

CEO WORKING PAPER SERIES

THE JOB AS WORK ROLE AND PROFESSION: IT'S MORE THAN SKILLS

CEO Publication: G24-02(703)

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The Job as Work Role and Profession: It's More Than Skills

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In Sokol, M. & Tarulli, B. (Eds.) (2024). *Strategic workforce planning: Case studies and new directions*. Oxford University Press.

NOTE: Please do not quote from this version as it has not been copy-edited and the printed version could differ.

Volume editors Marc Sokol and Beverly Tarulli made significant suggestions to improve the readability of our chapter and we greatly appreciate their careful attention to what we hoped to accomplish. We also appreciate the suggestions of Leaetta Hough, Fred Oswald and Nancy Tippins on the ways personality issues might be reflected in professionalism in work roles.

We propose that when companies have in place the strategic workforce planning the new world of work requires, that a culture and climate for professionalism will exist that fits this new world of work roles. Our dynamic, interdependent and increasingly complex work world changes the role of workers from narrow (the job) to broad (the work role). The reality of this work role world is that workers must necessarily exhibit increasing discretion over what they are responsible for, what they feel accountable for, and how they carry out their roles—they must be professionals. From carefully delineated and prescribed task activities, the new work role requires more than doing immediate tasks; it also requires being adaptable and flexible, being dependable, self-controlled, ethical, and so forth. In addition, the expansion of the work role requires employees to deal across functional boundaries, to work with people both inside and outside of their companies, to work with different teams under different leaders—and to experience and cope with the role ambiguity and role conflict that accompanies such work roles. If strategic workforce planning (SWP) is going to be effective, companies must have in place the various HR tactics (job and work role design and analysis, selection, education/training, socialization, performance management, and leadership) that are focused in on the work role as profession. The combined focus of these many HR tactics on work roles as professions will create a climate for professionalism that will promote the employee behaviors necessary for these new work roles.

SWP tends to focus in on the P—the planning. That is, the emphasis is on having the right number of people to fill jobs, whether the talent has the right skills, when those talents will be needed and where, and so forth. And, while some considerable attention is now being paid to “upskilling” as automation and AI penetrate the workplace, this appropriate focus on KSAs has inadvertently missed the necessity to focus on the “Os” in KSAO—those too-frequently ignored “Other” characteristics. Our position is that these Other characteristics are a key to professionalism in modern work roles. To be specific, our chapter is about what

professionalism is and what it requires in the form of work styles and the SWP actions that should be taken via selection, training, socialization, performance management, and leadership to create a culture and climate for professionalism that will serve both workers and organizations well.

Professionalism in the New Work Role

Table 1 provides definitions of professionalism at work as obtained from a Google search using the term “professionalism at work.” There you can see that various firms (Indeed, Insperity, Pinterest) see professionalism is a combination of various styles of behaving: Being conscientious and reliable; being ethical and competent; being respectful and considerate of others, and so forth. The Table emerged from accessing various consulting firms’ websites—firms obviously interested in and concerned about creating such in companies. Obviously, we are not the first or only ones to think that the professionalism of work and work roles may have important implications for the future of talent management.

A search of O*NET revealed a more comprehensive listing of these attributes under the heading of Work Styles that fits well with our thinking on professionalism and this listing is presented in Table 2. There is some overlap with the definitions in Table 1, especially those from Indeed.¹ While O*NET does not get explicitly at issues like role ambiguity and role conflict, it does address some difficulties workers may encounter (see Self-Control and Stress Tolerance). Obviously, the wide-ranging nature of contemporary work roles can produce discomfort and difficulties, and this is why it is so important for companies to do what they can to ensure that people understand what these behaviors are (more on this later), that they have the KSAOs for the specific tasks they must do (KSAs) and how they do them

¹ These work styles are not to be confused with what O*NET lists as “Generalized Work Activities” (<https://www.onetonline.org/find/descriptor/browse/4.AO>) or what Hunt (2016) calls “Generic Work Behaviors.”

(Os), and that the leadership they observe and experience as role models enact and support the development of these behavior styles.

Our fundamental proposals are these: (1) If workers at all levels of a company do not consider themselves to be professionals, they will not act the way professionals should; and (2) companies that employ their SWP practices to focus on the professional nature of work roles will reap the benefits in employee behavior and organizational success. It is the emphasis given professionalism as the way to behave across the variety of SWP that will yield work roles with appropriate standards for who occupies them, will contain people who have the appropriate KSAOs to carry out their roles, and who will be in step with the nature of contemporary work.

The need for such professionals in everyday work roles is great. That is, the new world of work is dynamic, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (Howard, 1995). In this new work world, it is increasingly less possible to precisely prescribe and directly manage the behavior, responsibilities, and outcomes of work. Consequently, the reality of the modern work world is that workers exhibit increased discretion over for what they take responsibility and for what they don't. We propose that an organization's aggregate level of professionalism—relatively autonomous work roles focused on doing the right things in the right ways given the organization's goals and objectives—is crucial to personal and organizational success.

