

INTRODUCTION TO ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

PART

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CHAPTER 1 The Nature and Scope of Organizational Behavior

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CHAPTER

1

Chapter Outline

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Learning Objectives

After reading and studying this chapter and doing the exercises, you should be able to:

1. Explain what organizational behavior means.
2. Summarize the methods of data collection in organizational behavior.
3. Summarize the research designs and methods of organizational behavior.
4. Identify the potential advantages of organizational-behavior knowledge.
5. Explain key events in the history of organizational behavior.
6. Understand how a person develops organizational-behavior skills.

Cisco Systems is a worldwide major player in information technology that designs, manufactures, and sells networking equipment. Based in San Jose, California, the company has more than 86,000 employees in close to 400 sites globally. Cisco's mission is to shape the future of the Internet by creating exceptional value and opportunity for all stakeholders. A major contributor to the extraordinary success of the company is its emphasis on caring for and motivating employees.

A formal component of motivating employees is the Connected Recognition program that is based on peer-to-peer appreciation on a large scale, as well as recognition nominations by team leaders. Cisco worked closely with the HR consulting firm Workhuman to develop Connected Recognition. Costing approximately 1 percent of payroll, the program enables employees to reward and recognize coworker contributions. The program is based on the basic principle of organizational behavior and organizational psychology that recognition for a job well done motivates workers.

Employees are authorized to grant coworkers rewards ranging from \$25 to \$250. Employees are also able to use the Connected Achievement program to reward colleagues with higher-value payouts, usually with involvement from managers. Connected Recognition is a tech-powered program with nominations made on a digital platform.

Ashley Goodall, Cisco's senior vice president of leadership and team intelligence, observes that "Recognition acknowledges people's strengths, which is the number one secret of a high performing team." The number of unique nominations is directly related to the level of engagement. Gabrielle Thompson, senior vice president, Acquisitions and Total Rewards at Cisco, says that once an employee is recognized by a sixth coworker, engagement increases substantially and continues to strengthen.

Employees perceive the program to be worthwhile, with 85 percent of company employees in the first year of the program having given or received recognition. More than 1.2 awards were given during the first five years of the program. During the first several years of the program, 93 percent of leaders have recognized an employee, and 90 percent of the Cisco workforce have been recognized.

A Cisco team analyzed data from 60,000 employees who received Connected Recognition rewards. A strong positive correlation was found between employee engagement (commitment to the job and employer) and more frequent, smaller awards received throughout the year.

Employees have a choice of redeeming their rewards for merchandise or experiences, resulting in a higher motivational value of the rewards. The recognition program offers the possibility of a large financial payout. One executive assistant was able to take her entire family, including husband, children, and grandchildren, to Disney for a week with the Connected Recognition awards she received.

The idea for Connected Recognition stemmed from Cisco's desire to modernize its reward program, a traditional on-the-spot bonus program for employees who successfully completed big projects. "Recognition is really at the center of the employee experience," said Thompson. A major idea was to align recognition and reward experience with "moments that matter."

The designers of Connected Recognition planned for it to enhance business results as well as employee motivation, engagement, and satisfaction. Cisco data indicated that Connected Recognition has played a key role in the company's success, helping drive 15.54 percent revenue growth during a recent five-year period. Furthermore, the program has contributed to multiple top rankings on the Fortune's 100 Best Companies to Work For list.¹

The story just presented illustrates how a company might use a basic technique of organizational behavior to accomplish the goal of having a more motivated and engaged workforce. The purpose of this book is to present systematic knowledge about people and organizations that can be used to enhance individual and organizational effectiveness. Managers and potential managers are the most likely to apply this information. Yet the

same information is important for other workers, including corporate professionals, sales representatives, customer service specialists, and technical specialists.

In organizations today, workers at every level do some of the work that was formerly the sole domain of managers. Team members, for example, are often expected to motivate and train each other. One reason organizations get by with fewer managers than previously is that workers themselves are now expected to manage themselves to some extent. Self-management of this type includes the team scheduling its own work and making recommendations for quality improvement.

In this chapter we introduce organizational behavior from several perspectives. We will explain the meaning of the term, see why organizational behavior is useful, and take a brief glance at its history including current developments. After describing how to develop skills in organizational behavior, we present a framework for understanding the field. An important goal in studying organizational behavior is to be able to make sense of any organization in which you are placed. For example, you might be able to answer the question: Is the human element given enough thought in attempting to implement this new workplace initiative?

The Meaning and Research Methods of Organizational Behavior

A starting point in understanding the potential contribution of organizational behavior is to know the meaning of the term. It is also important to be familiar with how information about organizational behavior is acquired.



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People engaged in highly technical work can also benefit from knowledge of organizational behavior because they too have frequent interactions with people and have to be creative.

The Meaning of Organizational Behavior

Organizational behavior (OB) is the study of human behavior in the workplace, of the interaction between people and the organization, and of the organization itself.² The major goals of organizational behavior are to explain, predict, and control behavior.

Explanation refers to describing the underlying reasons or process by which phenomena occur. For example, an understanding of leadership theory would explain why one person is a more effective leader than another. The same theory would help predict which people (e.g., those having charismatic qualities) are likely to be effective as leaders. Leadership theory could also be useful in controlling (or influencing) people. One leadership theory, for example, contends that group members are more likely to be satisfied and productive when the leader establishes good relationships with them.

Data Collection Methods in Organizational Behavior

To explain, predict, and control behavior, organizational-behavior specialists must collect information systematically and conduct research. The purpose of collecting data is to conduct research.

Methods of Data Collection

Three frequently used methods of collecting data in organizational behavior are surveys, interviews, and direct observation of behavior. The *survey questionnaire* used by a specialist in organizational behavior is prepared rigorously. Before preparing a final questionnaire, a scientist collects relevant facts and generates hypotheses (educated guesses) about important issues to explore. The questionnaire is carefully designed to measure relevant issues about the topic being surveyed. For example, participants in a study might be asked to evaluate their supervisor in various dimensions such as giving clear instructions and showing compassion. Among the surveys included in this textbook is the self-quiz about conscientiousness in Chapter 2.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 1

Explain what organizational behavior means.

Organizational behavior (OB)

The study of human behavior in the workplace, the interaction between people and the organization, and the organization itself.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 2

Summarize the methods of data collection in organizational behavior.



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Direct observation of people is one method of data collection.

Surveys typically ask the survey taker to respond to a question on a numerical scale such as 1 to 5 or 1 to 10. An example would be, “How satisfied are you with being given the opportunity to work from home two days a week?” Most readers of this book have taken dozens of surveys. Surveys can also ask open-ended questions, such as “How do you feel about having the opportunity to work from home two days per week?”

Research about human behavior in the workplace relies heavily on the *interview* as a method of data collection. Even when a questionnaire is the primary method of data collection, interviews are usually used to obtain ideas for survey questions. Interviews are also helpful in uncovering explanations about phenomena and furnishing leads for further inquiry. Another advantage of interviews is that a skilled interviewer

can probe for additional information. One disadvantage of the interview method is that skilled interviewers are required.

Archival data refers to collecting data from sources that already exist. A researcher might want to know how productive a group of IT support specialists was before a work-from-home program began. Company records might be available about these productivity levels. After the work-from-home program is in place, fresh data could be generated about the productivity of the IT workers. Objective before-and-after comparisons of productivity could then be made.

Naturalistic observations refer to researchers placing themselves in the work environment to collect much information about organizational behavior. Systematic observations are then made about the phenomena under study. One concern about this method is that the people under observation may perform atypically when they know they are being observed. A variation of systematic observation is *participant observation*. The observer becomes a member of the group about which he or she collects information. For example, to study stress experienced by customer service representatives, a researcher might work temporarily in a customer service center.

Research Designs and Methods in Organizational Behavior

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 3

Summarize the research designs and methods of organizational behavior.

Research design Framework of research methods chosen by a researcher to conduct a study.

To conduct an investigation, the researcher must first decide on a method of conducting a study. A **research design** is a framework of research methods a researcher chooses to conduct a study. The design serves as a blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data. A research design is close in meaning to data collection because the design indicates how the data will be collected. The topics of research design and data collection overlap.

In this section we describe four major approaches to research design: experiments, case studies, observational methods, and meta-analysis. We also describe how moderator variables need to be accounted for in designing research. Moderator variables are influencing factors such as living arrangements in a study about a hybrid work model.

Experiments

In recent years, there has been renewed interest in the use of experimental design in organizational behavior, management, and leadership research. A key reason for the use of experimental design is the ability to demonstrate *causality*, or what causes events or behavior. An *experiment* is the most rigorous research method. The essence of conducting an experiment is making sure that the variable being modified (the independent variable) influences the results. The independent variable (e.g., a motivational technique) is thought to influence the dependent variable (e.g., productivity). The dependent variable

is also known as the *criterion* (or *measure*). The power of experiments to establish cause-and-effect relationships is critical for advancing knowledge in organizational behavior, organizational psychology, and related fields.³ Experiments vary in their precision, but all are useful for advancing scientific knowledge.

Laboratory Experiments

A major characteristic of the *laboratory experiment* is that the conditions are supposedly under the experimenter's control. For example, to study the effects of stress on problem-solving ability, a group of people might be brought into a room. The stressor the experimenter introduces is an electronic beeping noise. In a field setting, however, assuming the experiment was permitted, the experimenter might be unaware of what other stressors the subjects faced at that time.

