local Cuban bakery. At the end of that class, I host a mock awards show, awarding student teams with funny trophies based on their semester-long performance on a business simulation, including the Warren Buffett award for financial wizardry and the [Ricky Bobby](#) award for 2nd highest overall score. It's a nice way for us all to celebrate our hard work together and put a cap on the semester.

Planning recognition is the easy part—but it matters. Indiscriminate recognition can dilute its impact, and poorly considered recognition can create perceptions of favoritism. Again, recognizing students authentically is the key. As you progress in your career, it's easy to let small irritants accumulate over the years, and I can understand how some folks end up like (hopefully watered-down versions of!) the villain from *Supergirl*. I try to remember that even though there may be university policies around attendance and appropriate student behavior and whatnot, fundamentally, students are choosing to show up for class, choosing to participate in class discussions, choosing not to distract other students, not to be on their phone, and so on. So, let's recognize our students.

As always, please email me with your thoughts, critiques, ideas, or to just say hi: Loren.Naidoo@csun.edu

Notes

¹ I will say that it *was* mildly interesting to consider some of its feminist and antifeminist themes. The hero is, obviously, a girl, and the main villain is a witch. However, I didn't think the movie really engaged in feminist ideas. Also, this movie is not to be confused with the new *Supergirl* movie coming out this summer (2026).

² At first, I thought I had coined a cool new word, but the Urban Dictionary tells me I'm not the first to climb this mountain. Not only is *bebiggle* in the Urban Dictionary, the Urban Dictionary has a store (who knew?), and they sell a [bebiggle mug](#)! However, I am using *bebiggle* to mean "to make people feel good about themselves," whereas the Urban Dictionary definition includes a more negative connotation of making something bigger than it is or deserves to be.

³ I don't mean to be overly critical because I appreciate that it's much harder to publish research than to critique it. However, I think it's scandalous that a study with such an obvious confound—the content of the quiz—could be published with no discussion of methodological limitations! I'm guessing that the author understood the issue, but space constraints or reviewer feedback resulted in text concerning the confound being cut or not being added.

⁴ For more on the importance of learning students' names, please read [Naidoo, L. J. \(2019\). Max. Classroom Capacity: Say my name, say my name... *The Industrial-Organizational Psychologist*, 56\(4\).](#)

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From R&R to DOI: From Inspiration to Impact¹

Bharati B. Belwalkar
American Institutes for Research (AIR)

Dear *TIP* readers,

When I launched [this column](#), I noted two (purely self-serving) goals: discipline and community. I have realized that the discipline required to write a regular column is a much heavier lift than I originally thought. Sticking to a writing commitment is a humbling reminder of the gap between intent and action, and it has made me appreciate those² who consistently publish their work. As for the latter goal, it has been a joyful experience to chat with **Traci Sitzmann** from the University of Colorado Denver about her work on religiosity and the gender wage gap (Sitzmann & Campbell, 2021). Dr. Sitzmann shared with me some interesting “behind-the-scenes” context that I have woven into this issue.

Based on our conversation, I cover three themes that capture the journey of most research ideas: (a) what could/should inspire research, (b) how to navigate publishing a particularly controversial topic (which could be more challenging the usual), and last (c) how to address the “So what?” factor of your published research (answer to which helps minimize the classic research–practice gap).

What Could/Should Inspire Research

For those just beginning their research journey, the most daunting question may not be *how* to research but *what* is worth researching. I believe there’s a psychological aspect to the research we choose to conduct. More often than not, our scientific inquiry mirrors our experiences. After all, however cliché it may sound, *research is often “me-search.”*

One reason my conversations with Dr. Sitzmann resonated with me so strongly is that her religiosity and gender inequity research *somewhat* illustrates this idea of me-search. While running experiments on facial expressions, she noticed strong reactions of disgust to images of women breastfeeding, especially among highly religious participants. This unexpected pattern sparked the idea behind her work. Growing up in a Catholic school and family, she observed how values were imposed and how she was denied graduating with honors due to (perceived) disregard for religious norms. These personal experiences became relevant later as a lens for interpretation and theory building. Dr. Sitzmann’s story offers a lesson for students and early career researchers to be a keen observer of one’s experiences and surroundings. It is likely that a seed of our research idea lies somewhere there!

Before I jump into the next theme, I want to acknowledge that me-search is not the only valid path. If we only research what we personally experience, our collective knowledge of the field will be tragically siloed. So, observation of others’ experiences could be a great source of research ideas, too. This is where research as an empathy exercise comes in! As a huge cinephile, I find a perfect example in actors. They need not have lived a character’s specific tragedy to portray it convincingly; they just need to use their skills to play it.³ Similarly, as researchers, we are capable of exploring topics far removed from our own lives because it forces us to approach research and data as rigorous observers.

Yet, beyond this, there is another more practical way of choosing a topic: the “So what?” factor that I discuss later in this article. It is about choosing your research topic based on the problem(s) it could solve. It shifts the focus from “What am I interested in?” to “What does the field of I-O psychology need?” If the answers to both questions overlap, there’s nothing like it! But, if they don’t, it’s not the end of the world (so long as you have covered one of them).

How to Navigate Publishing a Particularly Controversial Topic

Assume you have successfully picked a topic that you like and/or that solves an important problem; however, it is controversial. This section will be particularly helpful as we move on to discuss how to publish it.

If you skim through Sitzmann and Campbell (2021), you will quickly realize that it contradicts long-standing management scholarship that treats religiosity as a benign force; the study, in fact, establishes that religiosity exacerbates gender discrimination, and, thus, the gender wage gap. You can imagine the challenges faced in getting it published!

During our conversation, Dr. Sitzmann generously outlined the process of preparing, revising, and publishing the manuscript, and the timeline from its initial submission to publication. She also talked about handling earlier rejections and responding to reviewer feedback. The research was first submitted in October 2018, faced multiple rejections, and was eventually published in 2021 after substantial revisions, including adding new data and rewriting significant portions of the manuscript.

Rather than viewing initial rejections as evidence that the idea was flawed, she interpreted them as a signal that the work was misaligned with prevailing assumptions—and therefore potentially important. She repeatedly emphasized the role of empirical evidence in maintaining academic integrity when addressing criticism. I believe that the insights from our conversation will be helpful to you, especially those who are in the middle of their R&R process. Overall, Dr. Sitzmann recommended rigorous evidence gathering, openness to critique, and resilience in the face of rejections, but here are some specifics:

- *Treat reviewer disagreement as a signal to strengthen your theory, not abandon it.* There are ways to do this; for example, collect more data, integrate additional disciplinary perspectives to indicate robustness of your argument, and/or rewrite portions of your manuscript to improve your argument's clarity.
- *Let the data do the persuading, not you.* Although being defensive is a first natural reaction to any feedback, don't defensively reframe your argument or soften conclusions just because that's an easy way to get your manuscript accepted.

These recommendations come with a caveat, though. Distinguishing between mindless obsession with getting published (escalation of commitment) and a legitimate chance of publication (grit) is often incredibly difficult while you are in the middle of your R&R process. It is a complex decision-making process because the "correct" choice only becomes clear in hindsight.

Anyway, the bottom line is that the very exercise of R&R should reinforce methodological rigor and iterative refinement of your work. I acknowledge that it's easier said than done, but think of it as stress testing your idea, which will only make your work stronger!

How To Address The "So What?" Factor

My work mantra is based on Karl Marx's (1819–83) philosophy, *practice without theory is blind; theory without practice is sterile*. A hallmark of rigorous research isn't its complexity but its utility. Note that, in the real world, you may be pressured to choose between intellectual curiosity (What am I interested in?) and utility (What does the field of I-O psychology need?).⁴ However, *Pasteur's Quadrant* (Stokes, 2011) challenges this bifurcation. The central theme of Pasteur's Quadrant is that the most impactful work is "use-inspired basic research" as it seeks to solve problems (utility) while aiming for understanding (curiosity).

Dr. Sitzmann's article explains the "So what?" factor of her research well; she has noted practical applications of her findings in the article and offered recommendations to organizational leaders and policymakers. While discussing the importance of articulating practical implications of research, she recommended engaging with a broad network, such as non-I-O friends and family. Doing so, she noted, will likely help in clarifying the practical significance of your work and clearly communicating this "So what?" factor.

Note that, in her case, articulating the utility of her research findings was not an afterthought. It evolved, through dialogue with her coauthor Elizabeth Campbell from the University of Minnesota, her own continuous reflections on the findings, and repeated attempts to explain the work to people who did not already share the same theoretical and/or methodological priors. So, if you are struggling to answer the "So what?" question, actively test the significance of your

work through dialogue with others (especially non-I-Os). Having to repeatedly explain your work to them will help clarify its significance and could bring an interdisciplinary lens to it.

Taken together, these themes illustrate a research journey from inspiration to ultimate impact. Last, I must thank Dr. Sitzmann for sharing her reflections with me so candidly, as well as inadvertently seeding the idea for my next column!

A Sneak Peek Into the Next Column

As I was watching the interview recording, reading through the transcript and summary, and this work-in-progress draft, a broader issue caught my attention. During our conversation around theme two, Dr. Sitzmann noted that being housed in a management program came with explicit and implicit pressures to publish in a narrow set of top-tier journals (in order to be taken seriously as a management scholar). And, for her, it meant rebranding her scholarly identity and learning an entirely new publication ecosystem. I want to build on this idea and, therefore, will explore the tension between systemic pressures and practical habits required to maintain research integrity (while publishing successfully).

For the next column, I will be talking to **Herman Aguinis** from the George Washington University School of Business, specifically about his “[An A is an A](#)” article (Aguinis et al., 2020). The article addresses systemic/macrolevel pressures in the publication space. My hope is that, as a former editor-in-chief of *Organizational Research Methods* and a prolific author in the top-tier I-O psychology and management journals, he will open the “black box” of the peer review process and share strategies for navigating revisions successfully. Stay tuned!

Author Note

Share your comments, feedback, or your “publication stories” by emailing bharati.belwalkar@gmail.com or reaching out via LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/bharatibelwalkar/>.

I acknowledge using Microsoft Copilot for the title and Google’s Gemini 2.0 for editorial support; the transcript analysis and insights are original.

Notes

¹ R&R = revise and resubmit; DOI = digital object identifier.

² I see your discipline, and I am *officially* in awe of it!

³ Couldn’t help sharing some examples: Tom Hanks’ Chuck Noland in *Cast Away*, Meryl Streep as Sophie Zawistowski in *Sophie’s Choice*, to name a few.

⁴ Although I note that some I-Os (e.g., **Nancy Tippins**, **Gary Latham**, and, in recent times, **Nick Koenig**, to name a few) never seemed to have faced this issue as their work strikes a perfect balance between curiosity and utility—applied research or evidence-based practice in a true sense!

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Editorials: Using I-O Psychology to Advance DEI in the Workplace

Daniel Washington

What Is Industrial-Organizational Psychology? How I-O Psychologists Help Organizations Advance Their DEI Efforts

Industrial-organizational psychology focuses on how people experience work and how the design of roles, systems, and environments shapes performance, well-being, and leadership over time. I-O psychologists study these dynamics using psychological research methods that are intended to help organizations function more intentionally and humanely. In business settings, they apply these scientific research methods, which include surveys, interviews, and performance data analysis, in order to examine the ways that people and systems operate. When applying research methods, the goal is to improve how leadership, work design, and people systems function together. In practice, this work integrates:

- Evaluation and diagnosis to understand how work is actually experienced
- Data synthesis so insight is clear, usable, and actionable
- Work design and role clarity to reduce friction and overload
- Leadership development across the employee and leadership lifecycle
- Behavioral and systems-level interventions that change patterns rather than describe them

Think of I-O psychology as a specialized field within organizational development (OD). It assesses human behavior in the context of organizational settings, so it examines how individual, group, and organizational dynamics intersect and work together to create a company's overall organizational structure. Areas such as employee performance, organizational climate and culture, leadership, recruitment and hiring strategies, training and development, and workplace well-being are factors that influence a company's organizational health. For example, if one area of organizational development needs assessment, such as a company's DEI pipeline, then an I-O psychology practitioner or a DEI practitioner will step in and identify specific areas of improvement; these areas may include the company's hiring processes, employee engagement, accountability metrics, or employee lifecycle.

Challenges With DEI

As societies become more and more diverse in the 21st century, the concept of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) has received considerable attention and is being intensely discussed in business and society (Einwiller et al., 2025). Although this is the case, DEI initiatives have been ineffective in bridging opportunity gaps and eliminating systemic barriers in organizations across all industries. With the Trump administration set in place, DEI has now become politicized in the sense that it has evolved into a contentious cultural and economic battleground where it has received not only media backlash but systemic pushback in public universities, government agencies, and organizations. Although more organizations across various industries have set DEI as one of their core values, structural inequality in the workplace continues to persist and reinforce unequal opportunity outcomes for those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. This phenomenon mostly impacts historically marginalized groups such as racial/ ethnic minorities, women, and LGBTQ+ individuals because they are statistically more likely to be underrepresented in high level and leadership positions across many industries compared to their White counterparts. There are many possible factors contributing to this problem, among which are unconscious bias, broken DEI pipelines, lack of initiative in reaching out to a diverse talent pool, attrition issues, and others.

Funneling The DEI Pipeline

Much of the backlash around DEI is rooted in fear and a lack of understanding. Engaging in critical DEI discourse causes discomfort, invites criticism, and discourages engagement. To make headway, it is crucial to include more people in these efforts because understanding the role that both advantaged and disadvantaged groups play in advancing DEI is essential in reducing resistance, fostering shared responsibility for systemic change, and preventing "zero-sum" thinking, where progress for one group is viewed as a loss for another (Harmata et al., 2024). Moreover, DEI practitioners and I-O psychologists also play a pivotal role in advancing DEI because they understand that in order to facilitate cultural and behavioral change in organizations, systemic change must take place; in other words, DEI must be embedded in organizational policy because

it operates as both a macro (systemic) and micro (individual) concept. When executed effectively, DEI accomplishes the following:

1. **Reduces bias through evidence-based promotion and hiring:** I-O psychologists reduce bias by conducting structured job analyses that define necessary skills (KSAOs) rather than relying on gut instinct. This helps in identifying and recruiting diverse candidates, reducing unfair hiring practices.
2. **Incorporates systemic assessment and data analytics to identify systematic barriers that adversely impact underrepresented groups:** Instead of relying on symbolic gestures, I-O experts measure and analyze DEI metrics, such as adverse impact analyses, turnover rates for underrepresented groups, and employee engagement surveys to identify areas for improvement.
3. **Promotes inclusive leadership and culture:** They foster inclusive environments that promote a sense of belonging and psychological safety, which in turn enhances creativity, innovation, and productivity.
4. **Addresses workplace bias:** Professionals in this field address implicit biases, microaggressions, and systemic inequalities, ensuring policies are equitable across all levels of the organization.
5. **Encourages shared responsibility and enhances psychological safety:** Effective DEI requires systemic change, which cannot happen without the support of those who hold power in the current structure. Including them ensures they are active allies rather than passive or active roadblocks. Moreover, those who hold power or come from an advantaged group have the responsibility of amplifying marginalized voices because this not only builds trust, empathy, and psychological safety, but it also ensures that overlooked perspectives will be brought to the table, which will ultimately lead to more innovative business solutions.

Organizational leaders who are committed to DEI will generate pragmatic solutions to maintaining a diverse, equitable, and inclusive work environment, such as educating its staff, listening and communicating effectively, encouraging employees to be their full authentic selves, helping employees use their voice, and nurturing everyone's creative input. These aforementioned strategies present themselves as concrete goals that lead to small improvements overtime and a gradual, positive shift in an organization's work environment. If DEI research can be applied in an organizational setting, then this will test how well organizational leaders can use this research to address and tackle their DEI related organizational challenges. Research that can successfully be applied in any business means that organizations can use that research to answer questions about their organizational policies and work culture, and use whatever information they have gathered to redefine their vision, mission, and values.

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The Power of Privilege and the Role of Empathy in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI): Using Power and Privilege for Good

Defining and Recognizing Privilege

The systemic and structural inequalities that US society produces play a role in shaping organizational cultures and workplace bureaucracies. Let's examine one system of privilege that reinforces structural inequality: White privilege. White privilege can best be understood as an ideology that normalizes the White identity and grants White people the privilege to create a culture where their ideas, customs, and beliefs operate as the standard by which all other racial groups are compared. The advantages that Whiteness yields for White people make it an asset that only White people have exclusive rights to, so therefore, they can leverage it for their own benefits. In this sense, Whiteness can be compared to property in that it is reified and has value, so Whiteness as a property allows for the systemic maintenance of White privilege (DeCuir-Gunby, & Gunby, 2016).

Defining Whiteness in the Context of Privilege

Whiteness is an ideology and a powerful social construct that creates a set of values and norms in which inequitable social/economic relations are structured and reproduced through notions of race, class, gender, and nation. In other words, Whiteness is a dominant cultural space that has enormous political and economic significance, and its role is to keep others on the margin. This is how White advantage is reproduced. White privilege is so pervasive and insidious that it not only affects people's thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and worldviews, but it also influences how they navigate through social and professional spaces. When looking at Whiteness in professional spaces, it is no secret that it influences workplace norms regarding HR policies, recruiting and hiring practices, leadership representation, career advancement opportunities, equal pay, and so on.

Like the larger society we live in, racial inequality in the workplace creates different outcomes for White people and people of color, and even though blatant discrimination appears to be declining in American workplaces, more ambiguous manifestations of prejudice continue to persist (Offermann et al., 2014). For example, social acceptance can create causal uncertainty, with members of minority groups interpreting positive feedback from a majority group member as causally ambiguous and potentially disingenuous (Offermann et al., 2014). These types of situations can represent ambiguous exchanges with racial overtones where subtle discrimination is seen as a case-by-case occurrence. Thus, looking at discrimination from an attributional perspective would be helpful in examining individual differences in perceptions of subtle discrimination (Offermann et al., 2014).