Figure 1 shows that there are three major sets of organizational practices that must be in place to achieve a professional workforce. First, work-design and continuous redesign that focus directly on the work role breadth we see as characterizing increasingly large portions of future work. Second, HR management practices (including selection, training, and performance management) that focus directly on workers' fit with professional work-role requirements and responsibilities. That is, by behaving in the ways shown in Table 2, workers

will be more effective, more committed and more highly engaged in carrying out those roles. Third, all levels of leadership must continuously serve as role models to communicate through word and deed their support for professional behavior in all that is done both internally and externally (as with customers, suppliers, and so forth). A combination of focusing on all three of these diverse yet integrated policies, practices and procedures will produce a culture and climate for professionalism within an organization. We deal with each of these in turn in what follows.

Prior to moving on to more details about the new work roles we see, this issue of role modeling and professional behavior will benefit from an example of how it can go wrong. The case concerns the unprofessional behavior by various layers of workers and managers at Wells-Fargo². Millions of fraudulent checking and savings and credit card accounts were created at Well-Fargo by account representatives in branches. Initially, individual branch employees and managers were accused of impropriety, but the blame was later shifted to top-down pressure from higher management to open as many accounts as possible through what is known as “cross-selling.” Huge fines were levied against the bank, and there is still ongoing litigation. This scandal occurred in 2016 and the CEO was fired, and Wells-Fargo ostensibly went about renewing its previous reputation for stability. In 2022, however, Wells-Fargo was again in the news for unprofessional behavior, this time for conducting “fake” interviews³. In this case, company managers were forced by senior management to interview people for jobs that had already been filled, the purpose of which was to build up statistics with regard to the consideration of women and minorities for job “openings.” That is, the bank was falling behind meeting its diversity goals, so to build up its statistics vis-a-vis

² see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wells_Fargo_account_fraud_scandal

³ see <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/06/business/wells-fargo-fake-job-interviews.html>

recruiting, it began interviewing such “candidates” even after the job was filled—just to boost up the numbers.

The point of course is that if the context does not provide for the rewarding and supporting of professional behavior—indeed punishes it by firing those who do not unethically do enough cross-selling, as Wells-Fargo did—then the idea of the professional worker is nonsense and even the finest HR attempts at creating such a work force will fail.

The New Work Roles

Job-role differentiation theory (Griffin et al., 2007; Ilgen & Hollenbeck, 1991) is very useful for grasping the difference between jobs and work roles. A job consists of established and pre-defined elements in a formal job description that defines task requirements and responsibilities of the job holder. However, today’s jobs, because they exist in dynamic, turbulent, and ambiguous circumstances as well as across teams and levels, have far more responsibilities than previously, including working with automation, working across levels of the organization, working on different teams to accomplish goals, and working both within and without the boundaries of the organization. In short, work roles consist of established task elements (“the job”) plus emergent task elements (“the role”) that are more dynamic and constantly being changed. Emergent role elements are communicated by different social sources, including supervisors, colleagues, customers, and the job holder themselves. Sharon Parker (2014, p. 664) puts it well: “[J]ob characteristics have become salient as a result of changes in work organization. For example, the rise of dual working parents highlights the need to consider autonomy over working hours; the growth in service work identifies the need to consider emotional job demands; the rise of individuals working from home highlights the role of social contact during work; and changes in career structures bring to the fore opportunities for skill development.”

Jobs with their established tasks are seemingly objective because there is a shared consensus about the tasks that comprise them. The source of this consensus is the formal job description. Roles, with their emergent elements on the other hand, are more subjective because there are several changing possibilities in the elements that comprise them. As Hackman (1969) noted early on, role occupants must recognize, understand, accept, and integrate frequently changing external role expectations into their personal role understanding. Consequently, while the boundaries of a job can be relatively precisely defined by the formal job description of the tasks involved, the boundaries of a role—role breadth—are not so easily specified (Parker, 1998, 2000).

Jesuthasan and Boudreau (2022) are ahead of the curve in contemplating the new world of work. Their book has achieved best-seller status for a *New York Times* business book because, we think, it is real and offers ideas for action as companies and employees grapple with the new work. They provide the four principles for this new world of work, as shown in Panel I, obviously a new perspective on work and the people who do it—and the companies in which this is all happening.