Laboratory study usually involves observing or measuring the participants' responses to the independent variable. One measure of how the participants responded to the electronic beeping noise would be their scores on a test of problem solving, such as performing addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of numbers. Another measure of the results would be responses to a questionnaire. The participants might report on a rating scale how they felt about the beeping noise by responding to the following question on a 1-to-7 scale of "hardly noticed the beep" to "terribly annoying and distracting."

Laboratory experiments are seen as useful in establishing causal relationships because the researcher not only has precise control over the independent variable, but because the participants are randomly assigned to the treatment conditions. A *treatment* refers to receiving the independent variable under study, such as the electronic beep mentioned here, or a financial incentive for performing a task. The researcher exercises tight control over the research setting. Unlike experiments conducted in field settings, laboratory experiments enable the researcher to control extraneous variables. An example of an extraneous variable in a field setting might be a heavy workload that is adding to a worker's stress level. When the variables are controlled, the number of alternative explanations for the results can be reduced.

Laboratory studies often make an important contribution because they serve as a starting point for trying out, or replicating, the laboratory findings in a field setting. Although laboratory studies might be carefully controlled, with a precise methodology followed, they have a major limitation. The independent variable used in the study might not have much applicability in the outside world. For example, is an electronic beeping noise a good proxy for job stress? Or would it be better to have a student in the experiment to play the role of a nasty boss as a stressor?

Field Experiments

A **field experiment** is an attempt to apply the experimental method to real-life situations. Variables can be controlled more readily in the laboratory than in the field, but information obtained in the field is often more relevant. An example of a field experiment would be investigating whether giving employees more power would affect their motivation to produce a great quantity of work. The independent variable would be empowerment, while the dependent variable would be quantity of work.

Given that field experiments are conducted in natural environments, they tend to be realistic and produce results that are more likely to generalize to other settings. Unlike laboratory experiments, field settings often require that the individual variable be manipulated by someone in the organization in which the study is being conducted. In a laboratory study, the researcher manipulates the independent variable. The lack of control by the researcher raises concerns about how carefully the variable under study was administered.

Following are a few key characteristics and attributes of a field experiment:

- The experiment is consistent with the interest in evidence-based management.
- Because the experiment is conducted in a real-life setting, the intensity and quality of the independent variable are more likely to duplicate that in real life.

Field experiment An attempt to apply the experimental method to real-life situations.

- The study participants experience the independent variable for a relatively long time, such as spending at least six months experiencing a hybrid work model.
- The field experiment is conducted in an organizational setting, thereby adding practical relevance to the results.
- Observed behaviors are more likely to reflect real life because they occur in a natural setting.⁴

Dov Eden is an industrial and organizational psychologist and emeritus professor at the Collier School of Management at Tel Aviv University. Based on his many years of conducting research, he concludes that field experimentation is the most valid research method. Eden contends that field experiments are doable and provide clear evidence of causes.⁵ He provides an example of the utility of field experimentation for evaluating the usefulness of a procedure or method. The independent variable studied was the *Pygmalion effect*, the tendency of group members to live up to (or down to) the expectations of the leader.

At an anti-aircraft gunnery school in Israel, Eden and a research colleague assigned instructors to experimental and control conditions; these instructors were scheduled to train a new group of gunnery trainees. The instructors in the experimental group were trained in Pygmalion theory and application during a one-day workshop. The instructors assigned to the control group participated in a one-day session about the demographic and social structure of Israeli society.

The effects (impacts or results) were measured in terms of the achievement scores of the trainees, and the researchers had no contact with any of them. The trainees of the instructors in the experimental groups scored higher than the trainees of the instructors assigned to the control group on the variables under study. They scored higher on objective written examinations and simulated performance tests at the end of the course. Furthermore, the trainees in the experimental group scored higher on motivation, self-efficacy, and means efficacy. (Self-efficacy is confidence in performing a task, and means efficacy refers to having confidence in having the means or resources to accomplish as task.)⁶

Control groups are key for investigating the impact of an independent variable in organizational research, so here are a few additional details. Assume that a human resources researcher wants to use an experiment to evaluate the impact of a leadership development program about how to provide supportive feedback to group members. Figure 1-1 outlines the experiment. The experimental group would consist of participants in the development program. Before-and-after measures of skills would be taken to evaluate whether improvements took place. Outcome measures from the experimental group would then be compared to those from the two control groups. All three groups would be composed of people similar in education, cognitive ability, job level, and job experience.

People in one control group would receive no special development. Members of the second control group would receive a different kind of development. Instead of training in giving supportive feedback, they might be trained in spoken business communication. The purpose of the second control group is to determine if training in supportive feedback has an edge over simply sending people to any sensible training program.

Quasi-Experimental Design

Another type of experimental design resembles a field study because it takes place in a field setting with one key difference. A **quasi-experimental design** aims to establish a

Quasi-experimental design An experimental design that aims to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between an independent and dependent variable, but subjects are assigned to groups on a non-random basis.

FIGURE 1-1 Evaluating Leadership Development through the Experimental Method

	Pretraining Measures	Training	Post-Training Measures
EXPERIMENTAL GROUP	Yes	Supportive Feedback	Yes
CONTROL GROUP I	Yes	None	Yes
CONTROL GROUP II	Yes	Business Communications	Yes

cause-and-effect relationship between an independent and dependent variable, but subjects are assigned to groups on a non-random basis.⁷ Suppose that organizational behavior specialist Kate is assigned to provide a two-day seminar to commercial sales representatives in one city; the topic is how to display empathy toward customers and customer prospects. The justification for the training is that empathizing with customers helps close a sale.

A few months later, Kate wants to evaluate whether the training boosted sales. For a comparison group, she uses the sales representatives from the same company in another city. Sales representatives were not assigned at random to the two groups, nor was Kate able to pre-test the empathy skills of reps in the second city. Nevertheless, Kate can compare the sales performance of sales representatives in the empathy-trained group with the performance of another group of reps in another city.

A few key features of a quasi-experimental design are as follows:

- Independent variable is manipulated by an experimenter or organizational official
- Enables researcher to establish causal relationship between independent variable and dependent variable
- Compatible with evidence-based management
- Conducted in real-life setting making the findings suitable to generalizing to other situations.
- Study participants are often exposed to independent variable for longer than in a laboratory experiment
- Most likely conducted in an organizational setting likely to have practical value.
- Facilitates collaboration between researchers and practitioners.⁸

Natural Experiments

Natural experiments study naturally occurring events that affect people and then compare these people to those who did not experience the event. The key feature of these experiments is the presence of events that take place in the real world, such as new regulations and laws, natural disasters, or economic and political crises that affect people in different ways. Natural experiments mimic the experimental idea in which the units under study are divided into treatment and control groups, or might receive different levels of treatments.⁹ (The units in this context are usually individuals, teams, or organizations.)

Assume that a researcher wanted to study the impact of environmental trauma on the long-term productivity of employees. It would be inhumane, unethical, and illegal to purposely traumatize one group of employees as the treatment group. In contrast, assume that a company facility was hit by a tornado. The facility was destroyed, and lives were lost. A comparable facility in the same geographic region was not hit by a tornado. A few months later, the facility hit by the tornado was rebuilt. A natural experiment would be to compare the productivity and well-being of the tornado victims one year later to those not hit by the tornado.

Although the natural experiment may appear to be scientifically sound, the researcher might have to dig further to check the scientific purity of the experiment. A relevant issue to raise would be to investigate the true comparability of the workers in both facilities. For example, did some of the tornado victims already have preexisting high levels of stress? Another issue to explore would be the comparability of the workers in the two facilities. Among the important comparison variables would be demographic factors such as the age, sex, gender, and educational levels of the workers in both facilities.

Another caution about natural experiments is that although they take place in a natural field setting, their external validity (ability to generalize to another setting) could be questionable. The setting of the natural experiment is often unique, or the interventions refer to a very specific group. It is therefore difficult to know if the findings would apply to another group in another setting. During the pandemic, some human-resource management professionals encouraged virtual groups to hold a virtual happy hour about once a week to encourage team spirit. Survey evidence suggested that the virtual happy hours were indeed good morale boosters.¹⁰ Would virtual happy hours boost morale

Natural experiment An experiment that studies naturally occurring events that affect people and then compare these people to those who did not experience the event.

equally well when team members were not facing a crisis? Another experiment might be necessary.

Case Studies

Case study An in-depth study of a person, organizational unit, or total organization aimed at finding a valuable principle or generalization.

Case studies remain an important research method in organizational studies and often serve as a source of ideas for further research. A **case study** is an in-depth study of a person, organizational unit, or total organization aimed at finding a valuable principle or generalization. Case writers use a systematic approach to gathering information and explaining a situation in detail. Case information is usually collected by an observer mentally recording impressions or physically recording them on a notepad or tablet computer. People have a tendency to attend to information specifically related to their own interests or needs. Despite this subjective element in the case method, cases provide a wealth of information that can be used to explain what is happening in a situation.

The case study helps the researcher understand behavior in the unit studied at the time. The results of the case study might be useful to a similar organization facing a similar problem, such as a case history about what happens to an organization when seniority is abolished as a basis for pay increases. For the generalizations from one case to work in another situation, the situations should be reasonably comparable. It is best to try out conclusions reached in one case to another situation because a case is essentially a sample of one.

Assume that behavioral scientist Brett wants to investigate the impact of online mentoring on the career of young people in a large, complex organization. He finds out online that McKesson, a major drug company, has an online mentoring program. Brett contacts the head of human resources at McKesson and requests permission to prepare a case history of the online mentoring program. He promises to provide the company with his finished case report and not to divulge any details of the program to the outside world that McKesson does not want divulged. Brett devotes several months of research time to interviewing McKesson managers and people mentored. When the case history is completed, Brett has acquired considerable firsthand information about online mentoring. He has also formulated three hypotheses that might be the basis for a future quantitative study of online mentoring, as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Online mentoring has a positive effect on the future promotions of the people mentored.