Turning Privilege Into Progress

Moreover, if organizations are able to provide a comprehensive education plan in which all organizational leaders and employees can learn about concepts like microaggressions, microaffirmations, stereotype threat, imposter syndrome, psychological safety, and psychological capital, then gaining this kind of exposure can prepare organizational leaders to develop strategies to combat overt and covert discrimination. The learning process is the first step to teach self-awareness of thoughts, feelings, and actions. After awareness comes change. To create a workplace culture of inclusivity and solidarity, battling subtle discrimination will take more than rules, laws, and regulations; it will likely require value and attitude changes (Offermann et al., 2014). For example, encouraging empathy is an important value for instilling a sense of responsibility and accountability. In other words, empathy means putting in the work to educate oneself and to listen with a humble heart to understand another's experience from their perspective, not as we imagine we would feel (Terry, 2021). Empathy will open people's minds and hearts and make them more receptive to listen, learn, and become change agents. When organizational leaders can practice empathy, they will be able to lead by example, act as advocates for systemic, equitable change, and motivate others to get involved in creating change.

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A Philosophical Stance:

What is Your DEI Philosophy and How Does It Intersect with Social Justice and Systemic Change?

As a philosophical approach, the aim of critical theory is to diagnose the problems of modern society and identify the nature of social change needed to produce just and democratic societies (Bechara & Van de Ven, 2011). If critical theory can be introduced to organizations, then it can provide a theoretical framework on how to look at current organizational systems and challenge hegemonic power structures that limit equal opportunity. Thus, incorporating critical theory into the field of diversity, equity, and inclusion can be very helpful when examining an organization's workplace, identifying specific

flaws that are contributing to a broken DEI pipeline, and creating solutions that will lead to long-term, positive changes. Critical theory and DEI are very similar in their ideological perspective; they both maintain hope that knowledge can lead to emancipation and progress (Bechara & Van de Ven, 2011). By disseminating knowledge to organizational leaders who want to learn about DEI, the hope is that they will use that knowledge to incorporate DEI into their organizational policies and make DEI a part of their mission, vision, and values.

This is where pragmatism comes into play, which is another philosophical approach that can advance organizational leaders' understanding of how DEI can drive organizational success, if implemented effectively. Pragmatism emphasizes the relationship between knowledge and action, in which knowledge is "truthful" to the extent that it is successful in guiding action (Bechara & Van de Ven, 2011). In other words, pragmatism is about practice or taking action. The success of an organization starts with what organizational leaders value, and if DEI is a prioritized value, then it will represent an organization's overall workplace culture. Organizational leaders who are committed to DEI will generate pragmatic solutions to maintaining a diverse, equitable, and inclusive work environment, such as educating its staff, listening and communicating effectively, encouraging employees to be their full authentic selves, helping employees use their voice, and nurturing everyone's creative input. These outcomes would be great examples of a successful DEI pipeline. Having organizational leaders stimulate conversation around DEI is a participant frame of reference that requires an open-minded attitude because having the willingness to learn will encourage engagement and learning with others (Bechara & Van de Ven, 2011). This engagement can lead to self-reflection because not being aware of one's own privilege can unintentionally create barriers for marginalized groups – barriers that can become a hindrance to their educational or career success.

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Using DEI as a Tool for Success: Cultivating a Culture of Belonging

DEI work helps us understand the nature of bias and it provides us with the tools and resources to combat bias in order to create more equitable work environments. DEI work also addresses concepts and issues that may seem foreign to individuals outside of the DEI spaces. For example, DEI practitioners would often use terms such as microaggressions, microaffirmations, stereotype threat, imposter syndrome, psychological safety, and psychological agency. However, these terms may not always be easily recognizable or understandable to organizational leaders across different industry sectors, so how can they be conceptualized in an easily digestible way? The first practical strategy is to educate your audience, which are the organizational leaders who want to incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion into their business pipeline.

If any business prides itself on fostering a diverse and inclusive work environment, then leaders are going to need to ask themselves critical questions such as, what can be done to create a welcoming work environment for female employees and racial, ethnic, and sexual minority employees? Does the organization have leadership that is well equipped to work with people from diverse backgrounds? Does the organization provide educational tools and resources that are effective in addressing the unique needs of female employees and racial and sexual minority employees? What does culture fit encompass? What competitive advantage does the organization have that helps attract and retain diverse talent and leadership? Does the organization's vision, mission, and values align with diversity, equity, and inclusion work? Stimulating these kinds of questions can get organizational leaders to think about what they can do to successfully integrate diversity and inclusion strategies into their workplace culture.

The next helpful step is to set up workshops where people can learn what microaggressions, microaffirmations, stereotype threat, imposter syndrome, psychological safety, and psychological capital are. Providing definitions and specific examples for these terms can help guide leaders in their diversity and inclusion business plan. The more adequate resources organizations have, the more equipped organizational leaders will be in identifying certain behaviors that go against diversity and inclusion efforts and implementing policies that will protect those who are most vulnerable to any kind of intentional or unintentional discrimination. All in all, diversity, equity, and inclusion is a practice that is both micro and macro, meaning that it needs to be embedded in organizational policies so individuals can then normalize behaviors that will encourage the betterment of everyone.

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Defining Inclusive Leadership: Your Competitive Advantage in a Changing Workforce

We define inclusive leadership as someone who is aware of differences in life experiences as they pertain to race, gender, sexuality, national origin, political and religious affiliation, educational level, and socioeconomic status. It is essential for achieving organizational success because it enhances team performance by ensuring that all team members are treated fairly and respectfully, are valued for their work, and feel confident and inspired.

They understand that psychological safety is correlated to how well others adapt to change, so they communicate and teach in a way that gets everyone on board with new ideas and new ways of doing things.

Inclusive leaders who understand and respect different identities, life experiences, and worldviews are also aware of positive and negative social biases that come with belonging to a particular demographic group. With that said, inclusive leaders can recognize that biases and preferences do indeed lead to different outcomes in accessing opportunity, so they aim to bridge opportunity gaps by leading holistically or investing in the collaborative development of everyone. They can successfully manage heterogeneous groups because what they bring to the table is an authentic leadership style where they can rule out nepotism and discrimination, and respect the uniqueness of all individuals in an empathic, bias-free way. Hence, when employees work with inclusive leaders, they will feel valued for their input and will feel empowered to make major contributions in their place of work.

Moreover, inclusive leaders can inspire employees to participate in whatever business initiatives that they set in motion because inclusive leaders are able to adapt quickly to diverse scenarios and alternate perspectives with an open, non-judgmental mind to bring on the best results possible. When teamwork is executed effectively, this leads to teams performing better and more collaboratively, and making overall better decisions. With businesses increasingly optimizing their diversity and inclusion activities, inclusive leadership is more relevant now than ever. The kind of skills, competencies, and characteristics that inclusive leaders possess include the following:

- **Commitment**
 - Personal values are the driving forces that influence a leader's leadership style. Thus, knowing what your personal values are is crucial to understanding your leadership style, as they serve as the foundation of it.
 - **Personal values:** Individual conviction that inclusion is a desirable goal. Your business case beliefs will determine which direction you will go in when incorporating diversity and inclusion into an organization's business pipeline.
 - **Business case beliefs:** Commercial value of diversity and inclusion with respect to talent, innovation, customers, and new market growth
- **Cognizance of Bias**
 - Leaders who know how to self-regulate can sustain safe and fair environments that have low drama and high productivity.
 - Self-regulation is essential in maintaining a fair and productive work environment because situations such as ethical dilemmas, interpersonal conflicts, and organizational crises call for appropriate emotional responses.
 - **Self-regulation:** The ability and tendency to recognize and address personal biases and their impacts
 - Fair play is an integral part of running a business because it influences people's work behavior and shapes the overall workplace culture.
 - **Fair play:** An awareness of the components of fairness: outcomes, processes, and communication
- **Curiosity**

- Leaders who are open and authentic can build professional relationships that are based on trust, honesty, communication, and respect.
- Open-minded leadership leads to greater creative input because leaders will be able to see new pathways and patterns that will lead them down the road to success.
 - **Openness:** The willingness to listen to diverse ideas and experiences and integrate them into decision making
- Taking others' point of view into perspective is a skill that helps reduce egocentric thinking and improve the ability to seek out much-needed information.
 - **Perspective taking:** The desire and ability to understand other people's points of view in a respectful way
- **Cultural Intelligence**
 - Successful diversity and inclusion initiatives in the workplace come with having the drive to lead with a mission.
 - **Drive:** Championing the benefits of becoming culturally competent
 - A leader who champions diversity and inclusion in the workplace is a leader who is knowledgeable.
 - **Knowledge:** An awareness of the differences and similarities between cultures
 - Being able to optimize diversity and leverage the power of inclusion involves knowing how to adapt to change.
 - **Adaptability:** Being capable of adjusting appropriately in cross-cultural situations
- **Collaboration**
 - Empowering others to achieve their greatest potentials will give people enough psychological safety to feel confident in their ability to contribute to a greater cause and create change.
 - **Empowerment:** The ability to ensure that others feel sufficiently able and comfortable to contribute independently
 - Dynamic teaming requires diversity and inclusion because being aware of both diversity and inclusion builds recognition and helps organizations consider situations on a deeper level than just a business strategy.
 - Teaming is essential to an organization's ability to respond to opportunities and to improve internal processes.
 - **Teaming:** The ability to assemble and manage a diverse and cohesive team
 - **Voice:** Adapting styles and processes to ensure that every team member has a voice
- **Courage**
 - A leader who strives to create an inclusive environment must take a humble approach.
 - **Humility:** Awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses
 - A brave leader is a leader who is not afraid to break the status quo, transcend barriers, and inspire change for the betterment of everyone.
 - **Bravery:** Being an agent for change and the positive impact diversity and inclusion can have
 - A leader who is being faced with a precarious situation must possess a level of resilience and perseverance in order to achieve the goals that they set in motion, regardless of how many curve balls are being thrown at them.
 - **Coping with uncertainty:** The strength to support diversity and inclusion work for extended periods of time regardless of the outcome

Why Do We Need Inclusive Leadership?

Inclusive leaders are needed to set the tone for driving organizational change because if a business does not have an inclusive environment that embraces differences and creates a workspace where everyone can bring their true selves to work, then their DEI initiatives will fail. Treating diversity like a quota is also an ineffective method for fostering an inclusive workplace culture because diversity is not a numbers game. Diversity, equity, and inclusion ought to intersect because managing diversity is a complex goal, which can mean anything from ensuring equal employment opportunity compliance, to instituting cultural sensitivity training programs, to focusing on the recruitment and retention of racial and sexual minorities and women. Ultimately, if equity and inclusion are left out of the equation, then the benefits of having a diverse workforce will be rendered ineffective. An equitable and inclusive culture is one in which all people, regardless of their background and demographic makeup, feel welcome. Thus, it is imperative to position diversity, equity, and inclusion at the core of your company culture because these three factors can create high-performing, trusting, collaborative teams in which every member feels valued and contributes to the success of the group.

How to Be an Inclusive Leader and Sustain an Effective DEI Pipeline

If any business prides itself on fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive work environment, then leaders are going to need to ask themselves critical questions such as, what can I do to create a welcoming work environment for female and racial, ethnic, and sexual minority employees? Do I have leadership that is well equipped to work with people from diverse backgrounds? Do I have tools and resources that are effective in addressing the unique needs of female and racial, ethnic, and sexual minority employees? What does culture fit encompass? What competitive advantage do I have that helps attract and retain diverse talent and diverse leadership? Do my values align with diversity, equity, and inclusion work? Stimulating these kinds of questions can help organizational leaders start to think about what they can do to successfully make diversity, equity, and inclusion work a part of their business pipeline. Being an inclusive leader is a commitment that involves:

- **Identifying your personal biases**
- **Declaring your commitment to inclusion and taking imperfect action**
- **Leading with humility and showing vulnerability**
- **Seeking out diverse perspectives**
- **Creating a safe environment for effective collaboration**

Employees want leaders who will listen to them, respect them, validate them, and recognize them for their work because when they feel that their place of work invests in them, this will increase their psychological safety and psychological capital. Hence, employee satisfaction and employee productivity increases, creative input increases, and business productivity increases, which will maximize business revenue. Diversity, equity, and inclusion is a practice that is both micro and macro, meaning that it needs to be embedded in organizational policies so individuals can then normalize behaviors that'll encourage the betterment of everyone.

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Why Working With Marginalized Communities Is Important in Advancing DEI Research: Ethical DEI Research

For future research, to enhance the study of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace, researchers should focus on enhancing and maintaining diversity in research participation. Having a large research sample that reflects the racial, gender, ethnic, cultural, political, and socioeconomic diversity of US society will help researchers provide robust research that can be generalized to the larger population. Moreover, if researchers are able to select and recruit diverse participants, especially minority participants, who come from diverse professional and educational backgrounds, then they will be able to provide research that can highlight the diverse range of thoughts and perspectives on how each participant defines discrimination in the workplace, how well they think their place of work promotes diversity, equity and inclusion, and how well they think their industry promotes diversity and inclusion.

It is also important to keep in mind that when selecting a diverse sample size for research, researchers must do all that they can to minimize conflicts of interest and make sure that the study is ethically acceptable by having an independent review panel review the study to check for any potentially biased or unethical procedures. Informed consent is another requirement for ethical research. Participants should accurately be informed of the purpose, methods, risks, benefits, and alternatives to the research, they should understand the information being presented to them, including how it relates to their own situation, and they should have the freedom to make a voluntary decision about whether to participate. Building trust with participants is paramount to successful research, so researchers should be open and transparent about confidentiality. Having participants sign consent forms and confidentiality forms can help them gain trust in knowing that their information will be protected.

When working with individuals from marginalized populations, it is especially important for researchers to practice transparency, since it is crucial for furthering scholarly knowledge. Research transparency can be broken down into three categories and these categories include: transparency about the research process (including data analysis); transparency about research ethics and researcher positionality; and transparency with regard to sharing primary source data (Lake et al., 2019). Transparency is also important because it signifies that a research study is robust and can be used for future references. When researchers are able to explain their project's design by providing clear and extensive details about the project's conceptualization, implementation and data analysis, as well as explaining how they came to their conclusions (Lake et al., 2019), this will tell that the research study is effective enough to be applied in a real-world setting. Hence, if DEI research can be applied in an organizational setting, then this will test how well organizational leaders can use this research to address and tackle DEI related organizational challenges. Research that can successfully be applied in any business means that organizations can use that research to answer questions about their products and services or policies and procedures and use whatever information they have gathered to make important business decisions.

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When Engagement Data Lies: The Engagement Credibility Problem and Why Trust Determines What Employees Will Tell You

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Recently, I spoke on a panel at the Michigan Association of Industrial-Organizational Psychology (MAIOP) alongside fellow I-O psychologists, discussing employee engagement. As the conversation unfolded, a recurring theme emerged: Employee engagement remains one of the most frequently measured yet persistently misunderstood constructs in organizations.

Despite widespread adoption of engagement surveys and analytics platforms, many organizations continue to report declining engagement, rising turnover, and growing employee skepticism toward feedback processes. The challenge is not a lack of data. It is a lack of credibility. When employees believe their feedback disappears into a black hole, organizations sacrifice more than data. They undermine trust, silence employee voice, and put retention at risk.

That credibility gap matters even more in the current climate. Gallup reports that U.S. employee engagement has declined from its 2020 peak and is sitting at 31% in 2025. The decline is not due to a lack of data or methodological sophistication. Instead, engagement data are embedded within a broader social system, and that system shapes whether employees respond candidly, cautiously, or disengage altogether.

In environments characterized by low trust and inconsistent follow-through, engagement data loses their diagnostic value and increasingly function as a symbolic or performative exercise rather than a meaningful tool for organizational improvement.

This article argues that engagement measurement must be treated as a trust intervention rather than a purely technical exercise. Without psychological safety, visible action, and leadership accountability, even well-designed surveys will fail to capture the employee experience accurately.

When Disengagement Is Misdiagnosed

When engagement scores decline, leaders often search for individual explanations. Disengaged employees may be labeled as complacent, entitled, or unwilling to go above and beyond. This reflects a classic fundamental attribution error, where behavior is attributed to personal traits rather than situational factors.

In practice, disengagement is often a rational response to environmental cues. Employees learn quickly whether speaking up is safe, whether feedback leads to action, and whether leadership listens with intent. When those signals are weak or inconsistent, withdrawal becomes adaptive. Neutral survey responses, minimal participation, and silence are not signs of apathy. They indicate low confidence in the system.

Engagement Surveys as Social Signals

Engagement surveys do more than collect data. They communicate organizational intent. Asking for feedback without acting on it sends a clear message that employee voice is symbolic rather than influential. Over time, this contributes to survey fatigue and erodes trust.

Research consistently shows that follow-through is the critical differentiator between surveys that lead to improvement and those that do not (Huebner et al., 2021). When feedback disappears into what employees experience as a black hole, honesty begins to feel risky and unnecessary. Employees either disengage from the process or provide guarded responses that preserve psychological safety at the expense of accuracy.

This dynamic aligns closely with research on employee silence. When trust in leadership is low, employees are more likely to withhold information, even when that information could benefit the organization (Rai et al., 2025). Silence is not neutral. It represents lost insight and compromised data quality.

Psychological Safety as a Prerequisite for Valid Measurement

Psychological safety is often discussed as a cultural aspiration, but it also functions as a methodological requirement. Employees who fear negative consequences for honesty are unlikely to provide accurate self-report data. Instead, they engage in impression management, minimal effort responding, or nonresponse.