Panel I: The Jesuthasan and Boudreau (2022) new work operating system

1. Start by focusing on the tasks for a job, not the whole job which is likely to change as technology/automation is adopted; focus on the task elements
2. Combine people and automation that optimizes the capabilities of both; do not assume automation will replace people—it will do tasks that optimize the talents of both people and automation
3. Consider all manner of work and workers to accomplish what needs doing: traditional employment, gig workers, freelancers, specific project-based, and so forth.
4. Encourage employees to flow where they are needed releasing their instincts to be useful and to craft work to get it done

And companies are not just standing on the side-lines with regard to this new world of work. IBM, for example, has created what it calls “The New Collar Program,” one which seeks talent in people and not for degrees people may have obtained—and then trains them for specific roles. Panel II is a description of this program from the IBM website.⁴

Panel II: The IBM New Collar Program

The New Collar initiative is all about addressing the skills gap that we face in a world of fast-paced technology. A significant number of roles at IBM don’t require a traditional education or career path. What matters most are the skills and experiences to perform a role.

New Collar jobs are roles in some of the technology industry’s fastest growing fields—from cybersecurity and cloud computing to digital design. These jobs require skills that can be gained through “earn while you learn” apprenticeships, returnships for professionals who have been out of the workforce and wish to re-enter, and innovative public education programs like P-TECH, which IBM pioneered, as well as coding camps, professional certification programs and more.

⁴ <https://www.ibm.com/us-en/employment/>

It is obviously essential for modern job analyses to address the work role attributes shown in Table 2 so that selection and training and performance management focus in on these professional behaviors. We have been unable to locate such job analyses though we have contacted several I-O practitioners who work in the areas of selection and job analysis. Such work role analyses would need to identify what Gordon Allport called “life as it is lived“ (Allport, 1942, p. 56). In I-O we refer to the issues raised in Table 2 as “competencies” and these can be contrasted with KSAs—which are obviously more specific in content and need to be generated through job analysis techniques such as the Critical Incident Technique (Flanagan, 1954) or diary methods (Bolger et al., 2003).

Let us be very clear: The KSAs required for excellent performance serve as a central issue in the professional behavior of people in work roles while the style with which they display those KSAs—the “Os”—completes the picture of professionalism. A very talented air conditioning repair person who is not constantly learning (Achievement/Effort), who quits in the face of frustrations (Persistence), who fails to anticipate questions customers might ask (Initiative) and who fails to offer assistance to co-workers (Cooperation) is not being a professional.

Of course, some might argue that professionalism is more important in some work roles than others. Our opinion is that this is like saying manners are more important in some settings than in others. In some work roles it may seem more obvious that what people feel responsible for and hold themselves accountable for is more serious (medical personal, psychotherapists, teachers, bus drivers and airline cabin attendants) but it is obvious from that list that there is a slippery slope where all of those jobs must be professionally accomplished but differ in the hierarchy of the so-called professions—are bus drivers and cabin attendants professionals? Of course they are; life and death depend on such workers. AC repair people control air pollution, and cleaning personnel and garbage collectors support health and well-

being—and the point is that the more they identify with these larger facets of their work roles and do so professionally, the more likely they are to be engaged and carry out those roles effectively. The point, of course, is that when the larger work role and the larger effects performance in those roles can have are not considered, the less likely it is that the people in those roles will think of themselves as professionals.

It is the emergent quality of task elements as part of the work role that seem to us the most challenging issue for work design and redesign. That is, since workers will be operating more autonomously than in the past due to role expansion, natural job crafting (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019)—a central feature of the new world of work—will occur. Autonomy has been a central feature of understanding worker involvement in work since the early 1980s (Hackman & Oldham 1980) but it takes on an increased importance the more flexible and fluid work roles become. We turn to the issue of work autonomy in some detail next.

The New Autonomy in Work Roles

At the root of our notion of the work role is the idea that workers will necessarily be relatively autonomous as they carry out their expanded work role in this new era of work. The construct of autonomy has long been a central focus of studies of jobs and job characteristics. In the Hackman and Oldham (1980) early job description work, autonomy was one of the five most central constructs underlying the meaningfulness of work. In addition, in Ryan and Deci's (2003) self-determination theory (SDT), peoples' identities are formed by their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Indeed, research shows clearly that people will act autonomously in any job that offers an opportunity for it (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019) and, if the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is that people who are given the opportunity to work autonomously will do so with vigor, dedication and absorption—the three fundamental facets of engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010).

Acting autonomously to accomplish tasks associated with the role and doing so in keeping with the styles associated with professionalism need not compromise one's own autonomy, as long as one has internalized those prescribed behaviors and responsibilities. Thus, work roles offer an important mechanism by which one can live out one's own autonomous identity (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016). In what follows we review the common solutions used in strategic workforce planning (SWP) (selection, training, socialization, performance management) as ways companies can hire and develop a work force that will foster and take advantage of this autonomous work motivation so necessary for workers and their organizations. In short, we agree with Barrick et al.'s (2013) notion of "purposeful work behavior." Their idea is straightforward: It is through selection of the right people plus the creation of the appropriate context that organizations achieve the motivation and performance of the work force that matters. We call this "appropriate context" a climate for professionalism and develop it later in the chapter.

