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Work Expectations Profile

Research Report

Research Summary

The *Work Expectations Profile*, a self-assessment from Inscape Publishing, helps respondents to better understand and manage their work expectations and to transform their attitude toward work.

Profile development occurred in two phases:

1) The alpha research was conducted to identify the content and types of work expectations. This research was based on responses from a sample of 964 individuals. Through Factor Analysis, 11 categories of work expectations were identified: *Structure, Diversity, Recognition, Autonomy, Environment, Expression, Teamwork, Stability, Balance, Career Growth,* and *Compensation*.

2) The beta research was conducted to confirm the existence of the 11 scales, to improve the items within each scale, and to determine the reliability and validity of the scales. This research was based on responses from a sample of 646 respondents. Analyses confirmed the existence of the 11 scales. In addition, all scales were found to be highly reliable and valid.

Theoretical Background

Behavioral researchers are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of work expectations in the employment relationship. Research has demonstrated a direct relationship between the extent to which employee work expectations have been discussed and/or met, and employee tenure, job satisfaction, and job commitment (see for example: Buckley, Veres, Fedor, Wiese, and Carraher, 1998; Turnley and Feldman, 1998; Wanous, Poland, Premack, and Davis, 1992).

Many of these studies have focused on the "psychological contract," which can be defined as "a set of beliefs about what each party is entitled to receive and obligated to give, in exchange for another party's contributions" in the work setting (Morrison and Robinson, 1997). In other words, the psychological contract is what one expects in return for what one provides at work. It should be emphasized that employee and employer need not agree on the details of the contract for each to believe a contract exists. In fact, the most remarkable feature of the psychological contract is that participants feel that a promise was made to meet their expectations even if they never verbalized their expectation to the other person. In examining the psychological contract, it becomes apparent that being silent about one's expectations is the rule, not the exception.

Why don't people discuss their work expectations? First, people generally aren't taught to consciously identify and communicate their expectations. Most people become aware of specific or important expectations only after they are disappointed. Second, the need to

discuss one's expectations of work is a relatively new phenomenon. Until recently, the psychological contract may not have been discussed, but it was understood. Specifically, in the traditional workplace, a psychological contract represented an unspoken expectation that, in exchange for loyalty and hard work, an employee would be compensated fairly and would have a job for life. This is no longer the case. In today's workplace, change and uncertainty are considered normal, and what constitutes a psychological contract is markedly different. Employees are still expected to work hard and employers continue to hope for loyalty; however, employees are no longer offered a job for life in return for loyalty and hard work. The workplace psychological contract of 10 years ago is clearly outdated and its updated version remains ambiguous.

If employees are not offered a job for life, what are they offered? What do they want? It is essential that today's employees be able to identify and manage their work expectations. Unspoken and unmet expectations can have a potent, negative impact on work productivity. Even if the expectations were never openly discussed, a failure to have the expectations satisfied can feel like a violation or betrayal to employees (Morrison and Robinson, 1997). Once the violation occurs, the situation can be difficult to rectify. Employees begin to exhibit signs of distrust and emotional detachment from the employer, accompanied by a decrease in productivity. Taken further, those unmet expectations can lead to an increase in job turnover (Turner and Feldman, 1998).

In contrast, when employees are encouraged to openly discuss their expectations and make frequent updates to their unspoken psychological contract, working relationships become more effective. In fact, research shows that the key to managing expectations is that they be spoken. Even if an employee's expectations are not met, having the opportunity to learn why can decrease or eliminate the negative consequences for both the employee and the organization (Turnley and Feldman, 1998).

The process of helping employees become aware of and communicate their expectations is clearly linked to reduced turnover and increased productivity and job satisfaction. The *Work Expectations Profile* is key to this process. It helps individuals identify, understand, and manage their work expectations.

Alpha Research

Item Development

In developing items, the goal was to create a comprehensive list of general (i.e., not job-specific) work expectations. First, a thorough review of academic literature, mass-market books and periodicals, and Web sites was conducted in search of information on employee expectations and the psychological contract. Twenty categories of work expectations were identified in the literature. Inscape Publishing research staff then developed five items to measure each of the 20 categories. Items were written to be clear, concise, and comprehensive measures of the given category. In total, the alpha version of the response form contained 100 items.