Recent research continues to demonstrate strong links between psychological safety, voice behaviors, and engagement-related outcomes (Quansah et al., 2023). From a measurement perspective, this means engagement surveys administered in low-trust environments are systematically biased. The employees organizations most need to hear from are often the least likely to respond candidly.

From Engagement Tools to Engagement Systems

Recent *TIP* publications have emphasized the importance of moving beyond isolated interventions. In *Beyond Engagement: Why Your Diversity Climate Holds the Key to Your Managers' Work Passion*, environmental factors such as fairness, inclusion, and relationship quality shape whether motivation becomes sustainable or harmful (Simmonds Emmanuel, 2026). That work reinforces the idea that engagement is shaped by context, not just by incentives.

A similar systems mindset applies to engagement measurement. Surveys alone cannot carry the full weight of listening. Organizations benefit from a feedback portfolio that integrates multiple data sources, including pulse check-ins, listening sessions, and stay interviews.

Stay interviews, in particular, offer a proactive alternative to exit interviews. Whereas exit interviews explain what went wrong after the relationship has ended, stay interviews surface retention drivers and emerging risks while there is still time to respond. Just as importantly, they signal genuine interest in the employee experience.

The Role of Managers in Closing the Credibility Gap

Although engagement is often framed as an organizational initiative, it is experienced locally. Employees interpret engagement efforts through their relationships with direct managers. Managers shape whether feedback conversations feel safe, whether concerns are acknowledged, and whether action is visible.

Leadership research consistently links supportive and servant-oriented behaviors with higher engagement and resilience (Eva et al., 2021). These behaviors operationalize trust. When managers respond consistently and transparently to feedback, employees become more willing to share it. When they do not, engagement efforts stall regardless of the tools in place.

For I-O psychologists, this underscores the importance of equipping managers not only to review engagement reports but also to facilitate meaning making, barrier removal, and follow-through.

Practical Implications for Industrial-Organizational Psychologists

To strengthen engagement measurement credibility, practitioners can consider the following actions:

- Treat engagement surveys as part of an ongoing listening system rather than a one-time event
- Avoid asking questions about areas where leadership is unwilling or unable to act
- Pair quantitative data with qualitative methods that provide context
- Require visible follow-up commitments tied to survey results
- Prepare managers to lead engagement conversations, not just performance discussions

These practices do not eliminate disengagement overnight. They do, however, rebuild the conditions necessary for honest data and sustainable improvement.

Closing Reflections

Employee engagement does not decline because employees stop caring. It declines when employees stop believing their care matters. Engagement measurement that lacks credibility accelerates that belief. When organizations listen with intent, act with consistency, and return with evidence of change, engagement tools regain their purpose. For industrial-organizational psychologists, the challenge is not simply to measure engagement more precisely, but to help organizations create environments where the truth can safely surface.

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Industrial-Organizational Psychology in MBA Career Services and Employer Relations at the Tuck School of Business

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Introduction

Industrial-organizational (I-O) psychology plays a critical role not only in traditional business settings but across academic environments as well. Although the common pathways in the academic settings include applied research, professorship, or teaching, academic institutions are often complex organizations that depend on competencies central to I-O psychology throughout the entire ecosystem for successful administration of services, embedding practitioner roles within academic spaces. One such setting is within career services, where recruiting processes, assessment practices, and stakeholder decision-making converge. Here, staff play a key role in how students are supported while identifying career paths, building interview readiness, and making informed decisions around job offers.

This article highlights how the I-O principles are embedded in career services and employer relations functions at the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College (henceforth, Tuck School of Business), as an example of academic environments that blend higher education, talent strategy, and recruitment operations to support both the students and organizational partners through the services offered.

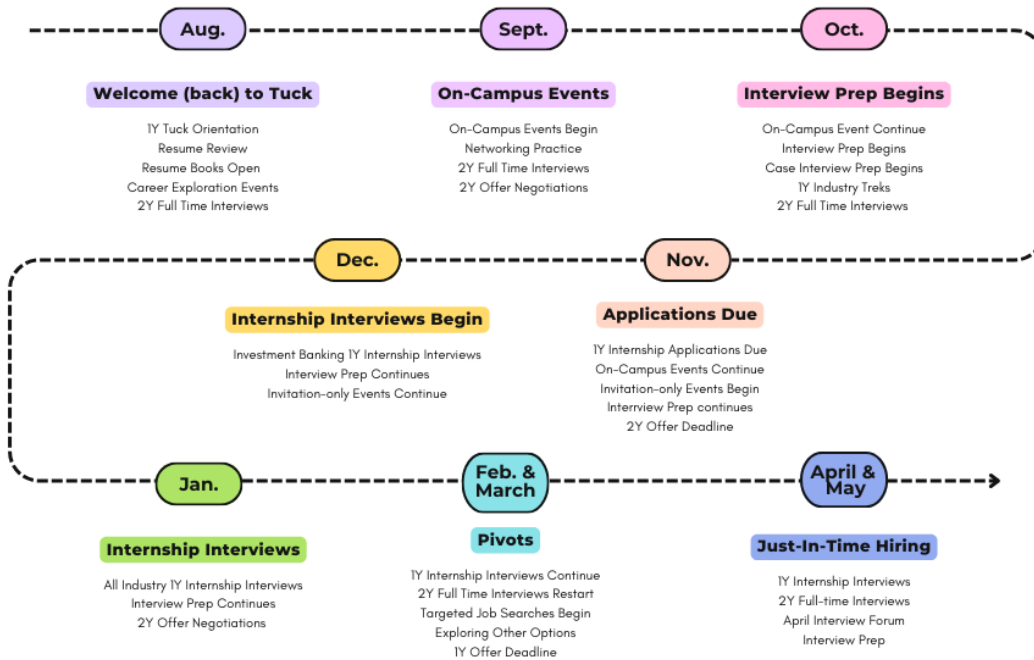
The Tuck School of Business Community

Tuck[ed] into the woods of New Hampshire, the Tuck School of Business has a highly selective MBA program and aims to provide a personal, connected, and transformative experience. These values are embedded in the fabric of Tuck, including Career Services, where the associate directors apply the school's mission and vision directly to the recruiting process and employer engagement. The recruiting program prioritizes relationship-based interactions through repeated, structured opportunities for ongoing engagement, personalized communication, and trust building, an emphasis that is reinforced across the MBA core curriculum through sustained, relationship-driven learning experiences. Career Services sponsors a "recruiting" program to help employers engage with students through hosted on-campus, virtual, or experiential events, and internships that often serve as pipelines to full-time employment for students, shortly after graduation.

An understanding of I-O psychology principles, particularly in the validation and use of selection procedures, informs how this role supports employers in their recruitment of MBA students, even though Career Services does not manage employers' internal hiring processes. Instead, I-O and recruiting process expertise is applied within the MBA career services day-to-day processes, which serves as an intermediary among academic priorities, employer hiring needs, student preferences, and equitable access and treatment for all participants across the recruiting timeline (Figure 1, below).

Figure 1: Example Recruiting Program Timeline Sponsored by Career Services

Navigating MBA Recruiting: The Career Services Timeline



Additionally, practitioners within Career Services offices offer strategic insight (i.e., consulting) on how the partner's organizations can effectively engage and evaluate the student population throughout the recruiting process by educating employers on the best practices for assessing applicants in the hiring process and coaching students during their transition from the classroom into the workforce.

I-O Principles Embedded in Daily Practice

I-O psychology is leveraged throughout the role in both explicit and implicit ways. Staff roles in higher education often function as bridges connecting candidates and students to employers or companies by designing standard processes that promote fairness and reduce bias in the sponsored events. This work supports a shared understanding of how students will be evaluated as candidates and promotes the understanding of the role and impact of assessments in the process, allowing both students and employers to use and understand fair hiring processes. Data analytics further inform this work when used to monitor outcomes, such as offer rates, reporting rates, and recruiting/timing trends, enabling evidence-based adjustments and continuous improvement.

In this I-O work context, we act as interpreters, bridging academic importance and career coaching with real-world constraints and company needs.

Structured Recruiting Timelines and Assessment Education

Within companies, recruiting processes should be intentionally structured to promote consistency and transparency, and the same applies to offices like Career Services. This includes standardized timelines, clear policies and procedures for interactions and events, and guidance on interview structure. Career Services encourages the employers partnered with the school to be transparent about hiring assessments and ensure alignment between the assessments or criteria used in the hiring process and the role-relevant competencies, improving face validity, the candidate's experience, and

selection quality. Specific to this role at Tuck, because there is an I-O lens, there is often the ability to discuss the implementation strategy of the assessments used within the hiring process, beyond organizational buy-in. For example, the associate director of Career Services often works directly with employers to discuss how assessment choices and implementation decisions (such as timing, communication, and format) affect both hiring processes and candidate reactions. These insights are translated into student-facing education through structured presentations on assessment expectations, common formats, and best practices, as well as into internal guidance for the career services team regarding assessment practices currently being used in the MBA hiring market.

Data Analytics and Continuous Improvement

Data are monitored throughout the MBA hiring cycle to identify patterns, changes in the markets, and overall trends. We are also consistently evaluating the needs of the companies and students. Job market data, qualitative stakeholder feedback from employers and event coordination efforts, student outcome metrics, and students' targeted employer lists are synthesized to inform adjustments to processes, communication strategies, and employer guidance.

Coaching and Stakeholder Education

A significant portion of the role involves educating employers as well as coaching students. Students are supported in understanding timeline navigation, networking opportunities and strategy, preparing for structured interviews, and making informed decisions when offers are in hand. Employers receive consultation and feedback on recruiting practices, timeline strategies, and emerging trends across their industries.

Looking Ahead: Expanding the Boundaries of I-O Practice

The academic recruiting events present unique circumstances that differ from corporate or consulting contexts. Hiring event cycle timelines are compressed, participants have competing priorities, and success from the career service/associate director's duties depends heavily on influence rather than authority.

At the same time, the environment offers opportunities for meaningful impact. Small process changes, such as improved communication, can affect outcomes for an entire class of students, and the right recruiting strategy for a company can ensure its pipeline is effective and sustainable for years to come.

All the Places We Can Go

This role illustrates how I-O psychologists can contribute outside traditional job titles or settings. Higher education career services or recruiting functions increasingly rely on data, more now than ever—some assessment expertise and systems thinking.

For practitioners interested in talent acquisition, workforce development, or applied consulting, career services and academic recruiting environments offer meaningful, scalable opportunities to apply I-O science in practice.

Want to learn more about I-O beyond corporate walls with applications in universities, K-12, and workplace systems? Join **Nathan Price**, myself, and other knowledgeable academic-based staff at the 2026 SIOP Annual Conference for *I-Os in Academic Spaces: All the Places We Can Go*, April 30 from 9:00-10:20 am.

Conclusion

I-O psychology plays a critical role in shaping recruiting systems that are effective, equitable, and data-informed. Within MBA career services, staff can apply I-O principles to influence hiring processes, support stakeholder decision-making, and improve talent outcomes at scale. As the nature of work and hiring continues to evolve, these hybrid environments represent an important and often underrecognized domain for applied I-O practice.

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Examining AI-Driven Organizational Change in I-O Psychology

Jessica Estep

Artificial intelligence (AI) did not enter quietly into corporate life. In many organizations, it arrived quickly and with a sense of inevitability, shifting from limited experimentation to an expected part of everyday work. What was once discussed as a future capability is now integrated into daily operations across industries. This rapid transition raises important questions for I-O psychology. Is the pace of adoption outstripping organizational readiness? What forces are driving the push to implement AI at this large a scale? And how are employees making sense of this shift when the technology involved is complex, ever evolving, and not fully understood?

Although adoption is frequently framed as a story of innovation and productivity, the speed with which AI has been woven into core workflows suggests something more profound than productivity gains alone. AI is increasingly positioned not as a discretionary tool but as infrastructure. When infrastructure shifts this quickly, the question is not only whether the technology performs. It is whether organizations are prepared to support the people who are asked to live and work within them. Without deliberate attention to psychological readiness, fairness, trust, and job security, adoption may advance faster than employees are given time to understand and adapt.

From Experimentation to Enterprise Infrastructure

Corporations did not arrive at enterprise-wide AI adoption gradually. What began as limited experimentation expanded quickly into formal initiatives embedded in budgets, governance structures, procurement decisions, and workplace expectations. In many organizations, employee use of AI tools is now tracked in dashboards and discussed in monthly business reviews. Leaders encourage teams to integrate AI into routine tasks, from drafting communications to analyzing reports. Adoption has become normalized.

A visible turning point occurred between 2022 and 2023, following a consumer-facing breakthrough that accelerated executive attention and investment. On November 30, 2022, OpenAI released ChatGPT to the public, an event widely cited as catalytic in expanding organizational awareness of generative AI capabilities (HISTORY.com Editors, 2025). Although the underlying technology had been under development for years, ChatGPT's accessibility and conversational interface distinguished it from earlier consumer-facing systems.

By early 2023, reporting highlighted how quickly the tool attracted widespread use, signaling both technological potential and strong market demand (Dastin, 2023). The speed of uptake disrupted assumptions across industries, including education, law, consulting, and corporate management. In many cases, it contributed to a growing belief that generative AI would soon become integral to knowledge work rather than remain a niche capability.

As adoption expanded, scrutiny followed. Industry reporting increasingly surfaced concerns related to accuracy, particularly the tendency of generative models to produce confidently stated, but incorrect, outputs. Questions emerged around data governance and privacy, including whether proprietary information could be exposed through routine use. Attention also turned to the environmental costs of operating large-scale AI infrastructure.

These tensions complicated early narratives of efficiency and innovation. They did not meaningfully slow adoption. Instead, they revealed a growing disconnect between the speed of integration and the depth of organizational understanding. AI systems were incorporated into core workflows even as their limitations, risks, and long-term implications for work design and accountability remained only partially understood (Horobin, 2023; Stanford University, Human-Centered AI Institute, 2025). Within months, generative AI shifted from curiosity to embedded expectation in everyday organizational life.

Platform Momentum and the Corporate Push for Adoption

The transition from consumer novelty to corporate infrastructure accelerated in early 2023, driven less by organizational demand and more by platform-level decisions. On January 23, 2023, Microsoft extended its partnership with OpenAI through a multiyear, multibillion-dollar investment, framing generative AI as a strategic platform shift (Microsoft Corporate Blogs, 2023; OpenAI, 2023a). This move signaled that AI would be included directly into widely used corporate enterprise systems.

Microsoft 365 Copilot integrated generative AI into everyday workflows, including Word, Excel, Outlook, and Teams (Spataro, 2023). In practical terms, this dramatically lowered barriers to adoption. AI was no longer something employees had to seek out. It was built into the software they already used. Other providers followed quickly. IBM introduced watsonx as a business-oriented foundation model platform (IBM, 2023). OpenAI launched ChatGPT Enterprise with enterprise-grade security and privacy features (OpenAI, 2023b). Google embedded generative AI into Workspace, later rebranding its offering as Gemini for business (Google Workspace, 2023; Pappu, 2024). Amazon Web Services introduced Amazon Bedrock, enabling enterprise access to foundation models within existing cloud ecosystems (Amazon, 2023; Amazon Web Services, 2023).

Collectively, these developments reveal an important pattern. The push toward AI adoption did not originate primarily from individual employers independently deciding to adopt new tools. It emerged from platform ecosystems, positioning generative AI as a default component across productivity, cloud, and development environments. Once AI capabilities were bundled into systems organizations were already licensing, nonadoption became increasingly difficult to justify. When the nature of everyday work shifts this quickly, the employees rarely move at the same pace.

A Global Phenomenon Shaped by Local Context

Although U.S.-based technology firms have led much of the private investment and platform development, AI adoption is not confined to the United States. Global investment patterns and enterprise usage have accelerated across regions, shaped by regulatory frameworks and labor market conditions (Stanford University, Human-Centered AI Institute, 2025). Cross-national evidence from G7 countries and Brazil confirms that AI adoption is international rather than U.S.-centric (OECD/BCG/INSEAD, 2025).

Workforce implications extend globally. The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2025 anticipates significant task reconfiguration and skill shifts over the next 5 years (World Economic Forum, 2025). Regulatory developments such as the European Union's AI Act further demonstrate that adoption is increasingly shaped by governance, compliance, and accountability expectations (Bruder & Yaros, 2024; European Parliament, 2025).

What This Means for Employees Right Now

For many corporate workers, the forces behind AI adoption feel familiar. They resemble earlier waves of technology-driven change, where efficiency and competitiveness were emphasized long before employees had clarity about how their own roles would evolve. The rollout of Microsoft 365 Copilot illustrates this dynamic. By embedding generative AI directly into everyday productivity tools, organizations normalized AI use almost overnight, even as questions about role expectations, evaluation, and accountability were still emerging (Spataro, 2023).

From an employee perspective, AI adoption is not merely technical. It is interpretive. Employees are asking: What does this mean for my role? Will performance standards change? Will AI use become expected? Am I now competing with the tool itself? In some organizations, employees are encouraged to demonstrate how AI has improved their productivity, subtly reshaping assumptions about what counts as baseline performance.

Emerging reporting suggests that fear and uncertainty may be outpacing actual job displacement (Horobin, 2023). Although large-scale layoffs directly attributable to generative AI have not materialized at the scale initially predicted, em-

employees are already expressing concern about skill relevance, role viability, and long-term employability. From an employee standpoint, this uncertainty can shape attitudes and behavior well before formal changes to roles, expectations, or staffing occur.

Organizational change research helps explain this pattern. Uncertainty, perceived threat, and loss of control often precede observable outcomes and meaningfully influence employee reactions (Bordia et al., 2004; Rafferty & Griffin, 2006; Vakola, 2016). Research on job insecurity similarly indicates that perceived automation risk alone can heighten stress and disengagement, even when displacement does not immediately occur (Jiang & Lavaysse, 2018; Sverke et al., 2019).