Selection/Staffing

One way that organizations can achieve this autonomous motivation in their people is by attracting, selecting, and keeping people who have it (Schneider, 1987). Of course, this is above and beyond the KSAs required for effective performance. Some might imagine that the "O" as in "KSAO" is a way to conceptualize and thus assess this autonomous motivation which we see as a predictor of the work styles noted in Table 2. Indeed, Table 3 presents one way to organize the work styles as correlates of the five-factor model of personality so popular in I-O psychology research and practice (e.g., Hough & Dilchert, 2017). Table 3 presents our conceptual model of how the "O" in KSAO might be linked with the professional work styles that will characterize work role behavior — and the footnote to that table provides lots of evidence for the presumed validity of such personality attributes, especially as compound attributes, as predictors of those professional work styles.

There is mounting evidence that reveals it is through external selection that organizations most obtain the specific kinds of personality in the people they have (Oh et al., 2018). Indeed, there is also evidence to suggest that the people in an organization tend to fit it and the better the fit the more superior is organizational performance (Schneider & Bartram, 2017). We hypothesize that because of the kinds of people hired by and who work in them, organizations will differ in the extent to which they will be seen as a *professional organization*. So in the aggregate, organizations that attract, hire and develop those with higher levels of the personality characteristics shown in Table 3 will be seen by those inside and outside as being more professional organizations. That is, organizations in the ASA model are not seen as characterized by “a” (single) personality characteristics but as a bundle or package of personality characteristics. One might indeed think of the bundle of personality characteristics of the people in an organization and the professionalism it reveals as a potential attraction to future employees via Glassdoor, for example.⁵

Obviously, different jobs will have different tasks that make up the role and different roles will have different needs for the professional styles shown in Table 2—and that is why we have work role analysis. That is, when the tasks involved in the role and the ways those tasks are carried out have been identified, then the KSAs and styles (Os) needed will be in hand and procedures for assessing them can be designed. Table 3 is an expanded version of Table 2, revealing for each style some examples of the kinds of behaviors that will contribute to work role performance as a professional. The importance of the style variables required for any role will vary, just like the KSAs will vary, and it is the package that will be necessary for the design of a potentially valid and legal selection process.

⁵ (<https://www.glassdoor.com/blog/guide/a-guide-to-professionalism-in-the-workplace/>)

Conducting the kinds of work design/job analyses we previously discussed can help identify the KSAOs desired at entry and on which different selection procedures can be focused. Given our emphasis on the turbulent and ambiguous nature of modern work it is critical that the selection procedures used focus not only on the KSAs that might be required for a specific job/role but also on the Os—which define the motivation to work independently, to be adaptive/flexible, to take initiative, to be cooperative, and to tolerate stress well—see Table 3 for more possibilities. Some call this selecting for P-O fit and that is a useful construct to have in reserve when making finalized decisions so long as there is an explicit focus on evidence and not just recruiter or interviewer feelings (Barrick & Parks-Leduc, 2019).

Education and Training

Professionalism does not exist in the abstract but in the reality of doing. People may be selected who have the KSAOs to be professionals, but it is what happens to them after they are hired that determines the degree to which those KSAOs become operationalized *in situ*. Education and training explicitly provide the formal standards and values as well as an introduction to the unwritten norms of the company that serve as the foundation for how to behave and thus professionalism (Grus et al., 2018). We think, for example, of the people in the medical fields (doctors, nurses, and so forth) as a metaphor because it is what happens to them early in their education and training that helps make them professionals. Of course, there are other critical experiences—like socialization, and working with others and the general culture and climate of the setting in which work is done that are also important—but we deal here with education and training now and those later.

The education and training context. Who the trainers and educators are and how they behave and what they emphasize are as critical to creating a sense of professionalism in newcomers as the content they provide (Andresen et al., 2000). In addition, many companies

during COVID-19 moved from in-person to video-based training due to many different constraints. There is little research that compares video-based versus in-person training but we hypothesize that specific content (KSAs) is well-learned via video-based methods but, unless the video-based learning involves two-way observation and feedback that the behavioral facets of professionalism, especially those involving other people, are better accomplished via in-person modes. The role of education and training, then, is not only the teaching of KSAs but the provision of values and norms about behavior—doing the right things in the right ways both of which are more difficult to accomplish in the absence of feedback. The earlier this values-laden training happens the more likely it is that professional behavior becomes the newcomers' norms (Ashforth & Anand, 2003). As we will note again later, what is important in training is that workers be exposed to not only what to do but how to do it plus be exposed to the consequences of what they do and how they do it.

Education and training goals and process. Along with the acquisition of KSAs in training, the goal is the reinforcement of the motivations that people bring with them to the workplace—the motivations as in the hoped-for work styles we previously discussed. As will be clear throughout, it is this combination of context and person that is essential for SWP to produce the professional work-role behavior desired. The education and training system thus must provide conditions for the acquisition of the ways to draw inferences, make predictions, understand work issues, and decide which actions to take in the frequently ambiguous work situations trainees will encounter. The goal then is to provide future role players with the mental models that serve as a framework for the professionalism behavior desired (Pfeffer, 2005), mental models that include what to do, how to do it, and the consequences of doing.