Hypothesis 2: People who find their own online mentor within the company are more satisfied with the mentoring experience than people who are assigned an online mentor by the company.

Hypothesis 3: People who use online mentoring will be promoted at the same rate as people who make use of in-person mentoring.

In short, the case study might reveal valuable information about a given situation. At the same time, a carefully prepared case might point the direction toward valuable empirical research.

Naturalistic Observation

Conducting a case study requires firsthand observation of what is happening to an individual or organizational unit. The observations then become the basis for a report. Observations are also used in organizational behavior research to report results that are not as comprehensive as a case study. For example, a researcher who wanted to study how store associates react to rude customers might stand near the checkout line of a discount department store or supermarket.

Naturalistic observation refers to researchers placing themselves in the work environment to collect information about workplace behavior. Subjects are therefore observed in their natural environment. Systematic observations are then made about the phenomena under study. Naturalistic observation is a form of qualitative research that usually focuses

Naturalistic observation Researchers placing themselves in the work environment to collect information about workplace behavior.

on collecting, evaluating, and describing non-numerical data. A light degree of quantitative research can enter naturalistic observation if the researcher makes a few numerical notes about what is observed, such as how many times store associates shake their head in disgust when sworn at by angry customers.

The goal of naturalistic observation is to observe behavior as it is happening in a natural setting without introducing an independent variable, such as having a confederate in the research swear at and belittle the store associate. Naturalistic observation is often more revealing than a laboratory setting because the research observes what happens in a true work setting. A research confederate who simulated the behavior of a rude and nasty customer might not have the same negative impact as would a real customer.

An advantage of naturalistic observation for the organizational behavior researcher is that the subject is directly observed in a natural setting. Certain behaviors can be observed that might not be observed in a lab setting, such as the rudely treated store associate breathing heavily. Naturalistic observation enables researchers to study behaviors or situations that cannot be manipulated in the laboratory for ethical and practical reasons.¹¹ Assume that a researcher wanted to observe the work habits of people who had recovered from a stroke. It would be out of the question to physically induce a stroke to several workers in a lab setting, in order to observe their subsequent work habits. Naturalistic observations are also useful because they confirm that something took place in a work setting, such as store associates experiencing stress when customers treat them rudely.

A major disadvantage of naturalistic observation is that it is difficult to determine the true cause of the subject's behavior. Another concern about this method is that the people under observation may perform atypically when they know they are being observed. Observer bias is another concern about naturalistic observation. The biases of the researcher observing the natural behavior could influence the results. For example, if the researcher is convinced that rude treatment by customers is a major stressor, the observer will be quick to observe any possible symptom of stress shown by the associates.

A variation of naturalistic observation is *participant observation*. The observer becomes a member of the group about which the observer collects information. For example, to study stress experienced by customer service representatives, a researcher might work temporarily in a customer service center.

Meta-Analysis

A widely used approach to conducting research does not involve conducting original research. Instead, the researcher contributes by synthesizing and analyzing results other researchers have published. Typically, the results of a large number of studies are combined. A **meta-analysis** is a quantitative or statistical review of the literature on a particular subject and is also an examination of a range of studies for the purpose of reaching a combined result or best estimate. Studies that have a large number of participants receive more weight in the meta-analysis than smaller studies.

A meta-analysis is therefore a review of studies, combining their quantitative information. You can also view meta-analysis as a quantitative review of the literature on a particular subject. For example, a researcher might want to combine the results of 100 different studies about the job-performance consequences of group decision making before reaching a conclusion. Many of the research findings presented throughout this book are based on meta-analysis rather than on the results of a single study. Meta-analysis continues to gain in frequency of use, as reflected in the many published research studies based on the technique.

Meta-analysis is often based on taking correlation coefficients from many studies, weighting them by the number of observations in each study. A conclusion can then be drawn about whether the effect is meaningful, such as whether empowering employees to make decisions really improves their work motivation. As meta-analysis has evolved over the years, its procedures have become increasingly complex and usually conducted with software. Very few researchers would be able to conduct a meta-analysis without the aid of a statistics and measurement specialist.

Meta-analysis A quantitative or statistical review of the literature on a particular subject; an examination of a range of studies for the purpose of reaching a combined result or best estimate.

Conducting a meta-analysis is often a massive undertaking, but it can provide conclusions that are useful to a wide audience, as the following example suggests. Five researchers from three different business schools conducted a meta-analysis of the relative contribution of team, organizational, and professional identification in the workplace. *Identification* refers to the process of feeling part of a group and perhaps having that link be part of one's self-concept. A person might say proudly, "I am a member of our marketing team," or "I am a life-saving ambulance medic."

The researchers, through meta-analysis, tested the relationship between each identification target and 15 attitudes, three behaviors, and five general well-being variables in the workplace. To search for conclusions, the researchers synthesized 483 studies and 557 independent samples that measured responses from a total of 179,442 participants. A handful of complex findings were revealed in the meta-analysis, but one stood out for career-minded people: Identifying with your team had the most beneficial effect among the variables studied, but particularly for well-being.¹² If you identify with your team on the job, it is beneficial to your physical and mental health.

Meta-analysis gives the impression of being scientific and reliable because so much information is assimilated, using sophisticated statistical tools. One might argue, however, that it is better to perform one rigorous study than to analyze many poorly conducted studies. A meta-analysis often consists of combining some carefully executed studies with a few of poor quality.

Moderator Variables

Moderator variable A third variable that affects or influences the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable.

An important use of meta-analysis in the various social sciences is to understand how certain factors, referred to as *moderator variables*, influence the results of studies.¹³ A **moderator variable** is a third variable that affects or influences the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable. An organizational behavior researcher might be studying the relationship between empowerment (giving employees more power) and work performance. Although the relationship would be positive for many workers, a moderator can be the employees' attitude toward authority. Workers from a culture that highly values the authority might feel uncomfortable being empowered because they expect the boss to make most of the decisions. If the researcher did not take into account the moderator variable of attitude toward authority, the positive relationship between empowerment and performance might be weakened.

In a correlation study, a moderator is a third variable that affects the correlation of the two variables. For example, the relationship between age and absenteeism would generally be slightly negative, meaning that older workers tend to be absent less frequently. A moderating variable, however, is conscientiousness. Younger workers with a high standing on the personality trait of conscientiousness might have low absenteeism.

Moderator variables are assigned so much importance by researchers that any study examining the relationship between two or more variables takes into consideration the moderators. A study investigating the relationship between two variables that did not include moderator variables would be rejected by most editors of professional journals.

A final note about research designs and methods is that research that uses multimethods, or more than one design, might produce the most valid results. An example would be the same study using questionnaires, case information, and a field experiment. The editors of the *Academy of Management Journal* concluded that multimethod research is likely to result in a higher-quality and more impactful result.¹⁴

Quantitative versus Qualitative Research Methods

Another way to classify research methods is determining whether they are quantitative or qualitative.¹⁵ Quantitative research involves collecting data, such as customer-satisfaction survey responses and production records. The data are then subject to a variety of statistical techniques including correlational analysis, regression analysis, and analysis of variance. Recording the results of experiments and meta-analysis are also examples of quantitative research methods.

Qualitative research involves the researcher interacting with the source of the data, such as talking to workers and even taking videos and photos. Interviews and participant observations are qualitative research methods. Naturalistic observation (observing people in natural settings) is frequently used as a method of qualitative research. Recognize, however, that qualitative research closely resembles quantitative research when the data from the qualitative observations are coded. For example, while interviewing workers about their job satisfaction, every response that contains a certain topic might be assigned a code. To illustrate, when workers mention the topic of “consideration for my feelings,” the response category of “consideration” would receive one entry. The entries would be tallied to yield a quantitative result. Many of the most important insights and theories in organizational behavior stem from qualitative research, such as uncovering what motivates people, and how organizations profit or learn from their experiences.

When management professors were asked to express their understanding of the difference between quantitative and qualitative research, one of the valuable insights that emerged was: “Quantitative research is about careful preparation and faithful execution of the plan laid out in the beginning; qualitative research is about exploring ideas.”¹⁶ Assume that a researcher wanted to study the conditions under which workers in a non-profit organization are creative. Using a quantitative research method, the researcher would prepare a lengthy questionnaire about organizational conditions related to creativity. The questionnaire would be administered to a large group of staff members in a few nonprofit organizations. Using a qualitative method, she might visit a few nonprofit agencies, and talk to workers about their creative problem solving.

How You Can Benefit from Studying Organizational Behavior

Studying organizational behavior can enhance your effectiveness as a manager or professional. Yet the benefits from studying organizational behavior are not as immediately apparent as those derived from the study of functional fields such as accounting, marketing, purchasing, and information technology. Such fields constitute the *content* of managerial and professional work. Organizational behavior, in contrast, relates to the *process* of conducting such work. An exception is the organizational-behavior specialist whose content, or functional knowledge, deals with organizational-behavior concepts and methods.

Visualize a woman industrial health specialist who has extremely limited interpersonal skills in communicating, motivating, and resolving conflict. She will have a difficult time applying her technical expertise to organizational problems. She will therefore fail in serving her clients because she lacks the ability to use effective interpersonal processes. In contrast, if the same health specialist had strong interpersonal skills, she could do a better job of serving her clients. (She would probably also hold on to her job longer.)