Beyond task reconfiguration, AI adoption has the potential to reshape how employees understand competence, contribution, and value. When generative systems can draft, analyze, summarize, or code, the boundaries between human judgment and automated output become less distinct. For some employees, this may feel augmentative. For others, it may feel destabilizing. The change is not only procedural. In knowledge-intensive roles, it can become identity level, touching assumptions about expertise, authorship, and professional worth.

Psychological readiness, therefore, becomes central. When adoption unfolds faster than communication, governance, and skill development, employees may interpret AI integration as a signal about organizational priorities and future workforce composition. In this context, fairness perceptions matter. Who receives training? Who is evaluated differently? Whose work is augmented rather than automated? These questions shape trust in leadership and willingness to engage with change.

The psychological impact of AI adoption may precede, and in some cases exceed, its immediate operational consequences. When infrastructure shifts this quickly, employee expectations, identities, and perceptions of fairness shift as well. The risk is not only technical misimplementation—it is an erosion of trust.

Implications for I-O Psychology

If generative AI is becoming infrastructure, then it cannot be treated as a routine technology upgrade. It represents organizational change, and organizational change has always required more than technical rollout plans. Organizations can purchase software. They cannot purchase psychological readiness.

When AI tools are introduced without deliberate attention to how employees interpret them, organizations risk confusing adoption metrics with acceptance. Readiness is not simply training completion. It includes whether employees believe the change is appropriate, whether they trust leadership intentions, and whether expectations surrounding AI use feel transparent and fair (Rafferty & Griffin, 2006; Vakola, 2016).

For I-O psychology, this moment presents a familiar challenge in a new form. The theoretical foundations already exist. Research on change readiness, justice perceptions, job insecurity, and trust provides structure for evaluating how AI integration unfolds inside organizations (Bordia et al., 2004; Sverke et al., 2019). The question is whether those frameworks will be applied early enough to shape implementation, rather than retroactively, to explain resistance.

AI adoption is unlikely to slow. What remains uncertain is whether organizations will integrate it in ways that preserve trust and long-term engagement. If technological transformation continues to move faster than people can make sense of it, strain is bound to surface somewhere. I-O psychology is uniquely positioned not to halt that transformation but to help ensure that it unfolds with sustained attention to the people asked to carry it forward.

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“But AI Can Do It”: Developing Novice Consultants in the Age of AI

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Leadership consulting is a dynamic field that requires consultants to continuously adapt, both to the evolving workforce and to the changing needs of their clients. Yet, one source of change that has left many of us both curious and uncertain is the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), defined as “the capability of computer systems or algorithms to imitate intelligent human behavior” (Merriam-Webster, n.d., as cited in Lowman, 2025). AI is beginning to influence every aspect of talent management, including selection and development (Landers & Nakamoto, 2025; Tiwari, 2025). Nearly 70% of major employers plan to hire talent with AI skills to help scale their business (Post, 2025). Although it is too early to gauge the full impact of these shifts, one area where the effects are already emerging is in the training and development of novice consultants.

As leadership assessment and talent strategy professionals, we have noticed AI reverberating through many conversations about our work, from automating report writing to comparing executive candidate profiles. There is a growing notion that *generative* AI, in particular, can enhance the consulting process by minimizing time spent on tedious tasks (e.g., organizing assessment data, identifying themes), thus freeing consultants to attend to higher order insights. For experienced consultants, this may hold true. However, for those still developing foundational consulting skills, such as interpreting leadership nuances, managing client relationships, and conducting strategic assessments, AI introduces new challenges as well as new opportunities. If technology can “do the work,” how do emerging consultants *learn* to think critically about the data, build judgment, develop their professional intuition, and expand their thinking?

Drawing on our experiences and insights as an associate consultant, function area leader, and partner, we offer practical suggestions for cultivating competent, thoughtful consultants in the age of AI. This article hopes to spark reflection on how AI is reshaping consultant development.

Eight Tips for Responsible AI Use by Novice Consultants

From our experiences in leadership consulting, we describe eight tips for novice consultants to support practices aiding modern early career training, and ultimately, transformative AI strategy. Across these recommendations, the central principle is that AI should accelerate learning and judgment, not replace the effort required to develop them.

Role of the Emerging Consultant

1. **Strengthen your knowledge of AI and the organization’s stance on it:** AI understanding and self-efficacy can be developed through increased exposure and hands-on practice (Murtza & Murtza, 2023). Generative AI tools are well versed in scoping the internet and can do so rapidly by synthesizing information across many sources; thus, it may illuminate new information or different perspectives on topics you might not encounter through usual channels. Consistently using or learning how to use AI to stay up-to-date is a simple yet fundamental starting point for gaining comfort and confidence with AI. In parallel, it is important to understand the organization’s stance on AI use, including usage guidelines, compliance policies, and internal training resources that support capability development aligned with organizational needs and expectations.

Takeaway: Keep up with trends and recent news, ask HR or other functions how they are using AI, and sign up for relevant development programs. Use this information to start building your identity as an AI user and remain current in your field.

2. **Seek guidance from senior consultants before relying on AI:** AI is a great tool for refining ideas and discovering patterns, but it cannot replace contextual judgement and client-specific insight that comes from experience. AI is best

when complemented with human expertise, particularly for nuanced decisions and stakeholder-facing recommendations (Murtza & Murtza, 2023).

Takeaway: When working with AI, push yourself to think through the work, even when it is uncomfortable or proves time-consuming. After your best attempts, use those around you as resources by asking for reviews or critiques. Use AI to help iterate such functions as clarifying language, pressure-testing logic, or generating alternatives while keeping human feedback as the primary guide.

3. **Create a strategy of self-use cases for AI:** AI can expedite the process of executing work, but this is not always synonymous with quality. Consider the *optimal* ways in which AI can aid you personally, not just how it can increase speed. Think of AI as a “mental map,” where you have a clear, intentional path for a given context (e.g., grammar checking for internal, nonsensitive announcements, drafting of survey items, initial topic ideation for executive coaching sessions). However you decide to use AI, use it in ways that streamline your work, but keep the richness and quality of your insights intact.

Takeaway: Always consider how AI can maximize your own unique insights. Ask yourself how it can add value or depth to your perspectives and how it may increase capabilities the organization currently does or does not offer its clients. Regardless of use, consider how AI can create or support opportunities that do exist without the technology, rather than replacing them.

4. **Communicate the process and why of using AI:** Important to the work of I-O practitioners are ethical practices for AI use (Landers & Nakamoto, 2025; Lowman, 2025). Every organization is bound to differ in its approach to AI guardrails, but some key safeguards are being transparent about the use case, learnings, limitations, and potential impact of using AI. Such information should be communicated to relevant stakeholders for transparency and alignment.

Takeaway: In practice, this may translate to a novice consultant prompting ChatGPT to provide succinct writing examples for a work product. For example, after implementing some suggestions into your own work, you do two things:

- a. Document the use in the deliverable when appropriate, especially if the output is stakeholder-facing or the AI contribution materially shaped the wording. Example note on a deliverable: **Note: this announcement was proofread by AI for enhanced readability.*
 - b. Share how you used AI with your supervisor or project lead, focusing on intent, boundaries, and review (e.g., “*I used ChatGPT to provide guiding examples while cleaning up the summary of the themes. No actual client data was used or summarized, but my general engine prompts helped illuminate some perspectives I was not considering, and I reviewed/edited the final language before sharing.*”). Communicating this information supports ethical practice by allowing others to evaluate appropriateness, risk, and alignment with organizational values.
5. **Use AI as a reflective tool to reinforce learning:** One of the most useful applications is using AI as a reflection partner to identify areas for improvement. For example, use it to get explicit feedback on drafts on which you have received “redlines.” Used this way, AI supports learning by helping to understand changes and how to practice those skills in future deliverables (e.g., tone, structure, clarity). It also helps you identify patterns across feedback so you can improve faster over time.

Takeaway: Consider AI as a tool to help assist with and refine your growth, not one that absorbs that growth for you. For example, you received an assessment report draft with substantial mark-ups, but you are uncertain of how to interpret or implement the suggestions. You create a practice report depicting similar insights and exclude the client or candidate’s name and exact context. You upload this report to Copilot to flag further opportunities for improvement and give you a detailed roadmap on how to address this, including additional writing practice.

6. **Use AI to challenge what you know:** Your organization likely has a framework or guiding approach it takes to its work. You likely have your own unique approach to your work, too. Important to leadership consulting is a strong “why” behind what you do and the ability to support this when questioned. Thus, in addition to using AI to work

through feedback (Tip #5), AI can help unearth differing interpretations on a topic or approach or even offer a counter perspective to your process or claims.

Takeaway: Use AI to refine your work strategy by prompting it to play devil’s advocate. Asking a generative AI engine to “give me three arguments someone might make that counter my approach” or “summarize varying interpretations of this framework” can illuminate what you have not considered and challenge what you believe before a client or stakeholder does.

7. **Use AI as a mirror for refinement:** AI can be used to refine your approach to nuanced consulting moments, such as tough conversations and client presentations, for example. In tools like ChatGPT, you may have speech-to-text, upload, or typing options to share your delivery and ask the algorithm to give feedback in the requested ways. Relatedly, aim to use AI as a tool to help heighten your ability to think critically by pressure testing your logic or unearthing gaps or inconsistencies in your work.

Takeaway: Use feedback from AI tools to help refine your professional presence or audit your work. For instance, you have an upcoming team coaching meeting alongside a senior partner. Your job is to deliver a recap of the last meeting and offer high-level insights to guide the discussion. You use speech-to-text to share your planned summary (excluding any sensitive information) and ask for feedback on how to make it more concise but still confident and warm.

8. **Do not get hung up on efficiency:** AI will always be the more efficient option, but you do not learn much more beyond how to use AI if speed becomes the main goal. Learning is *not* efficient. We have described ways AI can aid your development, but you cannot take shortcuts to retention. A hallmark of development for many novice consultants is that “aha” moment after trial and error; genuinely lean into that skill-development opportunity rather than bypassing it.

Takeaway: Use AI to streamline your work and training, but do not eliminate the learning moments by relying on an algorithm. Decenter efficiency from your perspectives on the benefits of AI. Efficiency is a baseline for AI-supported processes; insight, stronger judgement, innovation, and new perspectives should be your output aim.

Thus, emerging consultants have several ways they can use AI to refine their development and strengthen their contributions to organizations. However, the organization also plays a key role in developing novice consultants in this age of AI. Keeping up with emerging best practices and policy (internal and external) will be *crucial* to ensuring AI aids the process rather than creates noise while anchoring talent pipelines to organizational goals. I-O psychologists can guide organizations toward transparent, psychologically safe, and learning-oriented AI use. Yet, no matter what you decide to do, take every opportunity to communicate the “why” behind your AI approach, including the intended value, boundaries, and role of human judgment.

Looking Ahead

Taken together, these practices position AI as a developmental scaffold rather than a substitute for expertise, reinforcing that AI is only as useful as we make it. AI presents quick and easy ways to address some of the work of leadership consultancies, especially that of emerging consultants. Yet, with this comes the possibility that rigor and human expertise will lag if efficiency becomes the primary goal. That presents a dull future for healthy talent pipelines. The tips outlined are not exhaustive, but we hope they spark further dialogue and consideration about the broader implications of internal training and development in leadership consultancies during this age of AI.

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Building Sustainable Academic–Practice Partnerships: Lessons Learned From Collaborating With a State Government Agency

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Academic–practice partnerships reflect the long-standing scientist–practitioner orientation of industrial, work, and organizational (IWO) psychology. They offer a mechanism for the reciprocal exchange of knowledge between the classroom and real organizations (Rynes et al., 2001). When students are meaningfully involved, these partnerships can be mutually beneficial—supporting faculty goals related to teaching and program development while also providing organizations with evidence-based insights. Students deeply benefit from such experiences by bridging the gap between classroom knowledge and the complexities of applied work. Despite widespread endorsement of such partnerships, faculty members may feel intimidated by or struggle with how to initiate, structure, and sustain them—particularly in ways that meaningfully benefit all stakeholders involved.

In this article, we describe the process we recently used to establish a partnership between our I-O Master of Science degree program and a state government agency (hereafter, *the State Agency*) within the United States. Within the U.S. context, state agencies often maintain and develop large numbers of public employees. We outline how the partnership was formed, what it has yielded for our students and program, and how others in IWO psychology or related disciplines might apply similar strategies within their own institutional or national contexts. Although some structural features of this collaboration reflect the U.S. public sector, the broader principles underlying the partnership are broadly adaptable across universities, organizations, and governmental systems. Our intent is not to present a singular model but rather a set of principles and practices that can be adapted across settings. At its core, this partnership emerged from deliberate relationship building, mutual value creation, and thoughtful curricular integration. These elements, we argue, are central to successful and sustainable academic–practice collaborations.

Starting With Outreach and Trust

All partnerships begin differently. Some form through personal connections, relationships, or networks. Our partnership with the State Agency began very humbly: We initiated contact through a cold email and a LinkedIn connection request. Constrained by our outreach channels, our outreach message was brief, professional, and framed around creating a symbiotic and mutually beneficial relationship.

This initial outreach resulted in an invitation to meet in person at the State Agency's offices. Our foot was in the door. Importantly, this first meeting was focused on (a) establishing interpersonal familiarity and trust, and (b) gathering information, background, and context. We asked questions about the State Agency's mission, constraints, and priorities. This initial emphasis on fostering trust and understanding organizational context before proposing solutions aligned with our evidence-based management principles (Dirks & de Jong, 2022; Rynes & Bartunek, 2017). After explaining what IWO psychology focuses on, we listened carefully to how they viewed those core topics within their broader organizational system. This fact-finding mission was mutual; they learned just as much about us as we did about them. We shared information about our academic program, our students, and the kinds of applied skills we sought to develop.

From the outset, we were intentional about positioning ourselves—and our students—as collaborators rather than consultants (Schein, 1969). Rather than promising polished, ready-to-implement products, we emphasized that students could contribute evidence-based perspectives, structured evaluations, and design ideas that the State Agency could adapt and refine internally. This framing reduced risk for the organization while preserving the authenticity of the student experience.

During the meeting, we identified where opportunities for collaboration would likely be most straightforward, and it seemed as if everyone in the room appeared increasingly interested in focusing our collaborative efforts within their training department.

Identifying Mutual Value: Aligning Organizational Needs and Student Capabilities

Following the initial meeting, we engaged in a series of follow-up conversations focused on identifying areas of mutual benefit. We asked three guiding questions: What challenges or opportunities currently matter most to the State Agency's training department? What skills do our students need to practice in an authentic, applied context? Where is there meaningful overlap between the two? Through these discussions, a clear opportunity emerged.

The State Agency's training department was responsible for delivering and maintaining a large portfolio of courses available to all state employees. The courses were broad in their topics, ranging from time management to personnel selection. Generally, the State Agency viewed their courses as effective but in need of systematic revisions and updates to their instructional design, training evaluation, and training content. They just didn't have the personnel available. These needs aligned closely with several of our program's curricular priorities, including training needs analysis, instructional design, and program evaluation.

Collectively, we recognized that our students could assist the State Agency by evaluating existing training courses and offering evidence-based recommendations for improvement. In return, students would gain experience working with real stakeholders, real constraints, and real consequences—elements that are difficult to replicate through simulated case studies alone.

Translating Partnership Into Curriculum: Designing a Semester Project

Once the scope of collaboration was established, the next step was translating it into a structured learning experience. We incorporated the partnership into a semester-long project within a required training course in our degree program. The project design was informed by active and experiential learning (Bell & Kozlowski, 2008). Specifically, the project was scaffolded to build authentic, skill-based deliverables to enhance the transfer of knowledge and skills learned throughout the course.

At the start of the semester, students were randomly assigned to teams of four. Each team selected one course to focus on from the State Agency's existing catalogue of training courses. This choice provided students with autonomy to choose training courses related to their own interests—this was intentional to improve motivation (Fisher et al., 2010). Early in the semester, students met virtually with a key stakeholder from the State Agency's training department. This interaction served several purposes: It established realism, reinforced the applied nature of the work, and helped students understand that their efforts had the potential to influence real organizational decisions. For the remainder of the semester, faculty served as the liaisons between the State Agency and our students. This helped students feel more comfortable seeking guidance from faculty they already built rapport with and freed the State Agency from the responsibility of responding to individual student emails.

The project unfolded in phases aligned with our program's training course content. Students were tasked with (a) evaluating the current state of their selected training course, (b) identifying strengths and gaps using relevant theories and empirical research, (c) generating evidence-based recommendations, and (d) designing actual learning activities and instructional sequences that incorporated those recommendations. These competencies and others developed by the project align with professional capability domains frequently emphasized in graduate IWO training and practitioner preparation (Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Inc., 2016). Throughout the semester, students received formative feedback from both instructors and peers, allowing them to refine their thinking and products iteratively.

Student Deliverables and Skill Development

The culmination of the project was a comprehensive written report produced by each team. The report summarized the evaluation of the existing training course, articulated recommendations grounded in the training and learning sciences, and presented concrete instructional activities. In addition to the written deliverables, students delivered spoken presentations as a class activity, simulating the experience of briefing stakeholders on findings and recommendations.

From a pedagogical perspective, the project targeted several core competencies. Students gained experience designing and evaluating training systems (an important design facet; Arthur et al., 2003), translating theory into practice, and writing professional reports for nonacademic audiences. They also practiced collaboration, project management, and professional communication—skills that are frequently cited as highly desirable by employers but are challenging to teach explicitly.

