

Survey Feedback Interventions in IT Workplaces¹

Debra A. Major

Old Dominion University, USA

Lisa M. Germano

Old Dominion University, USA

INTRODUCTION

Several factors may explain the underrepresentation of women in IT. One reason is the portrayal of the IT workplace as hostile, or at least inhospitable, to women. Long work hours, a frenetic pace, and few family-friendly benefits are believed to characterize many IT work environments (Howard, 1995; Lambeth, 1996; Panteli, Stack, & Ramsay, 1999). Another reason is the perception that IT careers afford little social interaction or support (Misic & Graf, 1999). The stereotype of the IT worker as a “geek” who works in isolation from others may be less appealing to women than men (Spender, 1997). Moreover, white males are most frequently portrayed as IT professionals in the media, are most likely to have role models and support systems, and work in work environments that reflect their values and learning styles (Balcita, Carver, & Soffa, 2002). Subtle biases in stereotyping and language use and working in a white male culture may contribute to feelings of exclusion for women. Finally, male IT supervisors may be less likely to develop supportive relationships with women than men (Ragins, 2002), thereby reducing their bond to the organization and leading to their eventual dissatisfaction and departure from IT work and the organizations that employ them (Lee, 2004).

Our research examines how characteristics of the IT workplace can foster inclusion and equal opportunity for IT employees (see Major, Davis, Sanchez-Hucles, Germano, & Mann, 2006). We are particularly interested in identifying barriers and enablers to the career success of women and minorities in IT departments. During Phase 1 of this three-year project, IT departments completed a Web-based survey designed to understand the factors that shape the access that IT employees have to oppor-

tunities in the workplace. During Phase 2 of the project, we provided the IT departments with feedback from our survey, conducted focus groups and structured supervisor interviews, and worked with the organizations to identify and implement changes designed to increase opportunity and inclusion for IT employees. During Phase 3 of this project, we administered another survey to assess the effectiveness of the interventions implemented during Phase 2. The remainder of this chapter describes our sample, survey measures, and research methodology.

BACKGROUND

During Phase 1 of our project, 916 IT employees from 11 companies completed our Web-based survey. Participating organizations varied in terms of industry, size, and location, in order to more broadly represent the diversity of IT work experiences and workplace climates. See Table 1 for a detailed description of participants.

Survey Measures

The measures used in the Web-based survey are described in Table 2.

Inclusion

The 13-item inclusion scale was created from existing measures and original items (Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2002; Mor-Barak & Cherin, 1998). Inclusion was assessed using three subscales: belonging, participation, and influence. An example of an item from the belonging subscale is, “I am included as part of the team by my coworkers.” A sample

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the total sample, $N = 916$

Characteristic	N	% of Total Sample
Gender		
▪ Males	530	57.9
▪ Females	344	37.5
▪ Gender not specified	42	4.6
Race		
▪ American Indian or Alaska Native	27	2.9
▪ Asian (non-Indian)	47	5.1
▪ Asian Indian	35	3.8
▪ Black or African American	74	8.1
▪ Hispanic	51	5.6
▪ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	8	0.9
▪ White	617	67.4
▪ Multiple Race	5	0.5
▪ Race not specified	52	5.7
Relationship Status		
▪ Single	140	15.3
▪ Married	639	69.8
▪ Living with Partner	22	2.4
▪ Separated	11	1.2
▪ Divorced	59	6.4
▪ Widowed	4	0.4
▪ Did not specify	41	4.5
Educational Attainment		
▪ High school graduate	71	7.8
▪ Vocational/technical school graduate	59	6.4
▪ Associate's degree	115	12.6
▪ Bachelor's degree	472	51.5
▪ Master's degree	144	15.7
▪ Doctorate degree	6	0.7
▪ Did not specify	49	5.3
IT Degree		
▪ IT related	405	44.2
▪ Non-IT related	404	44.1
▪ Did not specify	107	11.7
IT Position		
▪ Conceptualizer	288	31.4
▪ Developer	169	18.5
▪ Modifier/Extender	80	8.7
▪ Supporter/Tender	302	33.0
▪ Did not specify	77	8.4
Salary (\$)		
▪ Less than 30,000	21	2.3
▪ 30,000 - 39,000	46	5.0
▪ 40,000 - 49,000	93	10.2
▪ 50,000 - 59,000	133	14.5
▪ 60,000 - 69,000	119	13.0
▪ 70,000 - 79,000	124	13.5
▪ 80,000 - 89,000	85	9.3
▪ 90,000 - 99,000	86	9.4
▪ 100,000 or more	140	15.3
▪ Did not specify	69	7.5
Characteristic	Mean	Standard Deviation
Number of Children	1.11	1.13
Age of Youngest Child	11.08	6.29
Age of Participant	41.98	8.90
Years Worked at Current Organization	10.44	8.51
Years Worked in IT	14.44	8.67
Hours Worked per Week	46.69	7.96

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