

**Job Title**

Industrial/ Organizational Psychologist (consultant)

**General Overview**

Industrial/Organizational (I/O) Psychologists in the consulting field, operate in many areas relating to their expertise. Some of these areas include Organizational Development, Employee management, and Human Resource Management (SIOP, 2013). I/O psychologists focus on applying psychological strategies, facts, and principles to everyday work environments. There are two focuses of I/O psychology, including science and practice. The science aspect focuses on research, and uses scientific methods to investigate and advance knowledge about people at work (Muchinsky, 2012). I/O Psychology consultants fall under the practitioner aspect, which focuses on application of principles from the science aspect, to solve everyday problems in the world of work. These problems can fall under areas of personnel decisions, organizational learning, performance management, work motivation and, leadership. (O'Neill, 2013).

**Job Duties and Responsibilities**

With the wide breadth of focus areas within this field, I/O psychologists carry out specific tasks within each of these areas. With regards to organizational development, consultants focus on duties applying to organizational change. These tasks can include, designing surveys concerning organizational climate and culture, evaluating and designing specific jobs, team building, strategic planning for downsizing, and managing the overall process of organizational change (SIOP, 2013). Analysing and evaluating organizational goals, strategies, policies, social factors, technological factors, and physical setting, also fall under an I/O psychologist's duty this category (Porrás & Silvers, 1991).

Employee management consists of specified duties for developing the most efficient and team and productive work environment. Creating this environment involves a process of testing, selection and placement, training and development, and employee motivation and satisfaction. Specific tasks include test development, recruiting, conducting performance appraisals, designing and training teams, measuring effectiveness of training, measuring employee motivation and satisfaction, and resolving conflict (SIOP, 2013). Measuring the effectiveness of the methods used is crucial in determining whether key elements are working successfully in the organization (Koys, 2001).

Tasks in the human resource category are designed to optimize organizational integration, employee commitment, flexibility and quality of work (Guest, 1987). Tasks involve ergonomics, human factors engineering, determining compensation and benefits, managing employee behaviour, labour relations, and designing and implementing performance evaluations (SIOP, 2013). Consultants frequently work coincide with human resource departments within the organization to accomplish many of these tasks.

**Typical Workday**

A typical workday of an I/O Psychologist Consultant would vary depending on what stage of organizational change the consulting company joins in. Working in private firms, I/O psychologists frequently travel to the different areas where organizational divisions are located. Extensive daily communication with individuals in various positions within an organization is required to gain a comprehensive understanding of the organizational environment. Many workdays are spent administering focus groups and surveys to appropriate sample populations within each division, developing and communicating action plans and seamlessly administering the plan. Therefore, work is spread out during regular business hours, and large amount of overtime may be required to complete tasks by the necessary deadlines. A thorough understanding of research methods in I/O psychology is required (Anver, 2013).

**Educational Requirements and Other Qualifications**

To become an I/O psychologist, a Master's Degree in Psychology is required and a Ph.D. in Psychology would be further beneficial. The higher level of education attained will result in higher salaries and potential for higher-level positions in private firms or organizations. It is possible to have a career in the practitioner aspect without the required qualifications, but there are fewer responsibilities and opportunities for advancement (Spector, 1999). Many undergraduate psychology courses provide knowledge relative to the field of I/O psychology. One of the major considerations would be Statistics and research methods, as well as Design and Analysis in psychology. These courses provide the necessary information to be able to conduct psychological research within organizations. Organizational psychology courses are also important in learning the key elements of industrial and organizational psychology. Other beneficial courses include personality and social psychology. These courses teach various aspects of individual and social behaviour.

**Related Skills, Interests, and Abilities**

A versatile set of skill and abilities may be valuable for working as an I/O Psychologist. Among these skills include proficiency in reading, writing and communication in English, active listening, critical thinking, complex problem solving, strong judgement and decision making ability, social perceptiveness and time management. These skills are used conduct work analyses and to gather and analyse information about the work environment. Many organizational and managerial skills such as, service orientation, systems analysis, coordination of work and performance, math, science, enthusiasm, and persuasion, are needed to perform day to activities professionally in an organizational setting (My Majors, 2013).

**Relevance of Psychology Undergraduate Degree**

An undergraduate degree in Psychology teaches basic psychology principles and terminology required for graduate studies. It will also provide a thorough psychology background in research methods and social cognition, and provide opportunities to meet professors and build a network (Spector, 1999). To obtain higher-level position and salary a graduate degree is required, which requires an undergraduate degree to pursue.

**Salary Potential**

In Ontario, the median salary for an Organizational Psychologist is approximately \$120,000 annually. Salaries can range from \$85,000 on the lower end to \$155,000 on the higher end (Salary.com, 2013). The level of education and experience that individuals carry explains the wide range in salaries.

**Job Outlook**

The US Department of Labour stated that employment in the field of Organizational Psychology would rise approximately 26% through till 2018 (SIOP, 2013). There is a high demand for I/O psychologist who can boost employee engagement, and make appropriate selection and human resource, even in a down economy. As larger companies understand the importance and value of I/O Psychology principles towards organizational success, the demand is becoming greater (Novotney, 2013).

**To Apply**

To apply for a job as an I/O Psychology Consultant, it is essential to use your network and resources. Applying through various online job postings on websites and job search engines are also valuable resources.

**To Know More**

To learn more about I/O Psychologists, you can visit the Society of Industrial and Organization Psychologists (SIOP) at <http://www.siop.org/>.

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