These presentations were formally assessed as part of our program-level assessment criteria, allowing us to evaluate students' presentation and communication skills using standardized rubrics. In this way, the partnership supported not only course-level learning objectives but also broader programmatic assessment needs.

Closing the Loop With the Organizational Partner

After students submitted their final deliverables to us, faculty members compiled the materials and met with the State Agency to share and discuss the students' deliverables. Rather than forwarding student reports without context, we treated this meeting as a critical translation step. We highlighted cross-team themes, emphasized particularly strong recommendations, and clarified how the materials could be used moving forward.

This approach respected the organization's time while maximizing the usability of student contributions. It also reinforced the collaborative nature of the partnership—the State Agency was not merely receiving student assignments but engaging in a dialogue about training improvement informed by evidence and fresh perspectives.

Extending the Impact: Visibility, Recognition, and Sustainability

One of the fortuitous benefits of the partnership was its value for program visibility and reputation. With the State Agency's consent, we collaborated with our university's media team to write a news article highlighting the partnership. The article emphasized the applied nature of the students' work and the mutual benefits of the collaboration. Once published, the story was shared through institutional channels and on LinkedIn, extending its reach to prospective students, alumni, and practitioners.

This visibility served multiple purposes. It reinforced the applied identity of our program, provided students with a tangible example of their work being publicly recognized, and strengthened our relationship with the State Agency by showcasing their commitment to workforce development and community engagement. Collectively, such efforts aim to keep IWO psychology as a *pragmatic science* (Anderson et al., 2001).

Lessons Learned and Recommendations for SIOP Members

Although this specific partnership was developed within a U.S. public-sector context, several elements are broadly transferable across institutional and national settings. The underlying mechanisms described in this article—relationship-based outreach, identifying mutual value, structured curricular integration, and iterative feedback between academic and organizational stakeholders—can be adapted to private organizations, nonprofit institutions, or governmental systems.

At the same time, the instantiations of these mechanisms are often context dependent: LinkedIn's utility varies sharply by country and industry, and in some settings initial access may typically be mediated via professional associations, ministries, or informal networks; similarly, the appropriateness of a meeting in-person at the agency office—especially early in the relationship—may be shaped by security, geography, or formality norms that may favor a first-contact via video call or phone call, or official letters routed through administrators.

Regardless of the context, several lessons from this partnership may be particularly relevant for SIOP members seeking to establish similar collaborations. First, partnerships do not require existing relationships to begin. Thoughtful, respectful outreach—combined with a willingness to listen—can open doors. Second, successful collaborations are grounded in mutual value. Faculty should resist the temptation to frame partnerships solely around student learning and instead attend carefully to organizational needs and constraints. Third, curricular integration matters. Embedding partnerships within courses requires

intentional scaffolding, clear expectations, and alignment with learning objectives. Finally, closing the loop—with both students and organizational partners—is essential. Translating student work into actionable insights, acknowledging partner contributions, and publicly sharing successes all contribute to partnership sustainability.

Conclusion

Academic–practice partnerships represent a powerful mechanism for advancing the mission of IWO psychology. Our collaboration with the State Agency illustrates how relatively modest outreach efforts can evolve into high-impact learning experiences that benefit students, faculty, and organizations alike. By prioritizing trust, mutual value, and thoughtful design, SIOP members can create partnerships that extend beyond a single course or semester and contribute meaningfully to both education and practice.

Such partnerships offer a compelling way to demonstrate the practical value of IWO psychology while preparing the next generation of practitioners to engage thoughtfully and ethically with the organizations they will serve.

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One Construct After Another: The Story of Our Science

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Construct proliferation is not just an I-O psychology problem; it has been highlighted in many related fields, such as HR, from a variety of perspectives (Gupta et al., 2012; Jiang et al., 2012; McIver et al., 2012; Rosh et al., 2012) and advertising (Bergkvist & Langner, 2019). But this is not just an issue of the academy versus practice but one that involves the larger culture. The cultures around human resources and talent development initiatives are full of concept proliferation and serve as the root cause of many new constructs. Popular press and social media sites like LinkedIn have a constant churn of new work-related constructs, such as quiet quitting, silent resignation, quiet firing, microretirement, job hugging, and the list of two words pushed together goes on. Although many of these popular constructs have significant degrees of overlap, they seem to get coverage and attention as if they are new and important phenomena. Construct proliferation is also exacerbated by the sources of information I-O professionals use (Islam, Chetta, et al., 2018), such as consultant white papers and industry blogs, where similar constructs may be repackaged as completely new constructs. Why do we love our old wine in new bottles? In this article, we propose that this phenomenon is partially due to the fact that people love stories. New constructs represent new stories to explain current problems, whereas old constructs were framed around past problems. Although the current and past problems may share significant overlap in their inherent natures, the stories may be different and feel different in salience. The concept of storytelling helps us to understand this state of affairs. We highlight how storytelling plays a role in how stakeholders see their current needs. We then consider how storytelling can help us in our quest to reduce construct proliferation through the creation of a construct-tracking wiki.

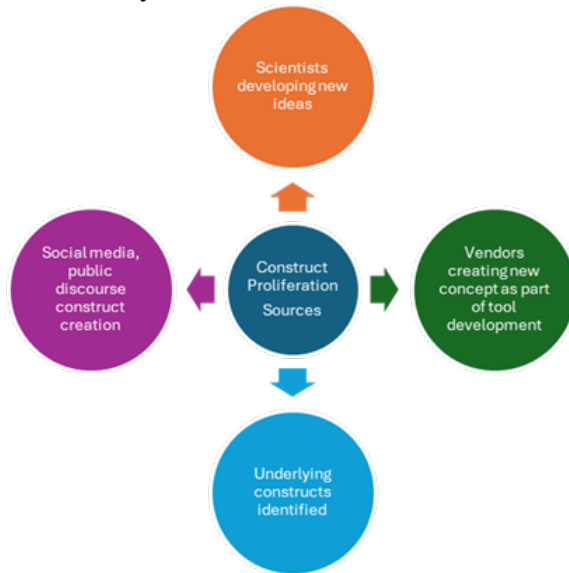
Stories We Tell Ourselves

One core aspect of construct proliferation that many researchers (Bowling et al., 2025) have failed to note is that of storytelling. People engage in storytelling to make sense of complex phenomena in their lives (Ready, 2002) and provide guidance on what should be paid attention to (Smircich & Morgan, 1982). Storytelling as sensemaking highlights some of the challenges that drive construct proliferation. As scientists, I-O psychologists may imagine that constructs are concrete building blocks of a shared reality. However, what we see in the production of the research literature and its application in the world of work are multiple attempts to create compelling stories around workplace experiences.

Prior research has noted that storytelling creates a shared reality (Schmidt & Van Dellen, 2022; Smircich & Morgan, 1982) and is often used by organizations and individuals to communicate ideas and argue for needed courses of action (Schmidt & Simha, 2025). Organizations, practitioners, academic researchers, and even workers are attempting to explain their situations in the workplace through storytelling. Different constructs become popular or used more prominently than others as time goes by. In Figure 1, we present the forces pushing for construct proliferation. These forces include vendors creating new constructs to sell products that fit their marketing stories. Academics create new constructs from research findings and their own experiences, trying to tell a story of how these constructs fit into the lives of workers. Scientists also create constructs from their own thought processes and experiences. Finally, the general public has an impact on the nature of a construct proliferation, especially stories on social media. As people share stories and examples of a construct, attention and perceived importance of the construct can grow. Construct proliferation is a function of storytelling and has no clear gatekeeper.

Figure 1

Forces Pushing for Construct Proliferation



We wish to use two examples to illustrate the idea of storytelling. The first example is of quiet quitting. Quiet quitting began as a concept presented in a TikTok video (Creeley, 2022). In the summer of 2022, the topic became a social media sensation and entered into the practitioner lexicon, with SHRM even noting that parts of their research “validated the narrative” of quiet quitting (Stanchak, 2022). This led to more practitioners talking about the topic of quiet quitting. Applied researchers from Gallup also weighed in on the topic, providing further legitimacy (Wooldridge (2022). This has led to numerous research articles on the topic of quiet quitting, eventually leading to the development of a separate scale (Galanis et al., 2023). Although quiet quitting may be a real construct, we must ask ourselves: Is it conceptually distinct from other concepts, such as employee withdrawal (Zimmerman et al., 2016)? For the general public, practitioners, and human resources vendors, it matters little whether the construct is distinct or unique or scientifically sound, as long as it fits into a narrative that creates sense for those in the workplace to understand current workplace happenings.

Another example of construct proliferation is that of employee engagement. Employee engagement (Kahn, 1990) began as a scale that looked at how people used different parts of themselves in the workplace. It redefined motivation in the workplace and, over time, became a popular construct. Engagement has grown in popularity over the years, with many consulting firms offering annual updates on employee engagement levels (Harter, 2025). Despite concerns around the lack of a consistent construct definition for employee engagement since its inception (Chandel, 2018), the construct continues to be used in research articles and various applied settings. Researchers and practitioners often create their own definition of employee engagement to fit with the situation and context they are interested in.

No matter where new constructs begin, we see that they are part of the larger storytelling efforts of practitioners, lay-people, and academics alike related to why things happen in work life. Bowling et al. (2025) suggest a moratorium on new constructs, but given the variety of sources, we are severely limited in our ability to stop the creation of new constructs! There are no higher authorities to contact regarding new constructs. It’s best for us to look at constructs as ways in which academics, practitioners, and lay people try to create a sense of the workplace.

In order to better understand how these various stakeholders work within the construct proliferation space, we conducted a stakeholder analysis. Stakeholder analysis attempts to evaluate and understand stakeholders to determine their impact on a given process (Islam, Lahti, et al., 2018). Table 1 contains the stakeholder analysis conducted by the authors. We included the following groups: academic researchers, journal editors, applied I-O practitioners, talent management (TM) and human resources (HR) practitioners, and vendors of assessment technology as potential major stakeholders in the construct proliferation process.

The results of the stakeholder analysis, as seen in Table 1, indicate that no single group of stakeholders has complete power over the nomological network or constructs that are used in the lay literature. Although those in industry tend to have the greatest impact on new constructs being created and supported, academics have their influence as well. Editors wield the most power among academics, as they can encourage or discourage new constructs. Editorial decisions shape the attitudes of journals toward constructs and can facilitate or limit construct proliferation. Journal editors can impact the research literature by increasing or decreasing the importance of construct innovation (as needed based on trends). They can even create paper calls that focus on construct proliferation or create opportunities for construct clarity through the review process. Individual academics may have lesser influence, but as a group, they can create and test constructs the most. Although no single group of stakeholders holds all the power in these relationships, each group has the unique ability to meaningfully impact the construct proliferation discussion.

Applied I-O practitioners can create avenues in the applied world to illustrate and share new concepts with client organizations. Vendors, along with HR, TA, and TM practitioners, can create opportunities for better I-O practice by focusing on construct issues when making recommendations to organizations (Rotolo et al., 2018). These practitioners can lean on academic research or research summaries to identify constructs that are useful in practice. However, there is limited time for applied practitioners to sift through the research literature to identify constructs. Many practitioners depend on vendor-supported research to keep up with trends (Islam, Chetta, et al., 2018).

Because no single stakeholder has all the power, we must look for new solutions outside of established power structures. This leads to a need to potentially create a new power structure that helps with the concerns related to construct proliferation. Utilizing this methodology, a new power structure as a framework to build upon and move forward would certainly be a step towards limiting unnecessary construct proliferation.

Table 1
Stakeholder Analysis Author Version

	Impact (How much does construct proliferation affect them?)	Influence (How much influence do they have on constructs?)	What is important to the stakeholder?	What the stakeholder has to offer?	Why might they create or cocreate new construct?
Academic researcher	High: Can impact them in a myriad of ways on tenure track or in their research space	Medium: They can promote and cite key research to promote constructs or conduct additional research to support or reduce impact of a construct	Achieving tenure, recognition for research, scientific rigor and quality	Scientific analysis, communication with other scientists	Novelty is rewarded in the academic literature
Applied I-O practitioner	Medium: Constructs may vary depending on the client	High: They can wield influence in organizations and in their promotion to other key stakeholders	High validity, reliability, ease of use of scale, ease of understanding for laypeople	Can create and provide opportunities for the use of different constructs in organizations	They may be responding to an executive or a social media trend
HR/TM practitioner (non-I-O)	Low: Constructs may not impact them at all outside of evaluating vendors and offerings	High: The constructs of interest and the names used often come from HR/TM practitioners who serve as clients	Ease of use, insights into their employees, construct integration into existing HR and talent systems	Access to employees, opportunities for application of constructs and evidence for their existence in an applied setting	They may be responding to an executive or a social media trend
Vendors (assessment and technology)	High: Creating and promoting new constructs and ideas through their tools	High: Their marketing has an outsized effect on practitioners	Sales, speed, reliability, UX, brevity	Access to larger constructs across multiple industries and organizations and further validation, simple benchmarking	This may be a part of the marketing process to create a new construct or a new concept for a better story.
Journal editor	High: Construct proliferation makes their work harder and more difficult to wrangle the scientific literature on a particular topic	High: They can create opportunities for construct clarity through special issues and through the review process	Rigorous science, high-quality journal metrics	Access to a forum in the scientific literature	New construct and ideas can generate increased attention for the journal

NAMING a Solution

The solution we propose to help the current construct proliferation issue is a metascience initiative that moves the conversation around constructs outside of the realm of I-O psychology and its journals. Metascience is a scientific attempt to improve science (Malich & Rehmann-Sutter, 2022). Construct proliferation and validation require more than just a commitment among I-O journals but among numerous stakeholders. Because we cannot stop the attempts by a variety of stakeholders to create and generate new constructs, we propose a new approach to the construct proliferation problem that we call NAMING or Nomological Attempts Made In Good faith. Rather than looking for an imagined supervisor or control lever, we suggest that practitioners, applied researchers, and journal editors try to create a wiki-like Wikipedia (Bridge, 2001; Hu et al, 2007) database of constructs. This NAMING database would list constructs that are similar to one another and would allow practitioners and researchers to communicate and share their constructs in a common nomological network. This is similar to an idea that has been proposed in drug development to map drugs across a variety of industries, along with their uses (Dubner, 2026).

So, for one example, job satisfaction has multiple measures and similar constructs, such as employee involvement, employee engagement, and perceived organizational support. The NAMING initiative would plot the various constructs on a map to illustrate how they are related to one another and provide links to existing studies connecting these constructs. Ideally, this would include correlations between similar constructs and dissimilar constructs for ease of use by practitioners and academics.

Researchers have noted that similar constructs are created across disciplines (Bowling et al., 2025), and a service like NAMING would allow interdisciplinary collaboration and easy access to information around constructs. Following a wiki-style approach, the concept of NAMING may include elements similar to the Mental Measurements Yearbook (Buros, 2025), which offers a list of constructs and consumer-oriented reviews of assessment tools. An initiative such as this would address many of the concerns regarding construct proliferation and would create a new resource for researchers as they develop the nomological network. The database could define the construct broadly and then provide links to papers and resources that connect constructs to one another. This process would further validate the nomological network. This initiative could also be more responsive to the changes of the public around issues like quiet quitting. It could help to connect the individual constructs to existing constructs and stories in an open way.

This initiative would take the idea of constructs as storytelling seriously. Scientists and laypeople from across several different fields could start to see the various ways in which people try to make sense of the workplace through psychological constructs. User-generated content with editorial control would allow new ideas to flourish. Rather than gatekeeping the field, we would allow more people to engage with the ideas and concepts in I-O psychology. A NAMING style initiative would also address one of the chief challenges of many applied I-O practitioners: the lack of access to scientific research (Islam, Chetta, et al., 2018). By creating a place where constructs can be placed into a larger nomological network, we could start to create opportunities for practitioners to learn more about existing constructs and contribute to them in their own right.

We hope that this paper generates new ideas and approaches to addressing the ever-expanding world of constructs. Innovation can effectively lead to new science communication initiatives and new metascience approaches that impact practice and science for the better. We can use stories to help our science rather than passively watch them increase construct proliferation.

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How Survey Data Revealed Leadership Opportunities to Improve Morale at a Healthcare Practice

Sana Lall-Trail

Whenever I visit my doctor's and dentist's offices, and I share what I do for work, they all respond with the same answer: "We need you here." They share challenges with teamwork, management, and the ever-present risk of burnout in their industry. According to the CDC, 46% of healthcare workers reported burnout in 2022 (CDC, 2023).

When we think about the "employee experience," often large companies come to mind, with manager dashboards, leader presentations, and established corporate lines of communication. Small and local organizations equally need our support, but they often don't have the survey infrastructure or the budget to hire a full-time organizational development consultant.

Through my work at [Red Trail Consulting](#), I help small to midsized organizations collect employee feedback through surveys, interviews, and focus groups, and partner with leaders to turn feedback into action.

Over the past few months, I have been working with the leaders of a small healthcare firm. The following is Part I of a case study of our survey work together and the leaders' commitments to action. Part II (to be published later this year) will discuss progress and outcomes.

Client Background

Client A, a small (~50 person) outpatient specialty healthcare firm based in Norfolk, VA, has been operating for over 35 years. It has built credibility through word of mouth and strong relationships with patients, passing through generations. Performance and patient satisfaction have rarely been challenges.

However, in the past couple of years, the leadership team noticed a significant dip in staff morale. In my initial leader interviews, they shared that although they deliver high-quality patient care, they felt their teamwork could improve but did not know where to start.

Methodology

Prior to my work with them, Client A did not have a formal mechanism to collect feedback from the staff on their experience. Managers mainly relied on one-on-one meetings with their staff to listen to feedback, an approach meeting its limits in a 50-person organization.