Obviously, we see this kind of education and training as being highly behavioral in type; as experience-based learning with feedback (Andresen et al., 2000). Such education and training programs make use of structured and directed experiences in role-plays, games, or

experiments. Instructional designers, teachers, trainers, and so forth must create and implement these experiences in a safe environment by (a) supporting the autonomy of learners in this process, (b) providing constructive and explicit feedback and (c) acknowledging the importance of others in work role performance. This process of experiential learning should also include explicit attention to how to engage in ongoing self-reflection and self-development. Trainees can be encouraged and taught how to seek feedback, reflect on accomplishments and disappointments by oneself as well as with the help of others (co-workers, supervisors, counselors, and coaches) (Nesbit, 2012).

One example of an experience-based training program is an exercise developed for the master's degree students at the German Police University. The exercise is based on a simulation designed by Florian Klonek and Sharon Parker from the Centre for Transformative Work Design⁶. Panel III summarizes the experimental conditions that are created for the students so that they get to have both positive and negative experiences. The goal is to experientially show trainees that it is context and not just people's own personal attributes that lead them to be professionals—and to be engaged and be productive. Of course, this is to sensitize them to the impact they will have as leaders—the consequences—when they are out in the field (Parker et al., 2019).

⁶ This is an ongoing intervention study we are conducting together with Florian Klonek and Sharon Parker from the Centre for Transformative Work Design, Curtin University, Perth, Australia.

Panel III: The Job Design Experiment for German Police University Leadership Training

1. Participants are randomly assigned to one of two conditions: (1) highly structured, with low chances of cooperation among team members, and centralized control over how to proceed and (2) flat decision-making with high opportunities to discuss strategies, and high worker autonomy to suggest ways to proceed.
2. The idea is to get students to experience different forms of job design and leadership and how those different forms influence their interpersonal behavior, their engagement and their success. After the exercise, the two groups meet to reflect on how they felt as individuals and what their experience of being in the group was like.
3. The future police leaders learn to feel responsible for the roles they play and the roles their co-workers play as a task unfolds.

The idea behind this exercise is to get trainees involved in positive experiences and to discuss how those differ from negative experiences and to do this by teaching positive actions, not only teaching to avoid negative ones. So, police work obviously can confront workers with situations that are ambiguous and require actions/reactions making awareness of what the positive options are and their consequences crucial. Awareness of the consequences of behavior style choices is of course not only important for police as we have unfortunately learned, for example, with airline cabin attendants during the pandemic who are forced to confront unruly passengers.

Socialization—the informal education and training. Socialization concerns how well the early experiences (as a new employee or as in a new work role) reflect the norms and values of the company. Earlier we noted how the context for learning and education/training is critical to how training will be received; socialization of newcomers is critical to how the larger organization will be perceived and is a cue to the behaviors that will be rewarded, supported and expected. Most organizations have formal training programs to which they devote astonishing time, effort and money yet pay little attention to the onboarding and

socialization experiences of new employees or employees new to a work role. Yet the research on socialization is abundantly clear about its potential impact (Chao, 2012). The key concept here is one of a blank slate: Newcomers are a (relatively) blank slate about the company and its norms and values so any and all early experiences will be determinant about what people believe the organization believes in and values—and how work roles are carried out in daily life. SWP can be excellent in the details and miss the bigger picture of ensuring early newcomers' images of the organization and their role as a professional in it. Socialization is a time for newcomers to understand, accept, and be encouraged by co-workers to be professionals in carrying out their roles.

A supplementary idea here is very important: Existing employees who are newcomers to new work roles receive even less attention than newcomers to the company! This is obviously silly since newcomers to work roles are also in need of the support and help associated with newcomer entry to the company.

A good example of the importance of socialization concerns the potential conflict between training and socialization on the job with police newcomers. Police in training typically learn about what the law requires of them as professionals but then on the job they may unfortunately sometimes encounter what is called “Dirty Harry” unprofessional practice, achieving essential ends by tarnished means (Fekjær et al., 2014). Thus, it is very crucial to invest in positive onboarding experiences for newcomers at all levels of the company. This can be accomplished by assigning one of the most professional people to be a newcomer advocate who is responsible for early information and experiences about how the work role is “really” done and who can be counted on for informal contact throughout the day including being a lunch partner (Chao, 2012). It is one sad detail of the murder of George Floyd by Dereck Chauvin in Minneapolis that Chauvin was serving as a field training officer despite

the fact that he had been the subject of several prior complaints, including three shooting incidents (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2022).