Studying and learning about organizational behavior offers four key advantages: (1) interpersonal skill development, (2) personal growth, (3) enhancement of organizational and individual effectiveness, and (4) sharpening and refinement of common sense.

Interpersonal Skill Development

Interpersonal skills remain of major importance in the modern workplace. These skills generally refer to getting along with people in a variety of ways such as motivating them, complimenting them, and being able to resolve conflict. People with good interpersonal skills are considered more rewarding to deal with.

Anil Singhal, the founder of NetScout Systems, a company that assists business firms and government agencies in managing their information technology networks, has helped many young employees make the transition to midcareer success. He believes that “primary skills” can take you only so far in your career. Singhal says that those talents by which you earned your college degree and first made your professional reputation can drive success for the first ten years of a career. After that period, “secondary skills”—interpersonal

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 4

Identify the potential advantages of organizational-behavior knowledge.



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Interpersonal skills are useful for people who wear a hard hat to work.

skills such as the ability to interact well with coworkers—become key to continued success.¹⁷

A major reason that interpersonal skill development is a key to success is that difficulty with interpersonal skills is a major reason behind career derailment. As Teddy Roosevelt said, “The most important single ingredient in the formula of success is to know how to get along with people.”¹⁸

The distinction between *soft* skills and *hard* skills is relevant for understanding the importance of interpersonal skill development, as well as the development of other skills, in organizational behavior. Soft skills are generally interpersonal skills such as motivating others, communicating, and adapting to people of different cultures. A key example of a soft skill that is important to success in roles that involve interaction with people is empathy and compassion. Empathy and compassion facilitate approaching work associates with patience, kindness, and respect.¹⁹

Hard skills are generally technical skills, such as information technology and job design. Some skills, such as those involved with decision making, have a mixture of soft and hard components. To make good decisions you have to be creative and imaginative (perhaps a soft skill), yet you also have to weigh evidence carefully (most likely a hard skill).

The World Economic Forum recently developed a list of the skills required for success in today’s workplace and into the future. Seven of the ten most necessary skills are soft skills, as indicated by an (S) in the following list. (H) indicates a hard skill.²⁰

1. Analytical thinking (H)
2. Creative thinking (S)
3. Resilience, flexibility, and agility (S)
4. Motivation and self-awareness (S)
5. Curiosity and lifelong learning (S)
6. Technological literacy (H)
7. Dependability and attention to detail (S)
8. Empathy and active listening (S)
9. Leadership and social influence (S)
10. Quality control (H)

A large-scale analysis of 34 million U.S. managerial job postings, along with millions of job résumés and employee performance evaluations, reinforces the importance of soft skills. The study found that in the last 20 years, employers have tripled the share of postings that emphasize collaboration, coaching, and influence. A Google study of thousands of performance reviews reached the same conclusion. The study found that Google’s best managers excel at coaching, communication, and collaboration across teams. These three soft skill behaviors are now used as core promotion criteria.²¹

If a specific skill is classified as soft, it does not imply that it is easy to develop. For example, the basic soft skill of listening carefully to people takes considerable practice to develop. A person would have to acquire abilities such as concentrating on what the other person is saying, not interrupting others, and looking directly at the person talking.

Personal Growth through Insight into Human Behavior

An important reason for studying organizational behavior is the personal fulfillment gained from understanding others.²² Understanding fellow human beings can also lead to enhanced self-knowledge and self-insight. For example, while studying what motivates

others, you may gain an understanding of what motivates you. Participating in the experiential exercises and self-assessments included in this textbook provides another vehicle for personal growth. A case in point is the study of motivation in Chapter 6. You will be invited to take a self-quiz about the meaningfulness of work to you. Taking the test and reviewing the results will give insight into the types of attitudes and behaviors you need to make your work more meaningful.

Personal growth through understanding others and self-insight is meritorious in and of itself, and it also has practical applications. Managerial and professional positions require sharp insights into the minds of others for tasks such as selecting people for jobs and assignments, communicating, and motivating. Sales representatives who can size up the needs of prospects and customers have a competitive advantage. Another value of understanding others and self-insight is that they contribute to continuous learning because the needs of others change over time, and so might your needs. For example, labor shortages have prompted many workers to demand exciting and meaningful work and worry less about job security.

Enhancement of Organizational and Individual Effectiveness

A major benefit from studying organizational behavior is that it provides information that can be applied to organizational problems. An important goal of organizational behavior is to improve **organizational effectiveness**—the extent to which an organization is productive and satisfies the demands of its interested parties. Each chapter of this book contains information that is applied directly or indirectly by many organizations. One visible example is the widespread use of teams in the workplace. Certainly, organizational-behavior specialists did not invent teams. We suspect even prehistoric people organized some of their hunting forays by teams. Nevertheless, the conclusions of organizational-behavior researchers facilitated the shift to teams in organizations.

Why does paying more attention to the human element improve business performance? One explanation Stanford University professor of organizational behavior Jeffrey Pfeffer offers is that people work harder when they have greater control over their work environment and when they are encouraged by peer pressure from teammates. Even more advantage comes from people working in a smarter way. People-oriented management practices enable workers to use their wisdom and to receive appropriate training. Another contribution to improved performance stems from eliminating positions that focus primarily on watching and controlling workers.²³ Much of organizational behavior deals with people-oriented management practices. Many of these practices will be described in later chapters.

Understanding organizational behavior also improves organizational effectiveness because it uncovers factors that contribute to or hinder effective performance. Among these many factors are employee motivation, personality factors, and communication barriers. Furthermore, an advanced understanding of people is a major contributor to managerial success. This is especially true because so much of a manager's job involves accomplishing tasks through people.

Organizational behavior also contributes insights and skills that can enhance individual effectiveness. If a person develops knowledge about subjects such as improved interpersonal communication, conflict resolution, and teamwork, the person will become more effective. A specific example is that knowledge about organizational behavior can contribute to high performance. Executive coach Lisa Parker observes that managers sometimes neglect to give encouragement and recognition to good performers because these workers are already performing well. Yet if these same

Organizational effectiveness
The extent to which an organization is productive and satisfies the demands of its interested parties.



Individual effectiveness can be enhanced through studying organizational behavior.

solid performers were given more encouragement, coaching in the form of advice, and recognition, they will often develop into superstars (very high performers).²⁴

A frequent problem noted about managers is that they supervise too closely, or micro-manage, the work of subordinates. One result is that employees can feel insecure and offended when their manager takes over a project that was assigned to them. If a present or future manager studies organizational behavior, the manager might become more aware of the problems of micromanagement, and then monitor his or her behavior to prevent micromanaging.²⁵

The Organizational Behavior in Action box illustrates how a manager might use organizational-behavior knowledge in the form of paying attention to the human element to improve organizational effectiveness.

Sharpening and Refining Common Sense

A manager commented after reading through several chapters of an organizational-behavior textbook, “Why should I study this field? It’s just common sense. My job involves dealing with people, and you can’t learn that through a book.” Many other students of organizational behavior share the sentiments expressed by this manager. However logical such an opinion might appear, common sense is not an adequate substitute for knowledge about organizational behavior. This knowledge sharpens and enlarges the domain of common sense. It markedly reduces the amount of time necessary to acquire important behavioral knowledge and skills, much as law school reduces the amount of time that a person in a previous era would have to spend as a law apprentice.

You may know through common sense that giving recognition to people is generally an effective method of motivating them toward higher performance. By studying organizational behavior, however, you might learn that recognition should be given frequently but not every time somebody attains high performance. (You specifically learn about intermittent rewards in your study of motivation.) You might also learn that the type of recognition you give should be tailored to the individual’s personality and preferences. For example, some people like flamboyant praise, whereas others prefer praise focused tightly on the merits of their work. Formal knowledge thus enhances your effectiveness.

Organizational-behavior knowledge also refines common sense by challenging you to reexamine generally accepted ideas that may be only partially true. One such idea is that inactivity is an effective way to reduce stress from a hectic schedule. Yet some hard-driving people find inactivity more stressful than activity. For them, lying on a beach for a week might trigger intense chest pains. For these people, diversionary physical activity—such as doing yard work—is more relaxing than inactivity.

If you study organizational behavior, you might become sensitized to the contribution of **evidence-based management**, or using research evidence to help make management decisions. The goal of evidence-based management is to improve the quality and decisions and therefore further human progress.²⁶ The Center for Evidence-Based Management points to four sources of evidence that should be considered, along with the quality of the evidence, when making a decision:

- Findings from empirical (data-based) studies published in academic journals
- Data, facts, and figures gathered from within the organization in which the decision maker is working
- The experience and judgment of managers, professionals, and other practitioners
- The values and concerns of the stakeholders (people involved with the organization) who may be affected by the decision²⁷

Research and case-history evidence might be available for some types of decisions, but not all. The careful student of organizational behavior would look to see what evidence was available before making a decision. A relevant example is the movement toward employee engagement, or commitment to the work and company, as a way of enhancing organizational effectiveness. Some people regard employee engagement as a

Evidence-based management
Using research evidence
to help make management
decisions.

Michelle Gass, the Levi Strauss CEO Who Combines Functional Skills with a Human Touch

Michelle Gass (pronounced “Goss”) is the president and chief executive officer of Levi Strauss & Co. and serves on the company’s board of directors. Gass is spearheading the transformation of Levi Strauss into a premier direct-to-consumer (DTC) first denim lifestyle retailer. Selling directly to consumers means relying heavily on the company’s 1,300 stores and website. The intent is to leverage the Levi’s® iconic brand and place it at the center of culture into long-term growth.