As an industrial-organizational (I-O) psychologist, **I approach work with new clients like a scientist. I hypothesize what the challenges could be, then use data to validate and diagnose opportunities for leaders.**

In November 2025, I launched Client A's first engagement survey to offer the staff an opportunity to safely express their opinions anonymously, allowing me to understand their experience at scale.

The survey included questions that relate to engagement, including, but not limited to, management support, teamwork, psychological safety, workload, and access to learning and development (Bailey et al., 2017). I used the staff's recommendation of Client A as a place to work as a proxy for engagement (Im, 2022), a metric that is commonly leveraged in industry. Seventy percent of the staff participated in the survey, with a fairly representative sample of doctors, managers, and staff. After analyzing the survey results and open comments, I presented the results to the leadership team.

Client A's strengths were clear and resonated with the leaders' experiences. The staff shared that they had great doctors, clearly defined roles, supportive managers, and motivated colleagues—all testaments to years of refining top-quality care for their patients.

However, their top opportunities caught the leaders by surprise. At their January 2026 quarterly staff meeting, we shared the results and announced three commitments to action.

Three Leadership Commitments to Action

1. Establish Consistency With Active Leadership Styles

From the open-ended comments, stronger leadership emerged as the top theme. The staff wanted more assertiveness, accountability, and consistency from their leaders.

The leaders expressed concerns that they didn't want to rule with an iron fist; I asked them to consider whether their hands-off, laissez-faire approach (Perez, 2021) was having the impact they intended. From the comments, staff felt their leaders were sometimes inconsistent and even showed favoritism in some instances.

The leadership team committed to leadership training in the first half of 2026. Together, our goals are threefold:

- Explore **active leadership styles, like transactional and transformational leadership**, and their positive impact on commitment and performance in healthcare (Perez, 2021; Huang et al., 2025).
- Discuss what leadership looks like in alignment with the firm's core values and in response to staff feedback.
- Identify their individual strengths as leaders through one-on-one coaching, using Hogan's personality assessments as a starting point.

2. Promote Recognition of Good Teamwork

The staff also shared a need for more recognition of their good work. Although the staff shares positive remarks about each other at their quarterly staff meetings, a few were interested in the doctors explicitly recognizing their teams' contributions.

In response, the leadership team committed to gathering positive feedback from the doctors ahead of their staff meetings to share. What makes for good doctors does not necessarily make for good leaders, and this is where leaders and doctors can work together to continue rewarding good work.

We also discussed rescheduling some of the staff meetings so doctors could attend and directly recognize their teams' contributions. Sometimes simple logistical work can help enable this key lever for engagement (Jo & Shin, 2025). I found that doctors were significantly more likely to recommend Client A as a place to work compared to managers and staff; recognizing their teams' efforts could help close this gap.

I also encouraged the leaders to shout out the staff who were mentioned in their patient survey as exceptional team members, an example of leveraging multiple data sources to improve the work experience.

3. Open Outlets for Regular Feedback and Progress Updates

Taking action on feedback was Client A's lowest score, paired with comments asking for more communication and responsiveness to suggestions for improvement.

The staff's responses of taking action were significantly related to their likelihood of recommending Client A as a place to work, **meaning improving perceptions of action could directly improve their engagement. This became the driving force of our work together.**

Our first step, presenting results and commitments in January 2026, was well received. One leader called it one of their best meetings and said the staff really appreciated it.

But the work does not stop there. The leadership team committed to sharing progress on their commitments at their next quarterly staff meeting in April 2026. In May 2026, I will launch another survey, establishing a biannual cadence to continually measure sentiment and track progress.

Why This Matters for Small Organizations

Although the leaders initially believed teamwork was their main challenge, the survey data revealed more pressing opportunities in leadership, recognition, and taking action.

This is why survey work matters: It challenges assumptions and helps diagnose where to create meaningful organizational change. Data insights can be especially helpful for leaders of small organizations (<200 employees). Although they have limited resources to carry out full-scale HR programs, starting with a survey helps narrow focus to make the biggest impact on the employee experience.

As we continue to gather and act on feedback, our work will evolve from these commitments. Curious how our progress unfolds? Stay tuned for Part II of this case study later this year.

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This document was created and written by the author. Claude and ChatGPT were used solely for structural guidance, light grammar, formatting, and word choice refinement. All ideas, sentences, and substantive content are the author's own.

**The Alliance for Organizational Psychology:
Connecting and Advancing the Global Industrial, Work, and Organizational Psychology Community**

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Across the world, work and worker challenges increasingly transcend national borders and are shared across organizational and cultural contexts. The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence, the normalization of hybrid and remote work, rising global leadership demands, political and economic pressures, inequality, and workforce mobility are shaping the experiences of employees and organizations worldwide. Responding effectively to these interconnected challenges, and their implications for employee performance and well-being, requires collaborative global efforts, as local regulations and institutional structures across countries can inform discourse and contribute to globally informed solutions. For example, regulations surrounding data privacy differ substantially between the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation and more decentralized approaches in the United States, shaping how employee data can be collected and used. Hybrid work expectations also differ across countries, with some emphasizing structured flexibility whereas others prioritize autonomy and individual choice. Finally, labor protection and unionization norms differ across the world, affecting employee rights and workplace conditions. Although these challenges are global in scope, their manifestations and appropriate responses are deeply context dependent. Therefore, international coordination, shared learning, and sustained collaboration across geographic and cultural boundaries are essential for companies doing business across the world to effectively navigate these complex global dynamics.

As industrial, work, and organizational psychology (IWOP) professionals, we are uniquely positioned to address these challenges through evidence-based practice and scientific inquiry into human behavior at work. However, realizing this potential at a global scale requires mechanisms that extend beyond national and regional boundaries. It requires structures that enable professional IWOP societies to connect, exchange knowledge, and act collaboratively. Historically, there has been an absence of formal mechanisms to coordinate efforts, share timely information, and present a coherent, interlinked voice on global issues affecting employees worldwide. As a result, IWOP expertise has often been advanced within national or regional contexts, limiting opportunities to amplify shared priorities and respond collectively to emerging workforce challenges. To address this gap, the Alliance for Organizational Psychology (aka. Alliance) was founded. Linking IWOP societies worldwide, the Alliance provides connective infrastructure that enables sustained collaboration, amplifies collective impact, and strengthens the global relevance of the field (Alliance for Organizational Psychology, 2018a).

History of the Alliance

The Alliance for Organizational Psychology was formally established in 2009 by leaders from several major professional societies who recognized a shared challenge facing the IWOP community: the absence of a coordinated mechanism for sustained global collaboration. It emerged from the belief that enhanced communication and collaboration across IWOP associations could strengthen the visibility, relevance, and impact of IWOP research and practice worldwide. Founding members

included the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP), the European Association of Work and Organizational Psychology (EAWOP), and Division 1 (Organizational Psychology) of the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP). Although each organization had a strong history and identity, leaders acknowledged that the field would benefit from greater alignment and collective action on issues of global relevance. These three associations were collectively referred to as federated members. Federated members serve as the governing voice of the Alliance and elect a president, secretary-general, treasurer, and communications officer who serve to advance initiatives aligned with the Alliance's mission.

Over time, the Alliance expanded to include additional federated member organizations, reflecting growing interest in global engagement. The Canadian Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (CSIOP) formally joined soon after the Alliance was formed, and in 2025, the College of Organisational Psychologists (COP) of the Australian Psychological Society (APS) and the Brazilian Society of Work and Organizational Psychology (SBPOT) joined as federated members. This expansion represents a strategic broadening of the Alliance's geographic reach and influence. By incorporating federated members from additional regions, the Alliance strengthens international connections while ensuring its priorities reflect diverse local contexts and professional norms. Strategically, this growth enhances the Alliance's ability to shape initiatives that are globally relevant and representative, rather than centered primarily on European and North American perspectives.

In 2020, the Alliance further broadened its reach through the launch of the Big Tent initiative. Prior to its inception, direct communication with leadership of IWOP associations and societies was, at best, uncoordinated and more likely absent. The Big Tent established a structured mechanism for broad-reaching communication with association leadership who chose to connect, receive communications, and engage in dialogue. Through the Big Tent initiative, the Alliance aims to increase the visibility and relevance of IWOP worldwide by engaging a broader set of professional organizations beyond the Alliance's federated members (Alliance for Organizational Psychology, 2018b). Participating associations of the Big Tent are referred to as Network Partners, reflecting their role in expanding the Alliance's global network. By incorporating Network Partners, the Alliance increases inclusion across the international IWOP community while maintaining a shared foundation in scientific and applied values. For example, through the Big Tent, communications about initiatives, such as the Global Work and Organizational Psychology (G-WOP) 24-hour free online conference, were disseminated to leadership of more than 22 Network Partners, significantly expanding participation and reach.

Mission and Impact

The mission of the Alliance for Organizational Psychology is to support and advance the science and practice of IWOP globally and to expand its contribution to society by improving the quality of working life (Alliance for Organizational Psychology, 2018c). To advance this mission, the Alliance focuses on fostering collaboration among member societies, supporting the exchange of research and practice insights across regions, and facilitating dialogue around shared global workforce challenges.

The Alliance adopted the [Declaration of Identity](#) (Alliance for Organizational Psychology, 2018d), a foundational statement that articulates this mission and defines who IWOP professionals are, as well as their responsibilities and societal roles in a changing global work environment (Kozusznik & Glazer, 2021). It positions IWOP professionals as evidence-based scientists and practitioners who translate research into concrete impact, engage effectively with diverse stakeholders, and inform organizational and public decision-making. They promote well-being at work, address social and humanitarian challenges, innovate, and bridge science and practice. These responsibilities are critical in the current world of work, characterized by rapid technological change, globalization, labor market insecurity, and increasing concerns about mental health and inequality.

One of the most visible ways the Alliance advances its mission is through curated programming at major professional conferences. These Alliance-sponsored programs are intentionally designed to integrate global perspectives within a single session. Presenters and panelists are selected to represent diverse countries and professional contexts, ensuring that discussions move beyond parallel regional conversations to foster genuine international dialogue on shared challenges facing the IWOP community. Alliance conference sessions provide an accessible forum for convening global IWOP perspectives and fostering dialogue between international research and practice.

The Alliance Conference Committee collaborates with conference organizers to develop symposia and panel discussions that highlight globally relevant issues in IWOP. Since its establishment, cross-society coordination has become more intentional and sustained. The Alliance Conference Committee itself is composed of representatives from the federated member societies, creating a built-in mechanism for shared governance and collaborative decision-making. Through this structure, programming is jointly curated across societies and includes panelists representing multiple countries and associations, ensuring integrated global dialogue. Alliance sessions often align with broader societal priorities, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 8, which focuses on Decent Work and Economic Growth, and they also feature diverse international IWOP perspectives, and showcase high-interest topics. Finally, they aim to inform future research agendas and applied practices, stimulate cross-national collaborations, and contribute to policy discussions affecting employees worldwide.

Over the years, the Alliance has contributed programming to the SIOP Annual Conference, the EAWOP Congress, the International Congress of Applied Psychology (ICAP), and the Brazilian Congress of Work and Organizational Psychology (CBPOT) hosted by SBPOT. For example, at SIOP 2025, the Alliance addressed pressing global and societal challenges, including organizational responses to migration, systemic barriers facing Indigenous employees, and the role of trust during geopolitical uncertainty. These sessions encouraged deeper reflection on leadership responsibility, accountability, and the ethical dimensions of organizational practice. In the same year, the Alliance, along with several other global professional IWOP societies, governing bodies, and professionals, participated in the inaugural G-WOP conference. Looking ahead, the Alliance is currently assisting with the planning of the 2026 G-WOP Conference. Collectively, these efforts demonstrate how the Alliance leverages international collaboration to surface emerging issues, question established paradigms, and advance globally informed dialogue within the field.

At the upcoming 2026 SIOP Annual Conference in New Orleans, the Alliance will sponsor three sessions that exemplify its commitment to timely, globally relevant issues. These sessions are open to all SIOP members and provide opportunities to learn about cutting-edge research and applied insights from academia and practice:

- *Designing Human–AI Collaboration* will bring together academics and practitioners to examine how human–AI collaboration influences stress, trust, and psychological safety, with a focus on job design strategies that support well-being in technology-rich environments.
- *Worker Well-Being: Research and Practice Across Contexts* will highlight international perspectives on worker well-being, integrating empirical research with applied insights and engaging participants in cocreating practical solutions for today’s changing world of work.
- *Bringing Decent Work to the Next Generation of IWOP Professionals* will examine the concept of decent work (i.e., productive employment with fair pay, good working conditions, and prospects for personal and professional development), as well as methods to prepare future generations to improve worker well-being.

Because these sessions address issues that manifest differently around the world, they exemplify the value of Alliance-sponsored sessions by intentionally bringing global perspectives together. Each topic benefits from cross-national dialogue. For example, human–AI collaboration may unfold differently depending on regulatory frameworks or cultural norms related to trust in technology. Worker well-being may be shaped by societal safety nets and cultural expectations. The meaning and implementation of decent work may vary across economic systems and developmental contexts. By bringing together IWOP voices from different nations, the Alliance creates space to identify shared global challenges while recognizing important regional realities. Together, these sessions highlight the Alliance’s role in surfacing critical global issues, fostering international dialogue, and connecting academia, research, and practice in meaningful ways.

Looking Forward: An Invitation to Engage

As a member of SIOP, you are already part of the global network that the Alliance brings together. At a time when work is being reshaped by rapid AI integration, shifting labor markets, evolving regulatory requirements, and changing employee expectations, the need for coordinated global dialogue and collaboration has never been more pressing. The questions facing our field are not confined to one country. Addressing them requires shared insight, collective reflection, and sustained international collaboration. The Alliance exists to facilitate that dialogue and provide meaningful avenues for engagement.

Contribute to the Global Conversation

Each year through the [Alliance website](#) and announcement through the Big Tent network, the Alliance issues a Call for Proposals for Alliance-sponsored sessions at conferences such as SIOP, EAWOP, ICAP, and CBPOT (and soon the Australian Psychological Society's Industrial and Organisational Psychology Conference). Students, academics, and practitioners are encouraged to submit proposals for symposia, roundtables, and panel discussions that integrate global perspectives. Submissions are reviewed by the Alliance Conference Committee, and selected proposals are incorporated into the Alliance's curated program for each conference. Through this process, the Alliance elevates topics of shared international relevance and ensures representation across regions, roles, and professional backgrounds.

Engage as a Presenter, Panelist, or Attendee

In addition to submitting proposals, SIOP members may engage with the Alliance in multiple ways. Members may serve as chairs, presenters, or panelists in Alliance-sponsored sessions selected through the annual Call for Proposals, or they may be invited to contribute their expertise in Alliance-facilitated sessions organized by the Conference Committee where global experts contribute their unique perspectives. They may also participate as attendees, using these sessions as opportunities to exchange ideas, ask questions, and initiate collaborations that extend beyond the conference setting.

Alliance sessions also offer distinct value across the IWOP community: Academics may extend the reach of their scholarship, increase international visibility of their research, and connect with collaborators from other countries and IWOP associations. Practitioners can share their applied perspectives and benchmark their applied practices, thereby learning how their peers are addressing or navigating comparable challenges across the world. Students gain exposure to global perspectives, expand their professional networks, and identify pathways for future involvement.

Volunteer With the Alliance

SIOP members who wish to take on a more active role may express interest in serving as an expert panelist during an Alliance-facilitated session or in volunteering with the Alliance Conference Committee. The committee comprises representatives from the federated member organizations who serve a rotating term and collaborate to shape conference programming and strategic conference priorities. The Alliance is currently seeking representatives from CSIOP, SBPOT, and APS to join the Conference Committee.

We invite you to connect with and engage in the Alliance's ongoing work. Through participation as a submitter, panelist, attendee, or volunteer, you become part of a sustained effort to connect associations and their members, foster meaningful collaboration, and elevate the global voice of industrial, work, and organizational psychology. In doing so, you help ensure that our field remains globally relevant, scientifically grounded, and socially impactful in addressing the evolving complexities of work worldwide.

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The 2026 SIOP Annual Conference: Right Around the Corner

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Note. The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of U.S. Customs and Border Protection or the U.S. Federal Government.

As you are reading this, the 2026 SIOP Annual Conference in New Orleans, LA, is right around the corner. The Conference and Program Committees have planned an exciting conference, packed with scientific and practical insights and many fun networking activities. The conference will begin with an opening plenary session at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 29, followed by a Welcome Reception and Top Poster Display at 8:00 p.m. that night. There will be 3 full days of peer-reviewed programming on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. This year, SIOP is bringing back the Closing Plenary session, which will take place at 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 2, followed by a Mardi Gras-themed reception.

In our last report in *TIP* (Cucina et al., 2026), we mentioned that we received a total of 1,259 proposals for the peer-reviewed portion of the program and that 1,091 individuals signed up to be peer reviewers. Thank you to everyone for signing up to be reviewers. We would not have a program without the volunteer efforts of so many amazing SIOP members. Overall, the peer review process went very smoothly. Some reviewers were unable to complete their reviews, and a team of emergency reviewers graciously jumped in and conducted reviews over the Thanksgiving break. All proposals were reviewed by at least three peer reviewers.