Performance Management

In the SWP process, is performance management first or last in what requires attention? We really thought about putting it before selection in our review—and before training—and before socialization. That is, the target of SWP needs to include the behavioral characteristics on which employees will be evaluated, judged, reinforced and rewarded. Look at Table 2. These are the kinds of issues requiring attention in performance management if a company is going to achieve having professionals in their work roles. As such, they constitute a partial list of the issues on which SWP can focus. The list is partial because it fails to contain all of the other KSAs required for success and effectiveness in the work role, for which there are many examples (cf. Pulakos & Battista, 2020).

Work role performance is not only a function of the design of the work roles, education/training and socialization but also a result of the continual monitoring of work role behavior on the job. Every work role will have its own set of behaviors against which performance will be monitored and assessed and we of course want it to contain the work style elements shown in Table 2, amended as appropriate for a specific setting. While the record of performance management techniques having an impact on organizational-level performance is not what we would hope for, there is no doubt that it can be improved and that work role occupants pay attention to it (Pulakos & Battista, 2020). That is, the behavior that people observe being rewarded, supported, and expected in their work units and in the whole organization is crucial for their own decisions on how to behave (cf., Cleveland, 2020) and what they deduce is important for obtaining rewards. Thus, leaders must promote, support, recognize, and reward such professional work role behavior and recognize, address, and sanction failures to do the right things in the right ways. It is essential that employees who in

any way violate these professional styles of work role behavior *not* be rewarded because everyone will notice such recognition. We propose that all performance management systems (i.e., the evaluation itself, pay, promotion, and other reward systems) that consider these positive work role behaviors will shape and develop workers' professionalism and, thus, contribute strongly to the climate and culture of the organization.

The Culture and Climate for Professionalism

Organizational culture has to do with the *values* that characterize a setting for the people there; organizational climate has to do with the *focus* of the policies, practices, and procedures, and the behaviors that get rewarded, supported and expected in an organization (Ehrhart et al., 2017). Climate and culture are in reciprocal relationships, with the focus or foci of the climate signaling what is valued and what is valued dictating the focus of policies, practices and procedures (Schein, 2010). When professionalism is valued in an organization, its SWP policies, practices and procedures will in the aggregate and across the practices focus on it.

The point is that there is no silver bullet to the creation and maintenance of professionalism in work role behavior for a company, but that many facets of human resources management must be in place to get across that message. As Ed Schein has repeatedly noted in his writings on culture (e.g., Schein, 2010), it is to what organizations devote scarce resources that helps to determine the culture of the organization. This focus on professionalism needs to be incorporated into all facets of SWP planning. That is, behavioral expectations for professionalism attributes starts with identifying them as characteristics (along with KSAs) that should be explicitly targeted when doing SWP and identifying gaps to be filled for the future—the essence of SWP. By devoting time, effort and money to a focus on professionalism through selection, training, socialization and performance

management the message will get across that this way of behaving is what the company values.

There are at least five critical HR tactics that must be in place to show that there is a climate and culture for professionalism:

1. Work roles must be explicitly designed and defined for the new world of work requiring performance in turbulent and ambiguous times that will require increased autonomy in carrying out the work role—and the people who will do these. And it will require more than the KSAs (indeed more than just the skills on which there has been so much focus) but the Os too.
2. The new work role definitions must be converted into formal selection procedures when “buy” is an identified solution to filling gaps. Such procedures will yield the KSAOs necessary as a foundation to carry out those roles.
3. In a “build” solution to filling gaps, experiential-based education and training programs that focus both on technical skills as well as the professionalism styles required by the work role must be designed and implemented that focus on doing things the right way.
4. Socialization of newcomers by the most professional current members of the work force.
5. Performance management processes that signal that professionalism on the job is what is rewarded, supported and expected.

Who will ensure these are in place? Business leaders who are the key stakeholders and sponsors in SWP must not just designate; they must be role models by behaving in ways that indicate to all how critical SWP is to them for the future of the company. Of course, it is the SWP professionals who must ensure the necessary discussions occur, but it is the business

leaders who must ensure SWP is being accomplished—the future depends on it. And all involved must expand their horizons beyond “Skill development;” there is Knowledge and Ability and those Other characteristics as well. As we noted earlier, Schein (2010) summarizes the issues well: It is to what leaders devote scarce resources and pay attention that reveals what they value. And it must always be remembered that, for leaders, time is a scarce resource so how they spend their time—on what they focus their time—sends the message about what is valued.

Leadership must focus on success as well as failures so that workers understand the difference. Failures may remain undetected by leaders if they are not paying attention to how things are being done (Aquino et al., 1999) and such failures can become the norm and a way of life. The Wells-Fargo case is an example of rewarded, supported, and expected unprofessional behavior. At Wells-Fargo, employees were punished if they failed to achieve goals for cross-selling that were unreasonable, so they were actually rewarded for creating false customer accounts to achieve the unachievable goals (Flitter, 2021). Leadership that creates these kinds of conditions for employees is apparently and unfortunately not that unusual (see Hagler, 2021, for a description of the leadership issues at Volkswagen-Audi and what is known as “diesel-gate”). While earlier we focused on the selection of employees, and did not focus on the selection of leaders we know that “pseudotransformational,” “personalized charismatic,” or “dark personality types” can hold leadership positions that they use to maintain their power rather than for the good of their companies or their employees (Den Hartog, 2015). People with high levels of “the dark side of personality” (Hogan et al., 2021) can be identified and they are obviously those who will not be wanted in companies desiring their employees to be professionals.