Response Format

A five-point Likert scale was selected as the response format. The ratings were as follows:

1 = Not Important
2 = Slightly Important
3 = Important
4 = Very Important
5 = Essential

Research Sample

The alpha version of the response form was completed by 964 respondents in the U.S. and Canada. Respondents had to be employed within an organization, as many of the items referred to relationships with either a supervisor or co-workers. As shown in Table 1, the research sample was well distributed across demographic variables.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Alpha Research Sample

Gender	N	%
Male	404	41.9
Female	544	56.4
Missing	16	1.7

Age	N	%
Under 18	2	.2
18–25	106	11.0
26–35	236	24.5
36–45	313	32.5
46–55	212	22.0
56 or older	72	7.5
Missing	23	2.4

Education	N	%
Some high school	11	1.1
High school graduate	84	8.7
Some college	264	27.4
Technical or trade school	77	8.0
College graduate	331	34.3
Graduate/professional degree	194	20.1
Missing	3	.3

Heritage	N	%
African American	137	14.2
Asian American	26	2.7
Caucasian	706	73.2
Hispanic	42	4.4
Native American	29	3.0
Other	21	2.2
Missing	3	.3

Employment	N	%
Secretarial/Clerical	86	8.9
Executive	52	5.4
Mid-level Management	168	17.4
Supervisory	102	10.6
Professional	191	19.8
Mechanical/Technical	45	4.7
Skilled Trades	20	2.1
Warehouse/General Labor	10	1.0
Assembly Worker	5	.5
Customer Service	72	7.5
Sales	41	4.3
Health Care Worker	39	4.0
Teacher/Educator	45	4.7
Custodial/Housekeeping	0	0.0
Homemaker	2	.2
Other	79	8.2
Missing	7	.7

Industrial Classification	N	%
Manufacturing	115	11.9
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	178	18.5
Public Administration	48	5.0
Wholesale/Retail Trade	65	6.7
Business Services	156	16.2
Educational Services	98	10.2
Health Services	101	10.5
Transportation/Utilities	74	7.7
Other	117	12.1
Missing	12	1.2

Location	N	%
Central States	226	23.5
Western States	64	6.6
Eastern States	350	36.3
Southern States	233	24.1
Canada	50	5.2
Missing	41	4.3

Analyses and Results

Analyses of the alpha research data set were designed to determine how to best categorize and measure work expectations. First we had to determine how many scales were involved and their content. Item responses were submitted to Factor Analysis using the Principal Components Method with Varimax Rotation. An 11-factor solution was selected as the most meaningful.

Next we determined which items best measured the given factors. Items were assigned to scales based on their factor loadings (partial correlation of the items with the factors). Items with loadings of .30 or higher were retained for further study. In total, 80 items were retained.

A review of the items in each factor suggested the following labels for the 11 scales:

- Structure
- Diversity
- Recognition
- Autonomy
- Environment
- Expression

- Teamwork
- Stability
- Balance
- Career Growth
- Compensation

The internal consistency reliability of each of the 11 scales was measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. This statistic represents the average correlation between all items on the scale. Alpha coefficients ranged from .72 to .87.

Beta Research

Item Development

As mentioned, 80 items were retained from the alpha response form. Additional items were written to strengthen the validity of the eleven scales identified in the alpha research. Items were again written to be clear, concise, and comprehensive measures of their intended scales. In total, 33 new items were developed. The beta response form, thus, had a total of 113 items.

Response Format

The same response format, a five-point Likert scale measuring importance, was used as in the alpha version.

Research Sample

The beta version of the response form was completed by 646 respondents from the U.S. and Canada. Once again, respondents had to be employed with an organization (i.e., not self-employed). As shown in Table 2, the research sample was well distributed across demographic variables.

Table 2. Characteristics of the Beta Research Sample

Gender	N	%
Male	288	44.6
Female	346	53.6
Missing	12	1.9

Age	N	%
Under 18	1	.2
18–25	100	15.5
26–35	175	27.1
36–45	160	24.8
46–55	150	23.2
56 or older	48	7.4
Missing	12	1.9

Education	N	%
Some high school	4	.6
High school graduate	35	5.4
Some college	140	21.7
Technical or trade school	49	7.6
College graduate	230	35.6
Graduate/professional degree	182	28.2
Missing	6	.9

Heritage	N	%
African American	100	15.5
Asian American	14	2.2
Caucasian	461	71.4
Hispanic	44	6.8
Native American	7	1.1
Other	11	1.7
Missing	9	1.4

