On-the-Job: What to Expect and How to Succeed

Mikelyn Meyers, US Census Bureau
Barbara O’Hare, US Census Bureau (retired)
Stas Kolenikov, Abt SRBI
Matt Jans, UCLA Center for Health Policy Research

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Disclaimer: This presentation is intended to inform people about research and to encourage discussion. The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the U.S. Census Bureau.
Overview

- What does the survey research work environment look like?
- What soft skills do you need to succeed in this environment?
- How can you design opportunities for on-the-job training (OJT) without management and budget authority?
- How can managers foster OJT?
What to Expect

- Diverse sectors
  - Commercial, government/non-profit, academia
- Interdisciplinary environment
  - Substantive experts
  - Survey production staff
  - Statistical staff
  - Questionnaire design staff
  - Management staff
  - Clients/sponsors
- Team-based & collaborative work
How to Succeed: Adapting to Your Role

- Knowing your role
  - Jack of all trades?
  - Filling specific niche?
- Understanding how decisions are made
- Understanding what’s valued at your organization
How to Succeed: Communicating Effectively

- Communicating with clients to help them make good decisions (e.g. cost/error trade-offs for a design)
  - Listening
  - Understanding current practices & needs
  - Building trust
  - Knowing audience
Designing Opportunities: Expanding Your Skillset

- Gaining exposure to full survey life cycle
- Requesting “stretch tasks”
- Volunteering to pitch-in with projects
- Seeking mentors
- Shadowing more experienced staff

“If you want to go somewhere, it is best to find someone who has already been there.”

-Robert Kiyosaki
Designing Opportunities: Continuous Learning

- Participating in conferences & workshops
- Taking short courses or training offered at your organization
- Pursuing certificates/graduate degrees
- Reading articles, presenting research, attending brown bags
Conducting OJT

- Promoting learning by doing
- Sharing the big picture
- Creating connections between staff
- Encouraging networking
- Establishing a culture of ongoing learning

Professional skills & activities:

- Regular review of relevant literature and improved knowledge and skills
- Short courses
- Technical seminars
What’s the Point?

- Soft skills are important
- We can still learn on the job, even without management and budget authority
- Managers set the tone for on-the-job training
Thank you!

For more information, email:

mikelyn.v.meyers@census.gov
barboh5@gmail.com
s.kolenikov@srbi.com
mjans@ucla.edu