Recently there have even been attacks against Jack Welch because he stopped focusing on doing the right things in the right way and instead focused on manipulating

financial records to make GE look profitable—at all costs (Gelles, 2022). In short, leaders must devote their efforts to creating and monitoring organizational policies, procedures, and practices that focus on professionalism and the variety of stakeholder outcomes achieved.

Leadership is most crucial for shaping and enforcing professional standards and values. They do this first as role models since everyone either is watching or hears about what leaders are paying attention to—and doing themselves. They must maintain their technical knowledge so that they are viewed by their people as up-to-date with the latest research and techniques (Pfeffer, 2005; Rousseau, 2006); and they must feel responsible and hold themselves accountable for the welfare of their people, the organization, and the various stakeholders of the organization (Voegtlin, 2012). The most critical thing the top management team can do is to understand that all they do displays the values they hold, and they can enforce the value of professionalism in their people by ensuring it is focused on when conducting SWP.

Table 4 presents interview quotes from a diagnosis of a service firm—a bank—conducted by Schneider et al. (2003) revealing how climate and culture for service professionalism exists in the experiences of employees. Table 4 reveals the many ways the message is sent: by who gets hired, how leadership serves as a role model, how people are socialized and trained, relationships with customers, and so forth (many more examples are in Schneider et al.). The message of course is that all these facets of organizational functioning, in combination, are the message.

A Future Focus for Professionalism as an Integral Part of Your SWP Process

Our goal has been to tell you why professionalism is the necessary way to think about work roles in the new world work and to show how, through an integrated set of lenses as shown in Figure 1, a culture and climate for professionalism can be created to make it happen. We conclude with some questions you can ask yourself as you think through how to

put into practice this issue of a professional orientation for your people and your company.

Developing answers to these questions will start you down the path of professionalism.

1. Professionalism must be identified as a need and incorporated into the role descriptions during SWP or it can easily be missed when the solutions of selection, training, socialization and performance management tactics are implemented.
2. Are there some work roles in your company that are the most critical to get to first because they need this professional mentality in carrying out those work roles? Our experience is that these roles are invariably customer contact roles because they are so autonomous—and the evidence is clear that a focus on those Os for customer contact through HR practices can pay dividends in customer satisfaction and profits (Hong et al., 2014).
3. How well are the HR practices in collectively focusing on the professionalism issue? Our experience is that some practices (say selection) have (a) an appropriate emphasis and focus on KSAs (mostly skills) but not the Os, and (b) that focus gets washed out because training is on technical skills, leadership is absent as a professional work role model, and performance management practices focus only on numbers and not on professional work styles. An unintegrated multi-faceted approach to planning for future people needs will fail to produce a culture and climate for professionalism.
4. Do we over-emphasize KSAs in who we hire and ignore—and have no validity evidence for—those work style issues as summarized in Tables 2 and 3? Who gets hired has long-term consequences for employee engagement and effectiveness—and long-term consequences for the reputation your company will have as an employer. Do you want to be known as the home of professional style? You can make it happen. But

you have to do this via selection in ways that meet professional standards and legal issues as well so do it with I/O Psychologists who specialize in such.

5. On the issue of evidence: (a) are we tracking who we hire and how they work out for us; (b) are we tracking how effective our training programs are in achieving the goals we (should) set for them; (c) do the results from our performance management systems track with the engagement of employees and with customer satisfaction?

In short, in an era of data availability, companies can focus their data systems on the kinds of professionalism issues we have raised and track both employees and the effectiveness of HR practices and leadership in producing the kind of workforce and company you want to be.

Summary

As work organizations become increasingly flat and as jobs become increasingly complex employees are confronted by numerous decisions about what they should be focusing on and how they should be behaving. We propose that jobs be reconceptualized as work roles with all the expanded issues such roles require. In addition, we propose that those who perform work roles be the subject of all SWP leading to them seeing themselves and being seen as professionals. As a result, we propose that SWP professionals conducting these analyses and basic HR systems and practices in organizations focus their efforts not only on the KSAs required for job performance but also on the professional styles with which such work roles are carried out. By the business leadership intensively emphasizing professionalism in who gets hired, the socialization and training they receive, and the standards against which their performance is managed a culture and climate for professionalism is possible. We emphasize the role of leadership in serving as role models for such professional behavior by (a) their own behavior and style and (b) their explicit devotion

of time, effort and resources to the SWP imperatives necessary to further the development of a climate and culture of professionalism.