Gass has 37 years of experience in the retail and consumer goods industry. Just before joining Levi Strauss in 2022, Gass served for four and one-half years as the CEO of a major customer, Kohl’s. At Kohl’s, she led its evolution into a leading omnichannel retailer by building an e-commerce business, valued at billions of dollars. Gass began her career with Procter & Gamble, then spent 17 years at Starbucks. She became president of Starbucks Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA), after holding a variety of senior leadership roles.

Gass explains that the pivot from wholesaler to direct-to-consumer retailer requires substantial new thinking. She says, “I think what I had not fully understood—just because I hadn’t been inside the company—is what a big lift it is going to be to really pivot this company to become a retailer.” Many processes would have to change, including the culture of thinking like a retailer. Gass is moving Levi Strauss toward becoming a denim lifestyle brand. “We talk about denim dressing, and I’ve got to tell you, as a woman, we’re going big after denim skirts and denim dresses,” she said.

Gass is continuing the Levi Strauss strategy of driving profits through principles. She emphasizes that the role of the CEO is to lead the business and care for employees. The company’s caring efforts include the Levi Strauss Foundation and the Red Tab Foundation that both help employees in need.

After 17 years of experience in a variety of marketing roles at Starbucks, Michelle Gass was hired as the chief customer officer at the department store chain Kohl’s. One of her first initiatives was to give a pep talk to employees at the retailer’s headquarters in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin. Gass sensed that a motivational talk was needed because, after several years of post-recession growth, sales had begun to slip. As with other brick-and-mortar stores, at Kohl’s, competition from online retailers and boutiques was eating into sales.

Her responsibilities as chief customer officer at Kohl’s included marketing and e-commerce; she also acted as the chief merchandising officer for all products sold in the stores. Gass also pushed Kohl’s to participate in the employee health and wellness trend.

Gass told employees that Kohl’s needed to think differently and that they should not be afraid to attempt new ideas, something most employees had been hesitant to do in the past. The willingness to change and desire to inspire employees were two of the reasons that Gass was chosen in 2017 to succeed Kevin Mansell as chief executive.

Chip Bergh, the CEO of Levi Strauss & Co., has described Michelle Gass as a proven leader who has been a positive force for the retail business. Gass is recognized by work associates as quickly changing course when an idea or an initiative fails. For example, Kohl’s experimented with in-store coffee shops but abandoned the plan when the shops proved to be unprofitable. Mansell said that Gass has a “bias for action,” meaning that she moves swiftly when making a tough decision, such as closing an underperforming location.

Despite the increasing pressures that faced Kohl’s as a retailer with stand-alone stores, Gass maintained a warm demeanor and smiles frequently in her interactions with coworkers and other employees. She says that for her, the fundamental principles of great leadership are “humanity, empathy, and being courageous.”

Gass wants company leaders at all levels to display empathy. In an era when many companies have dropped diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs, Gass remains committed to its diversity goals at Levi Strauss. She says, “We’ve been supporting diversity and inclusion for decades.”

After graduating in 1990 from the Worcester Polytechnic Institute with a BS in chemical engineering, Gass decided to specialize in marketing. She received an MBA from the school of business at the University of Washington, followed by more than five years of marketing experience at Procter & Gamble.

QUESTIONS

1. What evidence that Michelle Gass combines functional (discipline-related) skills with a human touch is provided in this description?
2. Relying on whatever current information you can quickly gather, how successful has Gass been as the CEO of Levi’s?

Source: Original story created from information in the following sources: Sheryll Poe, “Michelle Gass on Leadership, Taking Risks and Her Vision for Levi’s,” *National Retail Foundation* (www.nrf.com), 2025, pp. 1–4; “Michelle Gass: President & Chief Executive Officer,” *Levi Strauss & Co.* (www.levistrauss.com), 2025, p. 1; Phil Wahba, “Levi Strauss CEO Michelle Gass Is Counting on Women to Boost the Denim Brand—with Help from the Baggy Jeans Boom and Beyoncé,” *Fortune*, April/May 2025, pp. 10–13; Sajal Kohli, “Michelle Gass of Kohl’s on Shifting from Survival to Growth,” *McKinsey & Company* (www.mckinsey.com), July 26, 2021, pp. 1–10; Suzanne Kapner, “Kohl’s Chooses Marketer as Next Chief Executive,” *The Wall Street Journal*, September 17, 2017, p. B12.

fad, yet evidence from hundreds of companies and over 60,000 employees indicates that employee engagement enhances organizational performance.²⁸

An important caution about using evidence-based management is that you should not be frozen from making a decision just because relevant research on the topic is not available.²⁹ For example, a business owner might have the intuition that offering paternity leave to the men in his organization would boost employee loyalty and morale. He should make his decision now even if he cannot locate empirical research or other relevant data on this potential benefit of paternity leave.

A Brief History of Organizational Behavior

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 5

Explain key events in the history of organizational behavior.

Behavioral approach to management The belief that specific attention to the workers' needs creates greater satisfaction and productivity.

The history of organizational behavior is rooted in the **behavioral approach to management**, or the belief that specific attention to workers' needs creates greater satisfaction and productivity. In contrast to the largely technical emphasis of scientific management, a common theme of the behavioral approach is the need to focus on people. The behavioral approach to management was heavily influenced by the work of psychologists and their study of individuals in the workplace. Furthermore, the fields of organizational psychology and organizational behavior resemble each other quite closely.

Scientific management did not ignore people altogether, and in some ways it contributed to organizational behavior. For example, scientific management heavily emphasized financial incentives to increase productivity, yet the general thrust centered on performing work in a highly efficient manner.

Organizational behavior is also heavily influenced by social psychology, as well as sociology, the study of group behavior, organizational structure, diversity, and culture. In addition, the insights of cultural anthropologists contribute to an understanding of organizational culture (the values and customs of a firm), and they have been hired occasionally to help companies cultivate the right organizational culture. Organizational behavior also gains insights from political science by understanding the distribution of power in organizations.

Seven key developments in the history of organizational behavior are the classical approach to management, the Hawthorne studies, the human relations movement, the contingency approach to management and leadership, positive organizational behavior, the Internet and social media era, and the application of artificial intelligence (AI).

The Classical Approach to Management

The study of management became more systematized and formalized as a by-product of the Industrial Revolution that took place from the 1700s through the 1900s. Managing these factories created the need for systems that could deal with large numbers of people performing repetitive work. The classical approach to management encompassed scientific management and administrative management and contributed some insights into understanding workplace behavior.

Scientific management The application of scientific methods to increase an individual worker's productivity.

The focus of **scientific management** was the application of scientific methods to increase an individual worker's productivity. An example would be assembling a lawn mower with the least number of wasted motions and steps. Frederick W. Taylor, considered the father of scientific management, was an engineer by background. He used scientific analysis and experiments to increase worker output. A key part of his system was to convert individuals into the equivalent of machine parts by assigning them specific, repetitive tasks.

Taylor tackled the dilemma of management wanting to maximize profits, and workers wanting to maximize possible wages. Disputes between management and labor centered on what each side saw as incompatible goals. Taylor believed that his system of scientific management could help both sides attain their goals, providing each would undergo a "mental revolution." Each side had to conquer its antagonistic view of the other. Taylor believed that management and labor should regard profit as the result of cooperation between the two parties. Management and labor each needed the other to attain their

goals.³⁰ Scientific management is based on four principles, all of which direct behavior in the workplace.³¹

- Careful study of the jobs to develop standard work practices, with standardization of the tools workers use in their jobs
- Selection of each worker using scientific principles of personnel (human resources) selection
- Obtaining cooperation between management and workers to ensure that work is accomplished according to standard procedures
- Plans and task assignments developed by managers that workers should carry out

According to these principles of scientific management, there is a division of work between managers and workers. Managers plan and design work, assign tasks, set performance goals, and make time schedules. Managers also select and train workers to do the tasks according to standard procedures, and give the workers feedback about their performance. Workers are rewarded with financial incentives when they increase their productivity.³²

Administrative management was concerned primarily with the management and structure of organizations. The French businessman Henri Fayol and the German scholar Max Weber were the main contributors to administrative management. Based on his practical experience, Fayol developed 14 management principles through which management engaged in planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, and controlling. Weber suggested that bureaucracy is the best form of organization because it makes highly efficient management practices possible.

The core of management knowledge lies within the classical school. Its key contributions come from studying management from the framework of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling. The major strength of the classical school was providing a systematic way of measuring people and work that still exists in some form today. For example, United Parcel Service (UPS) carefully measures the output and work approaches of the delivery workers. The major limitation of the classical school is that it sometimes ignores differences among people and situations. In addition, some of the classical principles for developing an organization are not well suited to fast-changing situations.

Administrative management A school of management thought concerned primarily with how organizations should be structured and managed.

The Hawthorne Studies

Many scholars pinpoint the Hawthorne studies (1923–1933) as the true beginning of the behavioral approach to management.³³ Without the insights gleaned from these studies, organizational behavior might not have emerged as a discipline. The purpose of the first study conducted at the Hawthorne plant of Western Electric (an AT&T subsidiary) was to determine the effect of changes in lighting on productivity. In this study, workers were divided into an experimental group and a control group. Lighting conditions for the experimental group varied in intensity from 24 to 46 to 70 foot-candles. The lighting for the control group remained constant.