Employment	N	%
Secretarial/Clerical	55	8.5
Executive	32	5.0
Mid-level Management	87	13.5
Supervisory	34	5.3
Professional	135	20.9
Mechanical/Technical	26	4.0
Skilled Trades	7	1.1
Warehouse/General Labor	4	.6
Assembly Worker	1	.2
Customer Service	32	5.0
Sales	23	3.6
Health Care Worker	25	3.9
Teacher/Educator	107	16.6
Custodial/Housekeeping	0	0.0
Homemaker	0	0.0
Other	71	11.0
Missing	7	1.1

Industrial Classification	N	%
Manufacturing	49	7.6
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	75	11.6
Public Administration	36	5.6
Wholesale/Retail Trade	26	4.0
Business Services	89	13.8
Educational Services	156	24.1
Health Services	75	11.6
Transportation/Utilities	14	2.2
Other	100	15.5
Missing	26	4.0

Location	N	%
Central States	207	31.9
Western States	108	16.8
Eastern States	85	13.3
Southern States	208	32.3
Missing	32	5.0

Analyses and Results

Analyses of the beta research data set were designed to identify the best items to comprise the 11 scales and then assess the reliability and validity of the scales. The scales, again, are Structure (SR), Diversity (DV), Recognition (RE), Autonomy (AT), Environment (EN), Expression (EX), Teamwork (TW), Stability (SB), Balance (BA), Career Growth (CG), and Compensation.

Structure*:* Having high expectations about structure means that you want clear instructions regarding what to do, how to do it, and what resources are available to you.

Diversity*:* Having high expectations about diversity means that you want to work with people from a variety of backgrounds and/or with varied points of view.

Recognition*:* Having high expectations about recognition means that you want a work environment where good work is acknowledged and rewarded.

Autonomy*:* Having high expectations about autonomy means that you want to have the independence or freedom to make decisions about how you will do your job.

Environment*:* Having high expectations about environment means that you see a connection between the social and physical work environment and your well-being.

Expression*:* Having high expectations about expression means that you want a work environment that allows you to share your opinions and feelings openly.

Teamwork*:* Having high expectations about teamwork means that you expect collaboration to be a highly valued and commonly used method for reaching work objectives.

Stability*:* Having high expectations about stability means that you want job security and a work environment that remains relatively unchanged.

Balance*:* Having high expectations about balance means that you have personal and professional goals and that you want others to understand the importance of all of your commitments.

Career Growth*:* Having high expectations about career growth means that you want to make progress toward your professional goals.

Items were selected if they met the following criteria:

- The item distribution was fairly even. In other words, the item was neither deemed too popular (rated very important or essential by more than 70 percent of respondents) nor too unpopular (rated unimportant by more than 70 percent of respondents).

- The item was strongly correlated with its intended scale.

- The item was not significantly correlated with any scale other than its intended scale.

- The item made a unique and significant contribution to the scale.

For the convenience of the respondent, every effort was made to keep the scales short (between five and eight items each). The analyses demonstrated that all of the compensation items were too popular; compensation was important to almost every respondent. **As a result, while information on compensation is provided in the *Work Expectations Profile*, compensation is not included as a separate scale or measured in the instrument. All items measuring compensation have been removed.** Characteristics of the remaining 10 scales can be found in Table 3.

Table 3. Scale Descriptive Statistics

SCALES	SR	DV	RE	AT	EN	EX	TW	SB	BA	CG
Mean	18.4	20.5	17.9	29.9	20.6	24.3	18.3	20.7	24.0	25.5
Standard Deviation	3.65	3.98	3.68	4.16	3.94	4.68	3.22	4.69	4.70	5.2
Average Mean (per item)	3.68	3.42	3.58	3.74	3.43	3.47	3.66	3.45	3.43	4.25
Average SD (per item)	.73	.66	.74	.52	.66	.67	.64	.78	.67	.87
Number of Items	5	6	5	8	6	7	5	6	7	6

As in the alpha research, the internal consistency reliability of each of the 10 scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficienct. As mentioned previously, scales are considered reliable if their alpha coefficent is at or above .70. The 10-scale reliabilities are strong, ranging from .77 to .85 (see Table 4).

Table 4. Scale Reliabilities and Correlations
(Reliabilities coefficients are in bold along the diagonal.)