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Table 1: Examples of Professional Behavior

Indeed*	Insperty**	Pinterest***
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliability • Humility • Etiquette • Neatness • Consideration • Dedication • Organization • Accountability • Integrity • Expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behave in ways that command respect of others • Be reliable, ethical, competent and mindful of others • Maintain composure despite challenges • Build business relationships to further skill and career development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be on time • Become a resource to others • Dress professionally • Show respect for others • Avoid office politics and gossip • Never be afraid to ask questions • Take appropriate breaks

*Based on <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/the-ultimate-guide-to-professionalism>

**Based on <https://www.insperity.com/blog/professionalism-in-the-workplace/>

***Based on <https://www.pinterest.com/spjb01/professionalism-in-the-workplace/>

Table 2: Based on O*NET listing of Work Styles that Can Characterize Work Roles*

1. **Achievement/Effort:** Establish and maintain personally challenging achievement goals and exert effort toward mastering tasks
2. **Persistence:** Persist in the face of obstacles
3. **Initiative:** Willing to take on responsibilities and challenges
4. **Leadership:** Willing to lead, to take charge, and offer opinions and directions
5. **Cooperation:** Be pleasant with others and display a good-natured and cooperative attitude
6. **Concern for Others:** Be sensitive to others' needs and feelings and be understanding and helpful to others
7. **Social Orientation:** Prefer to work with others rather than alone and be connected to others on the job
8. **Self-control:** Maintain composure, keep emotions in check, control anger even in difficult situations
9. **Stress Tolerance:** Accept criticism and deal calmly and effectively with high-stress situations
10. **Adaptability/Flexibility:** Be open to change (positive or negative) and to considerable variety in the workplace
11. **Dependability:** Be reliable, responsible and dependable, and fulfill obligations
12. **Attention to Detail:** Be careful about details and thorough in completing tasks
13. **Integrity:** Be honest and ethical
14. **Independence:** Develop one's own ways of doing things, guiding oneself with little to no supervision, and depend on oneself to get things done
15. **Innovation:** Creative and alternative thinking to develop new ideas for and answers to work-related questions
16. **Analytical Thinking:** Analyze information and use logic to address work-related issues and problems

*<https://www.onetonline.org/find/descriptor/browse/1.C/1.C.1/1.C.4/1.C.5/1.C.3/1.C.7/1.C.2>

Table 3: Hypothesized Links Between the Five-Factor Model of Personality and O*NET Work Styles*

Five-Factor Dimension	O*NET Work Styles Facets
Conscientiousness	Achievement/Flexibility Persistence Dependability Attention to Detail Integrity
Openness to Experience	Adaptability/Flexibility Innovation Analytical Thinking Initiative
Agreeableness	Cooperation Concern for Others
Emotional Stability	Self-control Stress Tolerance Independence
Extraversion	Leadership Social Orientation

*Extensive reviews of the personality research literature reveal that the professionalism work styles shown in this Table are consistently and significantly predicted. Many of the reviews appeared early in the 2000s (cf. Ones & Viswesvaran, 2001) and subsequent reviews have replicated the significant findings (c.f. Barrick & Mount, 2013; Hough & Dilchert, 2017). There is also personality research on counter-productive behavior (indifference, distrustful, inconsistent, mischievous) with similar results, especially via personality measures focused on the so-called dark triad (O'Boyle et al., 2012). Few studies have used compound personality measures—combinations of Big 5 attributes, for example—to predict outcomes but when they do the results are quite impressive with meta-analyses in the .40-.50 range (Hough & Dilchert, 2013; Barrick & Mount, 2012); a key example has been the prediction of theft behavior by employees in what is known as “integrity testing” (Ones et al., 2012). We encourage the use of compound personality traits to predict professionalism defined by the compound ratings of the likely interrelated work styles in this Table.

Table 4: Climate and Culture for Service: Employees Speak*

- The CEO of the bank more than anyone embodies the service culture
- The culture of the bank is the way it is because management keeps employees focused on service
- At other banks they enforce rules by the book. Here we do what we have to do without doing it by the book. We're empowered
- If customers do not see enough people meeting their needs, they are unhappy. That is why cross training is important; to be able to fill a lot of positions with very few people
- The older people here were taught customer service at the beginning and the younger people learn by watching the older people
- We have monthly coaching sessions. We get ratings and we talk about them. We talk about next month and how they can be better, and everything is out in the open
- [The CEO] sends each employee a note thanking them for accomplishments that make him look good. The message is that we are all equal.
- When we interview potential applicants, we tell them that our primary goal is customer service. Developing relationships with customers is part of the job description.
- Service is the standard on Day 1 so we hire people who believe in good service
- [The bank] hires good people, people who want to learn

*From Schneider et al. (2003)

Figure 1. The culture and climate for professionalism is comprised of three interacting attributes: Leadership, job design and redesign, and HRM practices that all focus on professionalism.