As expected, the experimental group's output increased with each increase in light intensity. But unexpectedly, the performance of the control group also changed. The production of the control group increased at about the same rate as that of the experimental group. Later, the lighting in the experimental group's work area was reduced. This group's output continued to increase, as did that of the control group. A decline in the productivity of the control group finally did occur, but only when the intensity of the light was roughly the same as moonlight. Clearly, the researchers reasoned, something other than illumination caused the changes in productivity.



The Hawthorne studies emphasized the climate of the work group.

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Hawthorne effect The tendency of people to behave differently when they receive attention because they respond to the demands of the situation.

The relay assembly test room produced similar results over a 6-year period. In this case, relationships among rest, fatigue, and productivity were examined. First, normal productivity was established with no formal rest periods and a 48-hour week. Rest periods of varying length and frequency were then introduced. Productivity increased as the frequency and length of rest periods increased. Finally, the original conditions were reinstated. The return to the original conditions, however, did not result in the expected productivity drop. Instead, productivity remained at its usual high level.

One interpretation of these results was that the workers involved in the experiment enjoyed being the center of attention. Workers reacted positively because management cared about them. The phenomenon is referred to as the **Hawthorne effect**—the tendency of people to behave differently when they receive attention because they respond to the demands of the situation. In a research setting, this could mean that the people in an experimental group perform better simply because they are participating in an experiment. In a work setting, this could mean that employees perform better when they are part of any program—whether or not that program is valuable.

The Hawthorne studies also produced other findings that served as the foundation for the human relations movement. Although many of these findings may seem obvious today, documenting them reinforced what many managers believed to be true. Key findings included the following:

1. Economic incentives are less potent than generally believed in influencing workers to achieve high levels of output.
2. Dealing with human problems is complicated and challenging.
3. Leadership practices and work-group pressures profoundly influence employee satisfaction and performance.
4. Personal problems can strongly influence worker productivity.
5. Effective communication with workers is critical to managerial success.
6. Any factor influencing employee behavior is embedded in a social system. For instance, to understand the impact of pay on performance, you must understand the climate in the work group and the leadership style of the manager. Furthermore, work groups provide mutual support and may resist management schemes to increase output.

Despite the contributions of the Hawthorne studies, they have been criticized as lacking scientific rigor and being seriously flawed.³⁴ The most interesting criticism contends that the workers in the control group were receiving feedback on their performance. Simultaneously, they were being paid more as they produced more. The dual impact of feedback and differential rewards produced the surprising results—not the Hawthorne effect.³⁵

The Human Relations Movement

Human relations movement An approach to dealing with workers based on the belief that there is an important link among managerial practices, morale, and productivity.

The **human relations movement** is based on the belief that there is an important link between managerial practices, morale, and productivity. Workers bring various social needs to the job. In performing their jobs, workers typically become members of several work groups. Often these groups satisfy some of the workers' needs. Satisfied workers, it was argued, would be more productive workers. The challenge for managers was to recognize workers' needs and the powerful influence that work groups can have on individual and organizational productivity.

A second major theme of the human relations movement is a strong belief in workers' capabilities. Given the proper working environment, virtually all workers would be highly productive. Significant amounts of cooperation between workers and managers prove critical to achieving high levels of productivity. A cornerstone of the human relations movement is Douglas McGregor's analysis of the assumptions managers make about human nature, delineated in two theories.³⁶ Theory X is a set of traditional assumptions about people. Managers who hold these assumptions are pessimistic about workers' capabilities. They believe that people dislike work, seek to avoid responsibility, are not

ambitious, and must be supervised closely. McGregor urged managers to challenge these assumptions about human nature because they may be untrue in most circumstances.

Theory Y is an alternative, and optimistic, set of assumptions. These assumptions include the idea that people do accept responsibility, can exercise self-control, have the capacity to innovate, and consider work to be as natural as rest or play. McGregor argued that these assumptions accurately describe human nature in far more situations than most managers believe. He therefore proposed that these assumptions should guide managerial practice.

A large chunk of organizational behavior stems from the human relations movement. However, organizational behavior is more research-oriented than human relations and also develops more theories.

The Contingency Approach

Beginning in the early 1960s, organizational-behavior specialists emphasized the difficulties in finding universal principles of managing people that can be applied in all situations. To make effective use of knowledge about human behavior, one must understand which factors in a particular situation are most influential.

The **contingency approach to management** emphasizes that there is no one best way to manage people or work. A method that leads to high productivity or morale in one situation may not achieve the same results in another. The contingency approach is derived from the study of leadership styles. Experienced managers and leaders know that not all workers respond in the exact same way to identical leadership initiatives. A recurring example is that well-motivated, competent team members require less supervision than those who are poorly motivated and less competent. In Chapter 11, we present more information about the contingency approach to leadership.

The strength of the contingency approach is that it encourages managers and professionals to examine individual and situational differences before deciding on a course of action. Its major problem is that it is often used as an excuse for not acquiring formal knowledge about organizational behavior and management. If management depends on the situation, why study organizational behavior or management? The answer is that a formal study of organizational behavior or management helps a manager decide which factors are relevant in particular situations. In the leadership example just cited, the relevant factors are the skills and motivation of the group members.

Contingency approach to management The viewpoint that there is no one best way to manage people or work but that the best way depends on certain situational factors.

Positive Organizational Behavior

Another movement in organizational behavior is a focus on what is right with people. The human relations movement was a start in this direction. However, the movement toward focusing on strengths rather than weaknesses stems directly from *positive psychology*, with its emphasis on what is right with people, such as love, work, and play. Fred Luthans defines **positive organizational behavior** as the study and application of human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and managed for performance improvement.³⁷

The criteria of being measurable and developmental are significant because they separate positive organizational behavior from simply giving pep talks and inspirational speeches to employees. An example would be the concept of *self-efficacy*, or having confidence in performing a specific task. A worker might be asked how confident he or she is to perform a difficult task, such as evaluating the risk of a particular investment. If the worker's self-efficacy is not strong enough, additional experience and training might enhance the person's self-efficacy.

An everyday application of positive organizational behavior would be for a manager to focus on employee strengths rather than weaknesses. It is well accepted that encouraging a worker to emphasize strengths will lead to much more performance improvement than attempting to patch weaknesses. Assume that a person is talented in interpersonal relationships but weak in quantitative analysis. This person is likely to be more productive by further developing strengths in a position calling for relationship building. The

Positive organizational behavior The study and application of human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and managed for performance improvement.

less productive approach would be overcoming the weakness in quantitative analysis and attempting to become a financial specialist. (The point here is not that working on weakness is fruitless, but that capitalizing on strengths has a bigger potential payoff.)

In general, positive organizational behavior focuses on developing human strengths, making people more resilient, and cultivating extraordinary individuals, work units, and organizations. All of this is accomplished by careful attention to well-developed principles and research, rather than simply cheering people on.

The Internet and the Social Media Era

As with every other field, how people behave in organizations has been affected by the Internet, including social networks. Rather than being a new approach to organizational behavior, these modern developments in communication technology are incorporated into the work activities of most workers at all levels in the organization. Rare exceptions do exist with respect to workers who do not have to use the Internet to accomplish their tasks. Among them are shoe shiners, street food vendors, hotel housekeepers, and circus clowns. Following are three of hundreds of possible examples of how the Internet and social media influence organizational behavior:

- Workers communicate and collaborate with each other through company social media networks, as well as public networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.
- Team leaders motivate subordinates by sending them electronic messages in place of face-to-face meetings.
- Executives enhance their development of business strategy by gathering input from hundreds of company insiders and outsiders via a website dedicated for the purpose.

The focus of our approach in this book as to how the Internet and social media affect organizational behavior will be in Chapter 8 about interpersonal communications.

The Application of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become pervasive in most aspects of organizational life, perhaps second only to the influence of the Internet. AI is a broad term covering a variety of technologies with different definitions, yet conceptualizing AI as follows is useful: **Artificial intelligence** is a digital technology that imitates the analytical ability of human intelligence by finding patterns in the information it is fed or locates.³⁸ Here we highlight a sampling of the ways in which AI influences both the behavior of people in organizations and the study of organizational behavior as a discipline.³⁹

Artificial intelligence A digital technology that imitates the analytical ability of human intelligence by finding patterns in the information it is fed or locates.

1. *Using artificial intelligence, an organizational behavior researcher could uncover useful information based on an analysis of almost every available published study.* For example, a researcher might use the AI prompt, “What do studies conclude about the relationship between conscientiousness and job performance?”
2. *Artificial intelligence can assist in job design by taking over routine tasks, enabling employees to tackle more complex and creative tasks.* For example, AI might take over inventory audits in a supermarket, enabling store associates to spend more time interacting with customers.
3. *Generative AI can be helpful in generating a larger number of potentially creative solutions to a problem than people might be able to.* The chief human resources officer at a truck manufacturer might ask generative AI to find ways to recruit more truck mechanics to the company because the company is understaffed in this category.
4. *Organizational behavior specialists can alert AI users to ethical considerations in using the technique.* For example, a manager might use AI to write an overly harsh performance review of a group member for the sake of justifying that person’s recommended firing. Using AI to supplant a totally honest review would be considered

an ethical breach. Another potential ethical problem is sending communications to employees that are written by a bot rather than an executive. Should employees be told that the message is AI generated?

