

Summary of Responses to Ryan-Pearlman Survey on Use of O*NET in Human Resource Management and Job Analysis
3/18/09

Email sent to HRNet – used by members of the HR division of the Academy of Management.

1. How have you used O*NET in HR work? For what specific purposes?
2. What specific O*NET descriptors did you use? Was O*NET information used directly or were modifications made (and if so, how did those enhance the use)?
3. Was the experience a success? Why or why not?
4. In your view, what are the strengths and weaknesses of O*NET for this use?
5. What are the key problems or barriers (technical, practical/organizational, etc.) to this use of O*NET? What might improve O*NET relative to this usage?
6. What other ways might O*NET be useful in this area?
7. What improvements would you suggest to the content model underlying O*NET? The survey methodology used to develop the database? The user interface?

Responses from 9 individuals.

Uses of O*NET

- Cross-checking a competency model generated internally by the organization. Check the extent to which position descriptions generated internally by HR staff (using critical incident interviews and other methods) are congruent with the descriptors in the O*NET database.
- Determine the extent to which employees' career interests (as determined by the Strong Interest Inventory, used by the organization) match occupations for which Occupational Interest Profiles (OIPs) are available in the O*NET database.
- Net as a tool in a MBA course I teach to introduce non-HR professionals to the resources and information available on jobs and job descriptions as a starting point for job descriptions
- to assist with career counseling (when an individual I know was struggling to determine what career direction they wanted to take).
- Research -- As we surveyed people from a wide variety of industries, we needed a way to control for job level that would span organizations and industries. So, we used SVP as a control
- to model the amount of time it takes to re-learn the knowledge and skills it takes to perform work in a given occupation after being out of that line of work.
- to evaluate its utility as a tool for the Social Security Administration to use in making disability determination decisions.
- to provide some background job analysis information for an employment discrimination suit
- to map the reading requirements for O*NET OUs onto the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) reading scale using a Census crosswalk; the purpose was to synthetically derive literacy requirements for all occupations in the US economy.

- Usually as a first stage in a job analysis. O*NET provides nice starter lists. I've used O*NET primarily in selection system development contexts.
- In undergrad classes, I show students how to use it to obtain info about potential jobs, careers, learn about career exploration tools, how it links to state databases, etc.
- In my grad classes on staffing, I show them how to use it to develop interview questions when there are no resources for a job analysis; use it as an alternative to job analysis, etc.
- In consulting, I will sometimes use it as a start to a job analysis or job description, as a means to speed up a project when there are no resources or support for doing something more intensive.
- Typically used as a source of background material when beginning a job analysis.
- Have also used it as part of career counseling when trying to help employees identify jobs they may be interested in.

Limitations/weaknesses

- Not all the jobs for which information was sought existed in the database.
 - A limitation is that some of the descriptors (e.g., related to work design) are not part of the O*NET data collection effort. At a minimum, it should be clearly explained that not all the dimensions in the model have corresponding data in the O*NET database.
 - The greatest challenge was to match the O*NET Content Model (as presented at http://www.onetcenter.org/dl_files/ContentModel_DetailedDesc.pdf) with items used to measure them and with the codes in the database. A correspondence table whereby the construct is linked with the items used for its measurement and with the abbreviations used, and more information on whether data exists in the database for specific variables would be extremely helpful.
 - User interface can be improved. Currently, the information is relatively dispersed and difficult to re-assemble (e.g., if one needs to check the extent to which specific variables are correlated in specific industries or for specific individual characteristics or types of work design). The data is difficult to reconstruct, or takes too much time to do so, if one relies on the current interface. Connecting constructs, variables, items, and their code names using one document would be helpful.
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- the information is so generic that it is in many cases useless.
 - Searching is a bit difficult; moreover, I think the listing of "in demand" jobs should be more easy to work with/sort and search
 - the data are not as reliable as they could be
 - some of the OUs need to be disaggregated– some OUs are aggregated across jobs that are very different, so accurate SME ratings appear to be unreliable when combined with accurate SME ratings from different positions.
 - better career path models to be of any use for career counseling.
 - better link the OUs to the Census categories, or just get the Census bureau to agree to use O*NET OUs.
 - it is sometimes too abstract and that there are too few task statements
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- lacks public availability of respondent-level data (in addition to aggregated occupation-level data).
 - Need Collection of incumbent data for all the content domains (e.g., abilities).
 - Need Collection of analyst data for key domains (e.g., skills, GWAs).
 - it would be nice if the profiles printed out in a “cleaner” format. If the tool had a side by side comparison tool so you could look at more than one job description simultaneously it might be nice.
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Strengths

- Job descriptors based on multiple respondents, coming from multiple sources.
 - Having Occupational Interest Profiles for various jobs was extremely helpful for career guidance.
 - it provides a nice comprehensive taxonomy.
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