SCALES	SR	DV	RE	AT	EN	EX	TW	SB	BA	CG
Structure (SR)	**.82**									
Diversity (DV)	.35	**.79**								
Recognition (RE)	.36	.29	**.85**							
Autonomy (AT)	.21	.52	.48	**.79**						
Environment (EN)	.36	.46	.37	.38	**.79**					
Expression (EX)	.23	.53	.31	.62	.35	**.80**				
Teamwork (TW)	.38	.67	.37	.50	.52	.50	**.83**			
Stability (SB)	.55	.21	.38	.20	.45	.11	.27	**.85**		
Balance (BA)	.35	.31	.39	.39	.53	.30	.34	.39	**.77**	
Career Growth (CG)	.33	.35	.48	.47	.26	.34	.30	.35	.21	**.84**

There are several ways to demonstrate the validity of a measure. One is to determine whether the model presented by an instrument is validated by the statistical relationships among the scales. In this case, the scales are predicted to be relatively independent. As can be seen in Table 4, the inter-scale correlations are significantly lower than the scale reliabilities. This confirms the independence of the scales.

Another way to assess the validity of a measure is to examine the underlying structure of the items. As in the alpha research, item responses were submitted to Factor Analysis using the Principal Components Method with Varimax Rotation. The 10-factor solution found in the alpha research was confirmed. In addition, Factor Analysis supported the relative independence of the 10 scales.

A final way to assess the validity of a measure is to examine whether the instrument appears to measure what it is intended to measure. This type of validity is also known as face validity. Although not considered a "true" type of validity, face validity is very important in the training and development field because the instrument needs to look credible for the feedback to be accepted. The proposed response form for the profile was presented to 20 consultants in the field of individual and organizational development. All agreed that the response form has strong face validity.

Demographic Group Comparisons

ANOVAs and *t-tests* were conducted to identify differences within demographic variables on work expectation scale scores. No significant differences between men and women were found. Significant differences were found, however, for age, education, and heritage.

Significant differences by age of respondent were found on four of the expectation scales. Respondents age 18 to 35 reported higher Stability ($F=9.01$, $p<.001$), Environment ($F=3.87$, $p<.01$), Career Growth ($F=9.86$, $p<.001$), and Structure ($F=4.59$, $p=.001$) expectations than respondents age 36 years and older.

Significant differences were also found for level of education. Respondents who had completed college and respondents who had completed graduate school reported higher Stability expectations ($F=6.42$, $p<.001$) than respondents who had attended some college and respondents who had completed technical school. In addition, respondents who had completed graduate school reported higher Diversity expectations ($F=4.06$, $p=.001$) than respondents whose highest level of education completed was college.

Finally, significant differences were found for heritage. African Americans and Hispanics reported higher Stability expectations ($F=6.28$, $p<.001$) than Caucasian respondents. In addition, African Americans reported higher Structure expectations ($F=6.19$, $p<.001$) than Caucasian respondents.

Summary of Research Findings

In summary, the *Work Expectations Profile* is a highly reliable and valid instrument designed to help individuals explore 10 key work expectations that impact today's employment relationships. Research, as reported in the literature on work expectations and the psychological contract, demonstrates that people who have clearly defined, well-communicated expectations find more satisfaction and success in their work than people whose expectations go unspoken or unrealized. The instrument is designed to help individuals identify, communicate, and manage their expectations, which can lead to improved attitude toward work, increased productivity, and reduced turnover.

Appropriate Use

Respondents

The *Work Expectations Profile* is appropriate for individuals 18 years and older who are employed within an organization (i.e., not self-employed) and are interested in better understanding and managing their work expectations. A seventh-grade reading level is necessary to fully appreciate both the items and the feedback.

The main purpose of the *Work Expectations Profile* is to help individuals identify, communicate, and manage their work expectations and transform their attitude toward work. Accountability remains with the individual; however, the organization has an ongoing obligation to provide individuals with opportunities to assess their work expectations and to have meaningful, productive dialogue about them.

The *Work Expectations Profile* is not meant to be a substitute for mental health services. It is assumed that those completing the profile are in reasonably sound mental health, as no interpretations are available that would offer guidance with significant emotional issues. Moreover, significant mental health issues may interfere with a participant's ability to make use of the profile. Persons seeking mental health counseling should obtain that help from a licensed counselor or therapist. The *Work Expectations Profile* does not replace professional help.

Facilitators

In addition to this Research Report, facilitators are encouraged to read the Facilitator's Sourcebook and other available materials for help in administering the instrument and dialoguing with individuals about their work expectations.

About the Publisher

Inscape Publishing is committed to maintaining the highest professional standards of instrument development and application through careful research and development processes and periodic evaluation by independent behavioral measurement experts.

Inscape Publishing profiles meet the following quality standards:

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- Scaled on current population
- Appropriate applications
- Engaging to the learner
- Easily administered and interpreted
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