5. *Organizational behavior specialists can alert management to the reality that the combination of artificial and human intelligence is likely to produce the best results.* Recent research suggests that the collaboration of AI and human intelligence is likely to produce more useful solutions to problems than relying on one approach. AI might produce numerous suggestions, and then a person can select which one is the most useful. For example, GM used AI to design ultra-light automobile parts that helped the company meet new carbon emission standards. Engineers at GM chose a new AI-generated design that is 40 percent lighter and 20 percent stronger than the original version.
6. *Organizational behavior researchers offer the insight that empowering employees to participate in AI-powered work improvements can enhance their acceptance.* New AI tools have been developed at Walmart through a process that brings employees into the design rather than imposing the finished product on them. AI developers use employee input about what works and what does not, and tools are adjusted accordingly. During pilot sessions, store associates were asked for features such as shift-swapping, posting availability preferences, and viewing schedules further in advance. Using employee input, the finished AI system gave employees more control and transparency. After the AI system was implemented, store managers and team managers reported that the new app reduced the time needed to schedule shifts from 90 to 30 minutes. The new AI scheduling system gives Walmart associates more say over how and when they work.
7. *The findings of organizational behavior researchers can alert managers and other workers to a frequent misuse of AI output.* Many organizations have yet to see a measurable return on investment (ROI) from the use of AI. The problem is that artificial intelligence is sometimes used to produce *workslop*—content that masquerades as useful work but lacks the substance to correctly execute a task. Research conducted at BetterUp Labs and Stanford Social Media Lab found that the output is passed along to coworkers who have to rework the output, thereby resulting in lost productivity. Workers who disseminate workslop may pay the price because they are perceived as less creative, capable, and reliable after having sent along the defective work. Here is an example of workslop: A market researcher uses AI to arrive at a forecast for the use of walkers with wheels attached. AI produces a detailed ten-page report with fictitious information about the surging demand for these devices. The researcher passes along the report to a coworker who spends hours attempting to verify the findings.



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Artificial intelligence (AI) has become pervasive in most aspects of organizational life, perhaps second only to the influence of the Internet.

Skill Development in Organizational Behavior

Developing skill in organizational behavior means learning to work effectively with individuals, groups, and organizational forces. The greater one's responsibility, the more one is expected to work well at these three levels. Developing most organizational-behavior skills is more complex than developing a structured skill such as conducting a physical inventory or downloading an app for a mobile device. Nevertheless, you can develop organizational-behavior skills by reading this textbook and doing the exercises. The book follows a general learning model:

1. *Conceptual knowledge and behavioral guidelines.* Each chapter in this book presents research-based information about organizational behavior, including a section titled Implications for Managerial Practice.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 6

Understand how a person develops organizational-behavior skills.



FIGURE 1-2 A Model for Developing Organizational-Behavior Skills

Organizational-behavior skills can be developed by using a systematic approach.

2. *Conceptual information and examples.* These include brief descriptions of organizational behavior in action, generally featuring managers and leaders.
3. *Experiential exercises.* The book provides an opportunity for practice and personalization through cases and self-assessment exercises. Self-quizzes are included because they are an effective method of helping you personalize the information, assisting you in linking conceptual information to your own situation. For example, you will read about creative problem solving and also complete a quiz about creativity.
4. *Feedback on skill utilization, or performance, from others.* Feedback exercises appear at several places in the book. Implementing organizational-behavior skills outside the classroom will provide additional opportunities for feedback.
5. *Frequent practice.* Readers who look for opportunities to practice organizational-behavior skills outside the classroom will acquire skills more quickly. An important example is the development of creative-thinking skills. The person who looks for imaginative solutions to problems regularly is much more likely to become a more creative thinker and be ready to think creatively at a given moment. Contrast this with the individual who participates in a creative-thinking exercise once and then attempts the skill a year later when the need is urgent. As in any field, frequently practicing a skill the right way leads to skill improvement.

As you work through the book, keep the five-part learning model in mind. To help visualize this basic learning model, refer to Figure 1-2.

Developing organizational-behavior skills is also important because it contributes to your lifelong learning. A major theme of the modern organization is that to stay competitive, a worker has to keep learning and developing. A relevant example is that as work organizations have become more culturally diverse, it is important to keep developing one's skills in working effectively with people from different cultures. Working effectively with people from other cultures includes being *inclusive*, or welcoming people from cultural groups different from your own.

A Framework for Studying Organizational Behavior

A challenge in studying organizational behavior is that it lacks the clear-cut boundaries of subjects such as cell biology or Italian. Some writers in the field consider organizational behavior to be the entire practice of management. Others focus organizational behavior much more on the human element and its interplay with the total organization. Such is the orientation of this textbook. Figure 1-3 presents a basic framework for studying organizational behavior. The framework is simultaneously a listing of the contents of Chapters 2 through 17.

Proceeding from left to right, the foundation of organizational behavior is the study of individual behavior, presented in Chapters 2 through 7. No group or organization is so powerful that the qualities of individual members do not count. Visualize a famous athletic team with a winning history. Many fans contend that the spirit and tradition of the team, rather than individual capabilities, carry it through to victories against tough

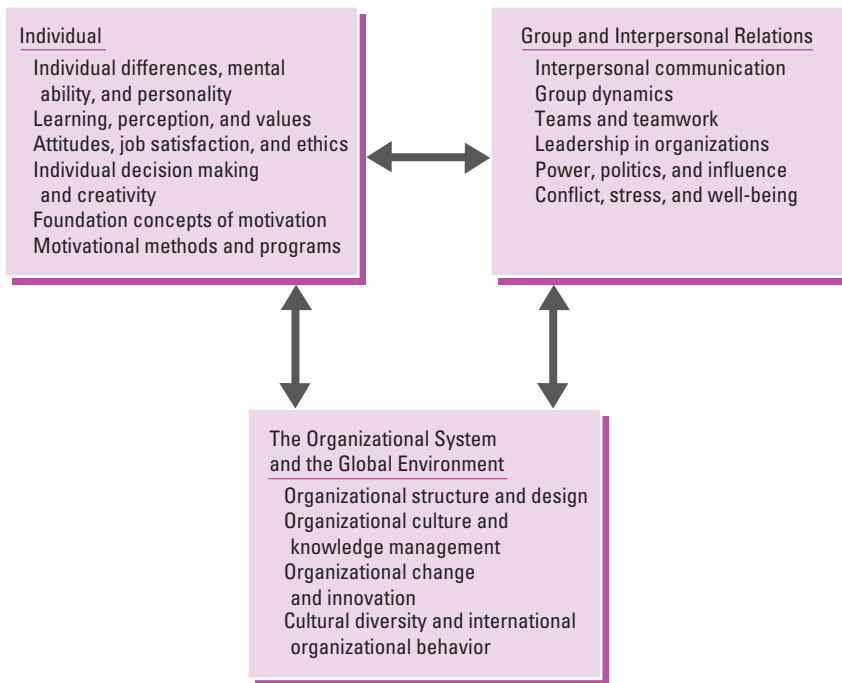


FIGURE 1-3 A Framework for Studying Organizational Behavior

To better understand organizational behavior, recognize that behavior at the individual, group, and organizational system, and global environmental levels are linked to one another.

opponents. Yet if the team has a couple of poor recruiting years or loses a key coach, it may lose more frequently.

Key factors in understanding how individuals function include individual differences, mental ability and personality, learning, perception, attitudes, values, attribution, and ethics. It is also important to understand individual decision making, creativity, foundation concepts of motivation, and motivational programs.

As suggested by the arrows in Figure 1-3, the various levels of study are interconnected. Understanding how individuals behave contributes to an understanding of groups and interpersonal relations, the second level of the framework. This will be studied in Chapters 8 through 13. The topics include communication, group dynamics (how groups operate), teams and teamwork, and leadership. Although leadership relates directly to interpersonal relationships, top-level leaders are also concerned with influencing the entire organization. The study of power, politics, and influence is closely related to leadership. Conflict, stress, and well-being might be classified at the individual level, yet these processes are heavily dependent on interaction with others.

Finally, the third level of analysis in the study of organizational behavior is the organizational system and the global environment, as presented in Chapters 14 through 17. Components of the organizational and environmental level studied here include organizational structure and design, organizational culture, organizational change and knowledge management, cultural diversity, and international (or cross-cultural) organizational behavior. Cultural diversity and international organizational behavior could just as well have been studied before the other topics. Our position, however, is that everything else a person learns about organizational behavior contributes to an understanding of cross-cultural relations in organizations. For example, a useful interpretation of the popular word *equity* is that it refers to giving people an equal opportunity to capitalize on their capabilities. Understanding the components of human capabilities, as described in Chapter 2, will assist in helping workers make better use of their talents.

The connecting arrows in Figure 1-3 emphasize the interrelatedness of processes and topics at the three levels. Motivation provides a clear example. A person's motivational level is dependent on the person's individual makeup as well as work-group influences

and the organizational culture. Some work groups and organizational cultures energize new members because of their highly charged atmospheres. The arrows also run in the other direction. Highly motivated workers, for example, improve work-group performance, contribute to effective interpersonal relationships, and enhance the organizational culture.

The influence of organizational-behavior factors may extend beyond the organization and lead to the firm's competitive advantage.⁴⁰ For example, the strongly talented individuals, high-performing teams, and high-performance culture that characterize Apple Inc. enhance its worldwide competitiveness.

Implications for Managerial Practice

Each of the following chapters includes a brief section explaining how managers and professionals can use selected information to enhance managerial practice. Our first lesson is the most comprehensive and perhaps the most important: Managers should raise their level of awareness about the availability of organizational-behavior information. Before making decisions in dealing with people in a given situation, pause to search for systematic information about people and organizations. For example, if you need to resolve conflict, first review information about conflict resolution, such as that presented in Chapter 13. The payoff could be improved management of conflict.

Another key implication from this chapter is to search for strengths and talents in others and yourself, and then capitalize on these strengths as a way of improving organizational and individual effectiveness. Weaknesses should not be ignored, but capitalizing on strengths has a bigger potential payoff.

