Professional Skills (Communication, Business/Research Proposal Development, Consulting, & Project-Management Skills)[1][2]

Industrial-organizational (I-O) psychology practitioners work in a variety of settings and perform a variety of different roles (Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology [SIOP], 2016a). For example, some practitioners work as faculty members in institutions of higher education, as owners of their own consulting companies, as consultants within a private consulting firm, as testing and assessment experts for test development companies, or as researchers for government agencies. Regardless of their role, I-O psychology practitioners must have a core set of professional skills (SIOP, 2016b). Without these skills and regardless of the employment sector, I-O psychology practitioners may have difficulty gaining employment and remaining productive within the workplace. These core skills are communication, business/research proposal development, consulting, and project management.

First, I-O psychology practitioners must be able to communicate well with others (SIOP, 2016b). Communication is a key skill for being productive and developing effective relationships. I-O psychology practitioners must be able to effectively communicate using varied technology, write well, and verbally present information (including scientific research) clearly, concisely, compellingly, and in a politically savvy way to professional and layperson audiences (individually and in groups). Changes in technology are resulting in less face-to-face communication, requiring that I-O psychology practitioners understand how to vary communication when using different mediums. With a need to write for professional audiences, I-O psychology practitioners must be able to precisely and clearly articulate key messages in a way that others can easily understand when there is no opportunity to ask questions. When communicating verbally with others, I-O psychology practitioners must be interpersonal skilled, carefully monitoring what they say and how they say it so they can get along with and better influence others. They must use their communication skills to effectively negotiate with others and manage conflicts so that differences with others are resolved smoothly, in a way that avoids arguing and disputes. They must be able to communicate complex scientific research to other professionals as well as to those who would benefit from a less-scientific explanation.

Second, I-O psychology practitioners must be able to write effective business/research proposals (SIOP, 2016b). Many I-O psychology practitioners conduct business development activities; that is, they take action to influence people so they can win business. Furthermore, many I-O psychology practitioners seek funding for projects or research, or seek to publish or present prior work or research. I-O psychology practitioners must be able to develop effective business and research proposals that include a compelling vision, where information is packaged in a way that influences others to take desired action, whether the desired action is to win business, secure funds, or be accepted for publication or presentation.

Third, I-O psychology practitioners must be able to effectively consult with others (SIOP, 2016b). Regardless of where they work, I-O psychology practitioners provide expert advice and assistance to others. To effectively consult with others, they must be able to find solutions to challenging problems (solve problems), select logical

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choices from options (make decisions), and develop, enhance, and maintain relationships with those they consult with, taking care of customer's needs by being professional and helpful during all phases of interaction.

Fourth, I-O psychology practitioners must be able to effectively manage projects (SIOP, 2016b). With increasing workloads and deadlines, managing tasks and times is more important than ever to working efficiently and effectively. Given the need to work with others on research or other collaborative enterprises, I-O psychology practitioners must be able to carefully plan and execute interrelated work tasks to ensure things run smoothly and project objectives are achieved within provided limitations (e.g., costs, time). To be efficient and effective when working on projects, they must be able to pay close attention to detail, create and manage budgets, schedule activities and meetings, and manage other people.

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