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Managing Work Expectations
• *Transforming Attitudes*

Research Report

Managing Work Expectations • *Transforming Attitudes* Research Report
Item Number: O-259

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Research Summary

The Inscape Publishing self-assessment, *Managing Work Expectations • Transforming Attitudes*, 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, eleven 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 eleven scales, 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 eleven 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, & Carraher, 1998; Turnley & Feldman, 1998; Wanous, Poland, Premack, & 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 ten 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 and 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 & Robinson, 1997). And 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 & 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 & Feldman, 1998).

The process of helping employees become aware of and communicate their expectations is one that clearly links to reduced turnover and increased productivity and job satisfaction. *Managing Work Expectations • Transforming Attitudes* 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. Specific attention was paid to the authors' beliefs about the contents and types of work expectations. Twenty categories of work expectations were identified in the literature. Inscape Publishing research staff then developed five items to measure each of the twenty 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 (i.e., not self-employed) as many of the response form items referred to relationships with either a supervisor or co-workers. As can be seen in Table 1, the research sample was well distributed across demographic variables.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Alpha Research Sample

<u>Gender</u>	N	%	<u>Employment</u>	N	%
Male	404	41.9	Secretarial/Clerical	86	8.9
Female	544	56.4	Executive	52	5.4
Missing	16	1.7	Mid-level Management	168	17.4
			Supervisory	102	10.6
<u>Age</u>	N	%	Professional	191	19.8
Under 18	2	.2	Mechanical/Technical	45	4.7
18 – 25	106	11.0	Skilled Trades	20	2.1
26-35	236	24.5	Warehouse/General Labor	10	1.0
36-45	313	32.5	Assembly Worker	5	.5
46-55	212	22.0	Customer Service	72	7.5
56 or older	72	7.5	Sales	41	4.3
Missing	23	2.4	Health Care Worker	39	4.0
			Teacher/Educator	45	4.7
<u>Education</u>	N	%	Custodial/Housekeeping	0	0.0
Some high school	11	1.1	Homemaker	2	.2
High school graduate	84	8.7	Other	79	8.2
Some college	264	27.4	Missing	7	.7
Technical or trade school	77	8.0			
College graduate	331	34.3	<u>Industrial Classification</u>	N	%
Graduate/professional degree	194	20.1	Manufacturing	115	11.9
Missing	3	.3	Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	178	18.5
			Public Administration	48	5.0
<u>Heritage</u>	N	%	Wholesale/Retail Trade	65	6.7
African-American	137	14.2	Business Services	156	16.2
Asian-American	26	2.7	Educational Services	98	10.2
Caucasian	706	73.2	Health Services	101	10.5
Hispanic	42	4.4	Transportation/Utilities	74	7.7
Native American	29	3.0	Other	117	12.1
Other	21	2.2	Missing	12	1.2
Missing	3	.3			
			<u>Location</u>	N	%
			Northwestern States	245	25.4
			Midwestern States	193	20.0
			Southern States	354	36.7
			Western States	81	8.4
			Canada	50	5.2
			Missing	41	4.3

Analyses & Results

Analyses of the alpha research data set were designed to determine how to best categorize and measure work expectations. The first questions to be answered were how many scales were involved and what was the content of these scales. Item responses were submitted to Factor Analysis using the Principal Components Method with Varimax Rotation. An eleven-factor solution was selected as the most meaningful.

The next question to be answered was 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 eleven scales:

- Structure
- Diversity
- Recognition
- Autonomy
- Environment
- Expression
- Teamwork
- Stability
- Balance
- Career Growth
- Compensation

The internal consistency reliability of each of the eleven 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. A reliability is considered accepted if it is .70 or higher. Thus all scales identified in the alpha research were reliable.

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 can be seen in Table 2, the research sample was well distributed across demographic variables.

Table 2. Characteristics of the Beta Research Sample

<u>Gender</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Employment</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Male	288	44.6	Secretarial/Clerical	55	8.5
Female	346	53.6	Executive	32	5.0
Missing	12	1.9	Mid-level Management	87	13.5
			Supervisory	34	5.3
<u>Age</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	Professional	135	20.9
Under 18	1	.2	Mechanical/Technical	26	4.0
18 – 25	100	15.5	Skilled Trades	7	1.1
26-35	175	27.1	Warehouse/General Labor	4	.6
36-45	160	24.8	Assembly Worker	1	.2
46-55	150	23.2	Customer Service	32	5.0
56 or older	48	7.4	Sales	23	3.6
Missing	12	1.9	Health Care Worker	25	3.9
			Teacher/Educator	107	16.6
<u>Education</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	Custodial/Housekeeping	0	0.0
Some high school	4	.6	Homemaker	0	0.0
High school graduate	35	5.4	Other	71	11.0
Some college	140	21.7	Missing	7	1.1
Technical or trade school	49	7.6			
College graduate	230	35.6	<u>Industrial Classification</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Graduate/professional degree	182	28.2	Manufacturing	49	7.6
Missing	6	.9	Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	75	11.6
			Public Administration	36	5.6
<u>Heritage</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	Wholesale/Retail Trade	26	4.0
African-American	100	15.5	Business Services	89	13.8
Asian-American	14	2.2	Educational Services	156	24.1
Caucasian	461	71.4	Health Services	75	11.6
Hispanic	44	6.8	Transportation/Utilities	14	2.2
Native American	7	1.1	Other	100	15.5
Other	11	1.7	Missing	26	4.0
Missing	9	1.4			
			<u>Location</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
			Northwestern States	64	9.9
			Midwestern States	180	27.9
			Southern States	236	36.5
			Western States	134	20.7
			Missing	32	5.0

Analyses & Results

Analyses of the beta research data set were designed to identify the best items to comprise the eleven 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.

Items were selected if they met the following criteria:

- The item distribution is 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 *Managing Work Expectations • Transforming Attitudes*, compensation is not included as a separate scale or measured in the instrument (i.e., all items measuring compensation have been removed).** Characteristics of the remaining ten 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 ten scales was assessed using Cronbach's *alpha* coefficient. As mentioned previously, scales are considered reliable if their *alpha* coefficient is at or above .70. The ten scale reliabilities are strong, ranging from .77 to .85 (see Table 4). Moreover, it is often the case that with scales of such few items, the *alpha* coefficient actually underestimates the reliability of the scales.

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				
Team Work (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 Rotations. The ten-factor solution found in the alpha research was confirmed. In addition, Factor Analysis supported the relative independence of the ten 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. The proposed response form for the profile was submitted to twenty 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 expectation scale scores. No significant differences between men and women were found. However, significant differences were found for age, education, and heritage.

Significant differences by age of respondent were found on four of the expectation scales. Respondents age 18-35 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 completed college and respondents who completed graduate school reported higher stability expectations (F=6.42, p<.001) than respondents who attended some college and respondents who completed technical school. In addition, respondents who 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.

The data suggest that these differences reflect true distinctions within the research sample, rather than a bias in the instrument.

Summary of Research Findings

In summary, *Managing Work Expectations • Transforming Attitudes* is a highly reliable and valid instrument designed to help individuals explore ten key work expectations that impact today's employment relationships. Research 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

Managing Work Expectations • Transforming Attitudes is appropriate for individuals eighteen 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 *Managing Work Expectations • Transforming Attitudes* 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 have meaningful, productive dialogue about them.

Managing Work Expectations • Transforming Attitudes 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, because 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. *Managing Work Expectations • Transforming Attitudes* 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

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