Summary of Key Points

1. **Explain what organizational behavior means.** Organizational behavior is the study of human behavior in the workplace, the interaction between people and the organization, and the organization itself. Organizational behavior relates to the process, rather than the content, of managerial work.
2. **Summarize the methods of data collection in organizational behavior.** Three frequently used methods of collecting data on organizational behavior are surveys (typically questionnaires), interviews, and direct observation of behavior. Archival data collects data from existing resources. Naturalistic observation places the researcher in the work environment to collect data.
3. **Summarize the research designs and methods of organizational behavior.** Four widely used research methods are experiments including laboratory experiments, field experiments, quasi-experimental design, and natural experiments. Natural experiments are important but less frequently used in organizational behavior. The essence of conducting an experiment is to make sure that the independent variable influences the results.

Case studies are an important research method in organizational studies and often provide ideas for further research. Naturalistic observation places the researcher in the work environment. A meta-analysis is a statistical review of the literature combining many studies. Meta-analysis is useful in investigating moderator variables that might influence the relationship between dependent and independent variables.

Another way to classify research methods is whether they are quantitative or qualitative. Quantitative research is said to be about careful preparation and faithful execution of the plan laid out in the beginning; qualitative research is about exploring ideas.
4. **Identify the potential advantages of organizational-behavior knowledge.** Knowledge about organizational behavior offers four key advantages: interpersonal skill development, personal growth, the enhancement of organizational and personal effectiveness, and sharpening and refinement of common sense. Emphasizing the human factor increases productivity and gives a firm a competitive advantage. If you study organizational behavior, you might become more sensitized to the contribution of evidence-based management, or using research evidence to help make management decisions.
5. **Explain key events in the history of organizational behavior.** The history of organizational behavior parallels the behavioral approach to management, including contributions from classical management. The classical approach to management encompasses both scientific and administrative management and

contributes some insights into understanding workplace behavior. The behavioral approach formally began with the Hawthorne studies. Among the major implications of these studies were that leadership practices and work-group pressures profoundly influence employee satisfaction and performance.

The human relations movement and the contingency approach to management are also key developments in the history of organizational behavior. The human relations movement was based on the belief that there is an important link among managerial practices, morale, and productivity. Analysis of Theory X versus Theory Y (pessimistic versus optimistic assumptions about people) is a key aspect of the movement. The contingency approach emphasizes taking into account individual and situational differences in managing people.

Another movement in the field is positive organizational behavior, which focuses on measurable human resource strengths and capacities. The Internet and

social media era have influenced behavior in organizations because they are incorporated into the work activities of the vast majority of workers at all levels in the organization. Artificial intelligence has a growing number of applications in organizational behavior, and organizational behavior knowledge can facilitate a more effective use of AI.

6. **Understand how a person develops organizational-behavior skills.** Organizational-behavior skills can be developed by following a general learning model that includes the use of conceptual knowledge and behavioral guidelines, experiential exercises, feedback on skill utilization, and frequent practice. The framework for studying organizational behavior in this textbook emphasizes the interconnectedness of three levels of information: individuals, groups and interpersonal relations, and the organizational system and the global environment.

Key Terms and Phrases

Organizational behavior, p. 5	Meta-analysis, p. 11	Administrative management, p. 19
Research design, p. 6	Moderator variable, p. 12	Hawthorne effect, p. 20
Field experiment, p. 7	Organizational effectiveness, p. 15	Human relations movement, p. 20
Quasi-experimental design, p. 8	Evidence-based management, p. 16	Contingency approach to management, p. 21
Natural experiment, p. 9	Behavioral approach to management, p. 18	Positive organizational behavior, p. 21
Case study, p. 10	Scientific management, p. 18	Artificial intelligence (AI), p. 22
Naturalistic observation, p. 10		

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. How might it be possible for a worker to not interact frequently with coworkers, yet still be a superior performer?
2. The term *belly-to-belly interview* used to be popular in market research. Why might this approach to data collection still be useful?
3. Identify any error you can think of made by a politician or business executive that the person might have avoided with a better knowledge of organizational behavior.
4. What does it mean to say that organizational behavior relates to the *process*—as opposed to the *content*—of a manager's job?
5. Give a possible explanation why meta-analysis is considered so important in evaluating the effectiveness of prescription drugs.
6. Work by yourself, or form a small brainstorming group, to furnish an example from physical science in which common sense proves to be untrue.
7. How could a few principles of scientific management be applied to enhance the productivity of baristas at Starbucks?
8. Why might being adept at soft skills help a manager or corporate professional from being replaced by AI?
9. It has often been said that the higher you go in terms of management responsibilities, the more important interpersonal skills become. Why might this be true?
10. Get together with a few classmates. Develop a list of strengths of group members that you think if further developed would be career assets, and explain why these strengths might be assets.

CASE PROBLEM 1A: CEO Amanda Is Worried about Her Workforce

Amanda is the CEO of Magna Home, the home appliance division of a Chinese conglomerate. Her company, located in Texas, employs 2,500 workers. Magna Home continues to stay profitable, partially because several major home appliance makers have exited the business in recent years. Magna pays above-average wages in all job categories and provides generous employee benefits.

When asked by a board member how well she thought the company was doing, Amanda made these comments: “I see a few positives. Our manufacturing, marketing, and sales are doing well. Our technology is outstanding, and we have fine-tuned our supply chain. Although we have high-quality employees, we have major workforce problems.”

The board member asked Amanda for more details. She said, “Our turnover is about 35 percent, which is way above average for the industry. Our absenteeism and tardiness rates are pretty high. My impression is that few of our employees either purchase our appliances for their own use, or recommend our appliances to friends.

“Roberto, our chief human resources officer, and I have tried to figure out what the problems are with our workforce. We have interviewed a few supervisors as well as employees, but we don’t have any specific answers.

“Roberto thinks that some of our problems are simply reflections of the attitudes of today’s workforce. Quitting jobs is in style. Loads of workers don’t think they should have to work on company premises full time. Even some production workers think they can get some of their work done at home by using computer commands.”

“A major project for Roberto and me in the upcoming months is to get a good handle on the causes of our workforce problems. We could then fix the problem. Roberto has even suggested that we hire a workplace behavior consultant to help us figure out what has gone wrong with our workforce.”

Case Questions

1. To what extent is Magna Home management facing a problem in organizational behavior?
2. Which two research methods of organizational behavior do you think would be the most helpful in uncovering the true nature of the workforce problems?
3. Why should Amanda and Roberto worry about the workforce problems if Magna Home is doing well financially?

Associated Role Play

One student plays the role of the head of human resources, Roberto. He decides to conduct a joint interview with two Magna Home production employees, chosen at random. He intends to ask the employees how the company could provide them a more exciting, interesting workplace. Two other students play the role of the employees, who might be suspicious of Roberto’s motives for conducting the interviews, yet they want to cooperate. Run the role play for about ten minutes. Observers can look to see if Roberto has attained any insights into how Magna Home can retain employees at a higher rate.

CASE PROBLEM 1B: The AI Agent Productivity Dilemma

Brandon is the marketing manager for Nirvana Supplements, a company that provides a large number of health supplements. The products are sold in many stores, but most of the sales take place over the phone or online. About one year ago, Brandon had a growing concern that the system of agents receiving calls and responding to customer questions had become too labor intensive. The large number of agents required to answer questions and complete a sale was reducing profits.

With the consent of top-level management, Brandon hired an AI consulting firm to install an AI agent based on natural language processing (NLP). The AI agent would process most calls and convert them into sales without human intervention for most inquiries. When the AI agent could not process the call to the customer’s satisfaction, the call would be switched to a human agent, who would take responsibility for the transaction.

Here is an example of a successful interaction with the AI agent:

Caller: I have lower back pain. Please send me a supplement to get rid of the pain.

AI Agent: I have exactly the product you need, “Pain Reliever Plus,” at \$29.95 for 90 pills. How many containers do you want?

Caller: One container for now.

AI Agent: Will you be paying by credit card or debit card?

Here is an example of a failed transaction with the AI Agent:

Caller: I think I have bursitis. Can you help me feel better?

AI Agent: You say you want to order a product besides this. What product do you mean?

Caller: I didn't say "besides this," I said "bursitis." I need help for my pain.

AI Agent: I do not understand you. Please wait while I connect you to the next available representative.

After six months of the AI agent system in place, it appeared to Brandon that the system was cost-effective, yet the results were not clear-cut. Recognizing that phone orders are a key part of Nirvana Supplement's business, Brandon thought it would be beneficial to conduct an experiment about the productivity of AI agents versus traditional phone customer representatives. Having studied marketing and organizational behavior in college, Brandon believed in the scientific precision of a field experiment. Yet he also knew that convincing top-level management of the value of conducting a field experiment on company time would be a tough sell.

Case Questions

1. What do you recommend Brandon tell management to convince them that conducting an experiment on company time is worthwhile?

2. What type of experimental design should Brandon use to determine if the current application of AI is improving the productivity of agents?
3. What should Brandon tell management if the experimental results fail to demonstrate that the company use of AI agents is producing positive results?

Associated Role Play

One student plays the role of Brandon, who has a meeting with three members of the top-management team, including the CEO, to convince them of the value of conducting a field experiment about AI agent productivity. Three other students play the roles of top management who might have some skepticism about conducting an experiment at Nirvana Supplements. Observers of the role play might be alert to how well Brandon presents the value of a field experiment to measure agent productivity.

Endnotes

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