In mid-December, the Program Trio (consisting of Jeffrey Cucina, Program Chair, Joe Allen, Past Program Chair, and Vipanchi Mishra, Program Chair-in-Training) and Robin Ganzel, the SIOP staff liaison for the Program Committee, met and built the program. The process of building the 2026 program was roughly similar to the process that Tonidandel and McCune (2019) described in their *TIP* article “Peering Behind the Curtain of the SIOP Program Building Process.” In a nutshell, the Program Trio reviewed submissions that were flagged by peer reviewers for potentially not following the Call for Proposals. For example, the Call for Proposals stated that “proposals with a commercial intent and focus are not permitted,” and the Program Trio reviewed proposals that were flagged for potentially violating that rule. Any submissions that were clearly not in compliance with the Call for Proposals were marked for rejection. Next, the group compiled the average peer reviewer ratings for each proposal. The average is taken across the rating scales and reviewers. The distributions of the ratings were then examined and the Program Trio determined cutoff scores for acceptance decisions. Cutoff scores varied by session type (e.g., posters), session length (i.e., 50 vs. 80 minutes), and space availability. The Program Trio considered a number of factors when determining the cutoff scores, including the anchors for the peer reviewer ratings (e.g., the lowest ranked anchors are “Not at all” and “Definitely not accept,” and the cutoff had to be set above these) and the impact of various cutoff scores on content area and session type representation in the accepted program. Any proposal meeting the cutoff scores was accepted, provided it followed the guidelines stated in the Call for Proposals. Finally, the group handled special requests for proposals (e.g., requests for roundtables, scheduling requests due to religious or other accommodations) and created the new Content Area Theme Tracks, which will be described later.

Incorporating Conference Attendee Feedback

The Program Trio has received both formal and informal feedback from SIOP Annual Conference attendees and SIOP leadership about potential enhancements to the program. In terms of informal feedback, some common concerns among attendees from past conferences have been regarding challenges for finding the sessions in their areas of interest, avoiding the need to shuffle between different rooms, and deciding between competing sessions at the same time. Some attendees also stated that particular content areas (e.g., artificial intelligence) and session types (e.g., panel discussions) were overrepresented.

In terms of formal feedback, the 2025 SIOP Annual Conference Survey asked attendees to provide planning suggestions for the 2026 SIOP Annual Conference. Nine themes were identified in that survey and are listed in Table 1. The Program Trio aimed to address Themes 2 (i.e., include broad range of topics/experts), 3 (i.e., increased representation across topics), 4 (i.e., improve scheduling of similar topics), 5 (i.e., increase research/less “fluff”), and both 6 and 9 (specifically more seating/space) during the program building process. Aspects of some themes (e.g., scheduling similar topics at different times) may be addressed in the future with adjustments to the scheduling system, and several other themes in Table 1 are not related to the program building process but can be addressed by SIOP staff and other committees. The Program Trio did decide to retain the current number of sessions for the 2026 SIOP Annual Conference because this is suggested by the *SIOP Conference & Program Charter: Conference Years 2023–2027* and because the Program Trio wanted to include as many presenters and presentations as possible in the program. The 2025 SIOP Annual Conference Survey also identified themes for negative reactions from attendees. Of these, three were related to the program building process. Attendees stated that certain topics, such as artificial intelligence, were overrepresented, there were too many sessions at the same time, and that there needs to be “more diversity in types of sessions, more symposia, and fewer panels.”

Table 1

2025 SIOP Annual Conference Survey Respondent Suggestions for the 2026 SIOP Annual Conference

#	Theme
1	Consider safety and logistics in New Orleans; expressed by domestic and international attendees
2	Broader range of topics and experts in the field
3	Increased representation across all topics/areas
4	Scheduling of similar content/areas should be at different times
5	Increased research focus/less “fluff”
6	Less concurrent sessions and more seating/space at sessions to avoid capacity; possibly reduce number of sessions available
7	Materials should be available in Whova before/during/after sessions
8	More considerations for food, accessibility, water, coffee, etc.
9	Better projections of attendance for sessions to guide room assignments and technology use; space considerations as to not run out of room, have sessions out of seating, etc.

To address the feedback, the Program Trio set a goal of creating a program that (a) included a sufficient number of live sessions (ideally at least 10) for each content area; (b) did not overrepresent the technology/artificial intelligence content area, but still included many sessions because this is a hot topic; (c) had a balance in terms of the number of symposia, panel discussions, and alternative sessions; (d) still met quality standards based on peer reviewer ratings; and (e) included experimental Content Area Theme Tracks to avoid scheduling highly rated sessions covering the same content areas at the same time.

Content Area Theme Tracks

This conference year, the Program Committee is experimenting with Content Area Theme Tracks in the program. The Content Area Theme Tracks will consist of back-to-back highly rated presentations in a content area that occur throughout the day in the larger rooms of the convention center, followed by a joint poster session consisting of the top posters in a content area. Each day, there will be four Content Area Theme Tracks in four separate rooms. The joint poster session will contain the top (usually 10 posters) in each day’s content areas.

This approach allows attendees interested in, for example, training/coaching/mentoring, to go to room B2-2 on Thursday and attend sessions just on that topic, then grab coffee and snacks with others interested in that topic (during the coffee break in the exhibit hall), and finally see the top 10 posters on training/coaching/mentoring. The SIOP Program Trio selected the presentations for each Content Area Theme Track from among the proposals with the highest peer reviewer numerical ratings. Some additional adjustments were made based on how well the submission information matched a content area and to balance the session types (e.g., panel discussions vs. symposia) for each content area. The posters were selected entirely based on numerical ratings. A list of the Content Area Theme Tracks can be found in Table 2. We expect that this type of programming format will make SIOP a more enriching experience for the attendees. Note that two topic areas (i.e., global/international/cross-cultural issues and legal/ethical/current events/humanitarian/prosocial) had too few submissions to warrant a track this year. Sessions for these content areas were scheduled using the same process for the remaining sessions that were not selected for the Content Area Theme Tracks. This process uses an autoscheduler that assigns sessions in a semirandom manner while avoiding scheduling conflicts.

Table 2
Content Area Theme Tracks

Content Area	Day	Room	Live Presentation (Nonposter) Times	Poster Session
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility	Thurs.	218/219	8:00 a.m.-3:20 p.m.	4:00 p.m.
Organizational Processes/Development/Culture	Thurs.	220/221/222	8:00 a.m.-3:20 p.m.	4:00 p.m.
Technology/Artificial Intelligence	Thurs.	B2-2	8:00 a.m.-3:20 p.m.	4:00 p.m.
Training/Coaching/Mentoring	Thurs.	B2-1	8:00 a.m.-3:20 p.m.	4:00 p.m.
Groups/Teams	Fri.	218/219	8:00 a.m.-3:20 p.m.	4:00 p.m.
Leadership/Leader Development	Fri.	B2-1	8:00 a.m.-3:20 p.m.	4:00 p.m.
Occupational Health/Work and Family	Fri.	220/221/222	8:00 a.m.-3:20 p.m.	4:00 p.m.
Selection/Assessment/Individual Differences	Fri.	B2-2	8:00 a.m.-3:20 p.m.	4:00 p.m.
I-O Psychologist Career Development/Teaching	Sat.	B2-1	8:00 a.m.-2:50 p.m.	3:00 p.m.
Job Performance/Withdrawal/Misbehavior	Sat.	218/219	8:00 a.m.-2:50 p.m.	3:00 p.m.
Motivation, Attitudes, and Emotions	Sat.	220/221/222	8:00 a.m.-2:50 p.m.	3:00 p.m.
Research Methods/Measurement/Statistics	Sat.	B2-2	8:00 a.m.-2:50 p.m.	3:00 p.m.

Balanced Program

Another goal of the Program Committee for this year's conference was to create a balanced program in terms of content areas and session types. This goal addresses complaints and concerns that the Program Committee has received in recent years that the sessions are too heavily oriented toward certain topics or session types. This year's narrowing of the number of content areas from 31 to 14 better allowed the Program Trio to monitor and adjust the content area balance. In general, the balancing effort resulted in an adequate representation of most content areas in the program and a reasonable balance of session types. Figure 1 shows the number of live presentation sessions and posters for each content area. Almost all of the content areas have at least 10 live presentation sessions. Many traditional I-O psychology content areas are well-represented, including leadership/leader development (with 44 live presentation sessions) and organizational/processes/development culture (with 51). Figure 2 shows the number and percentage of each live presentation session type. Although panel discussions (with 162 sessions) were the most numerous session type, there were also 128 symposia and 106 alternative sessions.

Figure 1. Number of Live Presentation (Nonposters) Sessions and Posters by Content Area

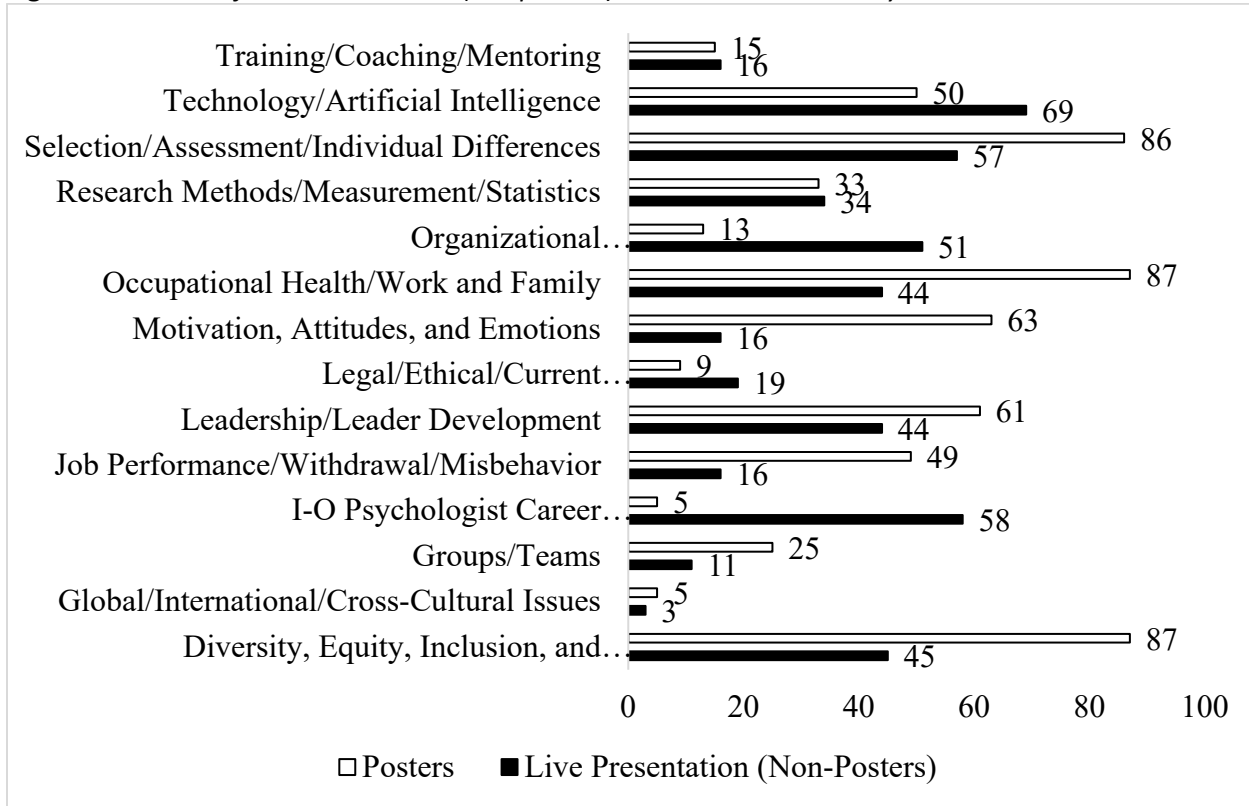
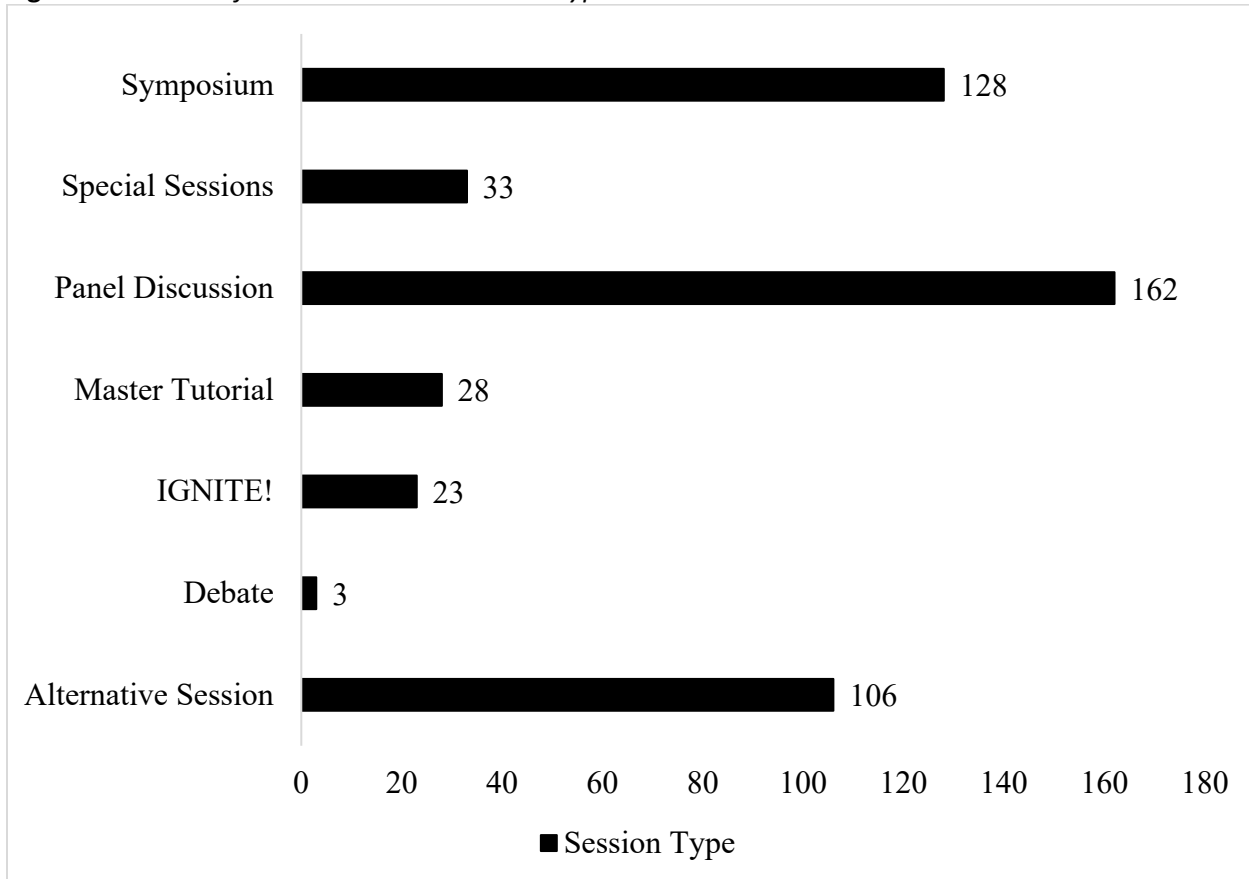


Figure 2. Number of Live Presentation Session Types



Room Assignments

After the schedule was created, the Program Chair shifted the room assignments for the live presentation sessions to better group those covering the same content area into the same general rooms throughout each day. For example, almost all of the technology/artificial intelligence sessions are in the Riverside (R) rooms and occupational health/work, and family sessions are typically in rooms 207 to 220/221/222. Due to differences in the number of sessions for a content area across timeslots, special requests (e.g., requests for roundtables), and scheduling issues, the relationship between rooms and content areas is not perfect. However, the room assignments should help attendees better connect with other scientists and practitioners in their interest areas and minimize the amount of shuffling between rooms.

Decision Letters

As was mentioned in our previous *TIP* article this year (Cucina et al., 2026), the Program Committee set a goal of sending out acceptance and rejection notifications in mid-to-late December or early January. After the program was finalized, decision letters were emailed to all submitters of proposals for the 2026 SIOP Annual Conference during the first full week of January.

Conference Committee Updates

When you need a break from meetings, posters, panels and symposia, the Conference Committee has activities planned to provide a change of pace. Get into the spirit of the conference at the Welcoming Reception after the Opening Plenary. Drop in on a book discussion during lunch, or explore ways I-O psychology is contributing to society as a whole during the midday breaks. Visit the Career Open House. Check out the talents of fellow conference goers or showcase your own at the Art Exhibition and SIOP's Got Talent. Remember to check out the sponsors in the Exhibit Hall! Finally, wrap up your conference experience at the New Orleans-themed reception immediately after the Closing Plenary.

See you in New Orleans, and "Laissez les bons temps rouler!"

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- Tonidandel, S. & McCune, E. (2019). Peering behind the curtain of the SIOP program building process. *The Industrial-Organizational Psychologist*, 57(1), 43–45.

Your First SIOP Annual Conference: A Practitioner’s Survival Guide

Caitlynn Sendra & Tiffany Hiscock

So, you have decided to attend your first SIOP annual conference, congratulations! Regardless of your background or experience, attending SIOP’s annual conference for the first time can feel overwhelming, a bit like attending your first day of grad school. SIOP’s annual conference truly is a diverse event that attracts a wide variety of attendees with different interests, goals, and priorities. Specifically for practitioners, maximizing your time can often be the make-or-break between being self-funded or successfully making the business case for why your employer should sponsor your attendance. It is for this reason that we, on the Professional Practice Committee, sought to create a practical guide for current or future practitioners headed to their first SIOP annual conference.

Tip #1: Understand What SIOP’s Annual Conference Is...and What It Is Not

First, a reality check: SIOP’s annual conference is not your typical HR industry conference. It is not vendor heavy; most of the speakers have not written books or given speeches in front of audiences of thousands (although some of them certainly have!). The annual conference sits at the intersection of science and practice, and it leans heavily toward evidence, theory, and methodological rigor. Rather than every session feeling like a polished TED talk that focuses on providing the “right answers,” you should expect sessions to feel more like a community-oriented discussion where multiple data sources and points of views will be discussed and deliberated. This is one of the best parts of the annual conference, and understanding this from the get-go will help to set expectations for what you can get out of your attendance.

Tip #2: Master the Art of Practitioner Agenda Building

As a practitioner, not all sessions are necessarily going to be the right fit, and that is okay. As we already mentioned, this is an extremely diverse conference, and strategically building your agenda is one of the most important things you can do to maximize your value. Here are some factors that you should consider.

1. Focus on attending sessions that will provide insights and takeaways relevant to your area of practice.
2. To do this, when building your agenda, we recommend searching for sessions that are tagged as “mostly relevant for practitioners” or “relevant for both academics and practitioners.” Looking at the speaker list and their affiliations can also be a helpful indicator to ensure that the session will include perspectives from other practitioners.
3. Take advantage of the parts of the agenda built with you in mind. Every year, the SIOP annual conference includes various events and sessions aimed specifically for practitioners. These can be great resources, especially for first-time practitioner attendees. Here are some sessions to consider.

Session title	Description	Attendance details
“So, Are You a Workplace Therapist?": Marketing I-O to Organizations	I-O psychology plays a vital role in improving workplace outcomes, yet the field remains underrecognized in much of the business world. This alternative session explores how I-O practitioners can better communicate the value of the field to organizational leaders. This session highlights real-world strategies, challenges, and lessons learned in marketing I-O within organizations. The session will provide practical guidance for both practitioners and students seeking to increase the visibility and	Thursday at 10:30am

	influence of I-O psychology in their work contexts.	
Telling Your Story: Translating and Communicating I-O Skills	I-O psychology professionals and students must overcome a translation barrier between the technical language of SIOP competencies (e.g., psychometrics, job analysis) and the NACE career readiness competencies (e.g., communication, leadership) often used by employers. This panel of academics and practitioners will engage in a lively discussion on how to translate I-O expertise to bridge the gap, ensuring graduates and early career folks are marketable, able to advance through generative AI screening processes, and be recognized for their valuable talent.	Thursday at 10:30am
From Graduate School to Practice: Navigating the Early Years as an I-O Professional	This panel aims to examine the career transition from graduate school to the workplace, focusing on the critical period between securing a role in the field and establishing one's professional identity. Authors bring together a group of panelists who will discuss their experiences in building relationships, establishing credibility, and overcoming challenges unique to I-O psychologists. The aim of this session is to help early-career I-O practitioners transition from graduate training to their careers by equipping attendees with strategies for navigating workplace dynamics and self-advocacy.	Thursday at 4:00pm
Selling I-O Without Selling Out: A Vital Skill for All Practitioners	I-O psychology delivers extraordinary value to organizations; however, its ROI can be unclear to organizational stakeholders. The panel will focus on the roles external and internal I-Os and salespeople play in communicating the value of I-O. Attendees will leave with concrete suggestions on how to "sell I-O" without selling out.	Friday at 8:00am
Career Best Practice Sharing & Coffee Meetup	Join experienced practitioners to learn about their best practices in areas like employee listening, AI, performance management, leadership development, and analytics. Come prepared with a specific issue you'd like to discuss or simply ask questions to learn more about how those companies manage these topics, make decisions, and benchmark.	Friday at 8:00am

Practitioner Needs Workshop: Cocreating SIOF Support for Practitioners	Have ideas for how SIOF can better support practitioners? Join our interactive working session, Practitioner Needs Workshop: Cocreating SIOF Support for Practitioners, to tell us what support and resources you need to stay and thrive.	Friday at 4:00pm
Career Benchmarking Event	A one-time, small group mentoring session where you'll learn how I-O practitioners navigated personal and professional cross-roads to shape their careers. This event offers insights into making job changes, exploring new directions, and navigating career transitions. Small group discussions will be facilitated by practitioners with diverse career experiences.	Friday at 4:00pm
Practitioner Reception	If your goal is to see how I-O lives and breathes in the "real world," this is your home base. Celebrate the work we do and the people who do it. Meet a mentor or peer who is navigating similar challenges, all while enjoying food and surprise giveaways.	Friday at 5:30pm
Problem Solving Across Industries as an I-O Practitioner	I-O psychologists span diverse industries yet share a common educational foundation. This session shows how practitioners can adapt core skills to tackle similar challenges across sectors. In breakout groups, attendees from fields like the military, healthcare, government, and technology will explore cross-industry problem solving. The goal is to highlight shared competencies, debunk role misconceptions, and empower I-O professionals to lead and thrive across contexts through influence, expertise, and strategic impact.	Saturday at 12:30pm

*Note: Sessions specific to the 2026 SIOF Annual Conference. Always check the Whova conference app for the most up-to-date information on attendance details, as they are subject to change.

4. Build flexibility into your agenda. As you are building your agenda, you will quickly find that you may have interest in multiple sessions occurring during the same timeslot. It is perfectly okay to add multiple sessions to your agenda and feel it out as you go. If you start at one session and it turns out not to be what you were expecting (maybe not relevant enough to practice, for example), feel free to leave and jump into one of those other sessions instead.
5. It is also important to keep in mind as a first-time attendee that the annual conference can be an overwhelming experience. Keep your well-being in mind as you plan your agenda by intentionally scheduling in breaks. Make sure to check in with yourself throughout the conference and prioritize taking additional breaks as needed.

Tip #3: Learn All You Can From Veteran Attendees

One of the most helpful things you can do to prepare for your first SIOP conference is to seek advice from practitioner attendees who have gone and learned valuable lessons. To help make this easier, we have collated some of the best advice collected from practitioners in our own professional networks. Here is what they had to say:

1. **Master networking:** Networking was by far the most common topic of advice from veteran practitioner attendees. They wanted newcomer practitioners to *not* underestimate how important networking is to the SIOP conference experience and recommended that people not only leverage the receptions but also the actual conference sessions as networking opportunities. It is a lot easier to strike up a conversation with someone after you both attended the same session; already you know that you have a common interest and an immediate topic to discuss (e.g., “what did you think of X research finding?”). Attendees should also leverage the Whova app to network and connect with others who may have a similar background (e.g., alumni of the same program) or shared interests.
2. **Help bridge the scientist–practitioner gap:** Sometimes practitioners feel like they are less valued or less important within the broader SIOP community. But practitioners bring something incredibly valuable to the conference—lived experience. If something does not feel practical or grounded in reality, feel free to ask questions. And even if you learn something that is not immediately applicable to your daily work, it may still help to refine how you think about a problem or challenge an assumption you may have previously held.
3. **Do not lose momentum!** It is easy to let the postconference exhaustion get to you, but it is important to digest learnings and information while it is still fresh. Within a week of the conference, try to write a summary or key takeaways and ideas, and maybe even schedule a meeting with your teammates to share insights and discuss how it might be applicable to your work. And do not forget to follow up with the connections you made through networking.

(*Bonus tip* A few veteran attendees also suggested that newcomers bring comfortable shoes and multiple layers, as the conference often involves a LOT of walking, and room temperatures can often vary widely regardless of outdoor temperatures.)

Closing Thoughts

Your first SIOP annual conference as a practitioner might feel overwhelming, intellectually challenging, and occasionally uncomfortable, and that is okay. It means you are engaging with the field and taking in ideas while still wrestling with real-world complexity.

To make your first conference a success, you only need curiosity, humility, and a willingness to engage with different points of view. Welcome to the SIOP annual conference. We hope you will join us for many years to come!

Appendix

Although this guide is specifically aimed at practitioners, we also wanted to take a moment to highlight additional resources relevant to all newcomers to the SIOP annual conference.

[SIOP Ambassador Program](#)

[SIOP first-time attendee tips and FAQ](#)

[SIOP newcomer reception information](#)

The Philosophy of Talent Management: Reviewing the Book *Rethinking Talent Decisions*

Steven T. Hunt

I met Dr. Sharna Wiblen, author of *Rethinking Talent Decisions: A Tale of Complexity, Technology and Subjectivity*, at an HR technology conference in 2025 where we discussed the subjective nature of talent management. Dr. Wiblen's observation that "talent decisions are complex because talent is a socially constructed concept" (Wiblen, 2024, p. 3) strongly aligns with my views that talent and performance management involve "making social judgments...about how much the organization values having an employee as a member" (Hunt, 2022, p.164). Dr. Wiblen and I both view talent management as a form of social decision-making, and the more she told me about her book *Rethinking Talent Decisions*, the more I wanted to read it.

Rethinking Talent Decisions is intended to help organizations improve talent management processes but is unlike most books written on the topic of talent management. Most talent management books are filled with models, processes, and methods for identifying and retaining high-potential employees and measuring and developing employee performance. They often read like "how-to" books with step-by-step instructions for building talent management processes. In contrast, *Rethinking Talent Decisions* reads more like a philosophy book about talent management. It challenges the reader to explore underlying beliefs and assumptions that shape how we approach the concept of talent management. As Dr. Wiblen puts it, "I aim to incite questions and inspire you to think critically and deeply about the issues and topics we explore" (p. XXVI).

Rethinking Talent Decisions is written for readers who seek to understand the nature of talent management at a fundamental level. This is a group I belong to, as I have a deep interest in the topic. Readers looking for prescriptive guidance for building talent management processes may find *Rethinking Talent Decisions* to be overly theoretical. If you are looking for explicit steps on how to construct performance rating scales or conduct talent review meetings, this may not be the right book for you. But if the following passage about talent management piques your interest, then you are likely to find this book to be an interesting dive into the ontological, epistemological, sociological, and technological factors that define and influence how leaders identify and measure talent within organizations.

As sentient human beings, we humans possess a range of cognitive and emotional faculties that shape our understanding and perception of talent. Our perspectives and opinions can fluctuate over time, leading to a dynamic concept of talent. This human factor adds a layer of complexity to talent decision-making, as individual biases, beliefs and values can influence how talent is identified, assessed, and managed within organizations. (p.1)

Rethinking Talent Decisions guides us through questions to address and clarify the complex, multifaceted nature of talent decisions within a company. It starts by delving into the subjective nature of talent, noting that even the meaning of the word "talent" varies from one person to the next. Talent is often treated as a fixed entity someone is said to possess, but, in reality, talent is highly dynamic, reflecting behaviors a person displays over time, how those behaviors compare to behaviors displayed by other people within an organization, and whether the behaviors are felt to align with the changing strategic needs of the organization. Dr. Wiblen encourages readers to think of talent as a verb instead of a noun, given its transient nature. People do not have talent; they display talent. What defines talent also changes across stakeholders within an organization. For example, an employee viewed as highly talented by external customers or managers could be viewed differently by senior leaders who have different priorities, perceptions, and expectations.

The book also explores how technology companies and consulting vendors influence how companies define talent and make talent decisions. These groups are cast in a somewhat negative light, referred to as "foil characters because their values fundamentally clash with [those of the organization]" (p. 25). The book emphasizes the risk of companies adopting talent decision methods promoted by technology companies or consulting vendors that do not reflect the unique needs of the organization. The definitions and methods used to make talent decisions should not be adopted from one source. Companies should actively negotiate the meaning, identification and management of talent by bringing together different stakeholder groups, including executives, HR, IT, and line managers. Openly discussing conflicts that arise when answering critical questions, such as "what does talent mean in our organization" (p. 163), "what talent identification process is best for our organization?" (p. 174), or "which talent management technology system is best for our organization" (p. 183).

My experience helping companies design talent management methods has given me some fairly strong opinions about talent management practices. *Rethinking Talent Decisions* does an excellent job calling out subtle yet critical concepts that tend to be ignored in many discussions about talent management.

However, there are a few places where I found myself questioning assertions made in the book.

- Technology is treated more as a necessary evil that companies must use as opposed to a tool to manage talent in more effective ways. Technology both limits and enables how companies make talent decisions. Companies that fail to embrace technological innovation when rethinking talent decisions are condemning employees to live in a world constrained by limitations of outdated talent management solutions.
- The book says, “talent is so complex and includes all the subtleties of life and organizations that it cannot be reduced to a single number, numerical digit, score, or measure” (p. 214). I agree that a person’s full talents cannot be captured by a single number, but the reality is that the most impactful talent management decisions ultimately come down to a single ordinal rating of one sort or another. Deciding to pay one person more than another is a form of numerical rating, and choosing whether or not to promote someone is a binary rating of their potential. Ratings may be inadequate to describe people in their full glory, but they are a necessary part of talent decisions. I found myself wanting more discussion of how to reconcile the complex nature of talent with the reductive need to rate people to guide operational talent decisions.
- One particular statement in the book struck me as highly odd: “talent scores emphasize past performance. And as we know from Finance ‘past performance is not an indication of future performance’” (p. 214). Past performance may not predict future performance in finance, although I question this claim, but one of the fundamental findings in psychology is that past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior in similar situations. Talent scores, assuming they accurately reflect past job performance, are likely to be one of the most effective predictors of future performance in similar roles.
- The book states that “talent management is inherently unequal and cannot be fair” (p.179). This might confuse some readers, given that well-designed talent management methods play an instrumental role in improving perceptions of fairness by improving procedural justice around compensation and staffing decisions that impact employees’ careers (Beaugre & Baron, 2006). I asked the author, Dr. Wiblen, about this, and she explained that because she is Australian some of the words in the book may have different connotations compared to American talent management texts. In Australia, the word “fair” is often used to mean treating all people the same way, whereas in the US, being fair is more about being able to equitably justify why some people are treated differently from others.

Rethinking Talent Decisions provides an in-depth examination of factors that affect how companies define, identify and manage talent. It also incorporates a variety of illustrative and sometimes whimsical stories to make points ranging from quoting Brene Brown to reciting lyrics from the 80s boy band New Kids on the Block. I particularly appreciated the author’s focus on the impact talent decisions have on employee well-being. Talent management is not just about the performance of organizations. It is also about the lives of the people in the organization, and “groups of humans should discuss their beliefs, ideas, mental impressions, and thoughts to ensure they have a shared understanding of the key concepts that form the basis of their talent decisions” (p. 91). This is a discussion well worth having in any company, regardless of size or industry.

An added personal reward I gained from reading this book was the chance to engage with Dr. Wiblen, a scientist who shares my interest in talent management but approaches it from a more sociological versus psychological perspective. We plan to delve further into this topic, exploring how companies can optimally balance the value of having a highly qualitative, expansionist view toward the definition of talent with the operational need to reduce assessments of talent into specific metrics and categories that can be used to guide talent decisions at scale across the organization. Maybe that will be a future book?

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Book Review: *Human Diversity: The Biology of Gender, Race & Class*

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Human Diversity: The Biology of Gender, Race & Class.

Murray, C. (2020). Hachette Group Books.

Charles Murray is nothing less than the Cartographer of Humanity, documenting reliable population ability differences. Until recently, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's enforcement of Title VII of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1991 used evidence of group differences ("adverse impact" comparing employment decision-making based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin) as *prima facie* evidence of employment discrimination.

Disparate impact has been defined by EEOC since the Supreme Court's 1971 *Griggs* decision as a difference in selection rates (less than 4/5ths of the best group's rate) comparing covered groups and/or underutilization comparing an employer's workforce to their labor market. Such group selection differences or a group's underutilization shift the burden to an employer to demonstrate that the employment decision-making is "job related and consistent with business necessity" as defined in EEOC's 1978 *Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures*. The White House, however, has recently issued an Executive Order (April 23, 2025) challenging the use of the adverse impact *prima facie* discrimination trigger:

It is the policy of the United States to eliminate the use of disparate-impact liability in all contexts to the maximum degree possible to avoid violating the Constitution, Federal civil rights laws, and basic American ideals.

It is likely that a constitutional "adverse impact" challenge will end up at the Supreme Court in the foreseeable future. So, the inductively reasoned "equality of results" advocates will certainly cherry-pick Murray's exceptional tome as they did with *The Bell Curve*. Murray's contribution to behavioral science reliably documents that objective, job-related decisions do not support the advocates' political redistributive *equity* agenda of equal results.

The early map makers described unknown territory as "thar be dragons"—today's social justice *equity* advocates? The Supreme Court likely will ultimately have to decide between equal opportunity and equal employment. This tension between equal opportunity (individuals) and equal results (groups) caused the late Justice Scalia to opine about

the evil day on which the Court will have to confront the question: whether, or to what extent, are the disparate-impact provisions of Title VII consistent with the Constitution's guarantee of equal protection?

Science is defined by prediction: Murray's *Human Diversity* will unquestionably provide the reliable information about group ability differences that will illuminate this inevitable constitutional challenge to Title VII's statistical definition of employment discrimination.

IOtas

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Samuel Blacher, Management at Work, presented work on workplace skip-level meetings at the the 21st European Conference on Management, Leadership, and Governance. The research poster, short paper as published in the conference proceedings (open access), and PhD dissertation as published on ProQuest (with an open access link) are available via <https://www.managementatwork.com/fslstudy>.

He also had an opinion paper, “Meeting culture: Hidden costs, pitfalls and practical guidelines,” published by CIO magazine at <https://www.cio.com/article/4143747/meeting-culture-hidden-costs-pitfalls-and-practical-guidelines.html>



Zainab Aderinwale, MSc, MA, developed the [Passion–Problem–Solution \(PPS\) Founder Acceleration Framework](#), a psychology-driven model designed to support women entrepreneurs and emerging leaders in evaluating ventures and strengthening decision-making.



Megan Leasher, Cincinnati Children's, has been recognized with the [2026 Icons of Change](#) International Award for her work advancing leadership development, talent strategy, and workforce innovation, all aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.



Chet Robie, Timothy G. Wingate, **Nataliya Baytalskaya**, and **Hilary Butera** recently published a new, open-access study in the *International Journal of Selection and Assessment* that tracks how candidates are using tools like ChatGPT on unproctored pre-hire assessments—and tests a low-friction way to stop it. “Candidate Generative AI Use in Pre-Hire Employment Assessments: Self-Reported Incidence and the Impact of Warnings” is available [here](#).