Current Position Description and Information

Name: David Futrell
Title: Senior Director, Global Selection & Assessment
Current Affiliation: Walmart
Highest Degree Obtained: Ph.D.
Field or sub-discipline (i.e., I/O Psychology, Neuroscience, Social, Clinical): I/O Psychology

1. Please provide us a short description of your current position, and the work you do on a daily basis. This will be made available to the attendees on a handout as part of the webinar resources (no more than 250 words is needed):

   David is responsible for the enterprise-wide selection strategy at Walmart. This includes the tools and processes used for screening and hiring all associates from the store level thru the C-Suite.

2. In your current job, are there other titles/roles for people doing similar work at other organization, universities, or companies? If so, what are those titles/roles?
   The title/level of roles like mine are usually *Consultant, Director, Senior Director,* or *Leader.* The departments/functions are usually *Talent Management, HR Research, Selection & Assessment, Talent Assessment,* or *People Analytics.*

3. What skills and abilities did you learn in your training (i.e., graduate school, postdoctoral experience), do you find are most useful in your job/career?
   Statistics, Data Analysis (especially developing SPSS skills), Research Design, and Measurement/Psychometrics have been most helpful. Some of the core psychology concepts/theories that have been most important are Individual Differences, Psychology of Learning, Motivation, and Social Psychology.

4. How did you get the job you are currently in? Please provide a brief history of your career path/journey. Our attendees are interested in knowing more about how one achieves a current position like yours, and what opportunities or experiences help open doors orcreate opportunities.
   My initial career goal was to be a rock star. But I figured I needed a backup plan, so I studied automotive mechanics at the local vocational school during my last two years of high school and one year post-secondary. When I finished, I was hired at the local Mazda dealership. One morning, about two months into the job, I had an epiphany (although that word wasn't in my vocabulary at the time). I looked around at my co-workers, and realized they were all 40-something old adolescents with a collection of addictions, arrests, divorces and other personal drama. They were earning only slightly more than I was, and none of them enjoyed their work. It was just something they endured to earn money to fund the stuff they actually wanted to do (and pay child support).

   I decided that I did not want to be doing that when I was 40 years old, and I drove over to my former high school that afternoon to get the paperwork to take the ACT. Nobody in my family

had ever gone to college and were clueless about how to actually make it happen. So I applied to Murray State University because it was the closest 4-year university to my home, and declared my major to be Psychology, even though I had only a vague notion of what "psychology" was.

I was lucky. Murray had an excellent psychology department, and several of the faculty members had a huge impact on me and helped guide my career. Although there was no undergraduate course in I/O Psych at the time, we had a professor named Brian Mullen who was an outstanding social psychologist and he guided me toward applied psychology. I applied to a few I/O programs and selected the University of Tennessee.

After finishing my course work, I took an internship at Saturn Corporation in Spring Hill, TN. This was before auto production began, and part of my responsibility was to help design and run the process to hire the first 5,000 production workers. I managed to collect my dissertation data from Saturn's selection process, and when my internship was finished after 1 year, I took a full-time position in Service Engineering as a data analysis team leader. This work had nothing whatsoever to do with I/O psychology. I was selected because I had in-depth knowledge about automobiles and how the labor time guide and warranty systems in dealerships function AND I knew how to analyze complex data. I created a process for collecting warranty data from the dealerships, then built the statistical analyses and reporting to feed that information back to the relevant teams in engineering, manufacturing, and supplier quality. I hired and trained three analysts for my data team, then I finished my dissertation and left Saturn for an external consulting role at QualPro

QualPro was a process improvement consulting firm. The work we did was quite similar to what Six Sigma consultants do, although we emphasized experimentation to a much greater degree. QualPro's clients had been primarily manufacturers, and I helped build out the practice into areas where process measures were more subjective: customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, visual inspection systems, etc.

After six years at QualPro, I'd seen enough airports, rental car counters, and hotel rooms, and I left for an internal consulting role in HR Research at Eli Lilly and Company. In this role I worked on virtually every process that involved measuring people, including employee engagement surveys, 360 appraisals, potential assessment, performance management, reward & recognition systems, recruiting, and employee selection. It was a great job and great company, but I had achieved about as much as I could do as an individual contributor, so when I had the opportunity to join Walmart and lead their Selection and Assessment team, I took it.

At Walmart, my team's work is a bit narrower than what I did at Lilly, but the scale is hard to fathom. At Lilly, we might receive 20,000 applications per year for sales representative jobs. At Walmart, we receive over 10,000 applications per DAY just for hourly positions in U.S. stores.

5. If someone wanted to follow a similar career path to your own, how would you suggest going about it? Please offer specifics/examples whenever possible: (Example: Networking is key. You should join XXXX LinkedIn groups, go to XXXX Meetups and attend XXXX meetings)

The best starting point is with an advanced degree in I/O psychology. Selection work is very technical, and even the constructs we deal with are difficult for most people to understand, including senior leaders. There is also significant legal responsibility. Selection systems need to be valid, fair, and legally defensible. I/O programs always provide some training relative to these legal issues. Selection teams in big companies might include a data scientist or statistician, but are almost always led by someone with a Master's or Ph.D. In I/O or a closely related field.

If someone with an advanced degree in some other area of psychology wanted to cross over and work in Selection, the most likely gaps would be in data analysis skills and relevant legal knowledge. There are courses/resources available online which could help bridge those gaps, but becoming fully competent in these areas would require some focused mentoring.

A somewhat easier path into applied roles in companies would be executive coaching. Psychologists with clinical or counseling backgrounds already possess most of the technical knowledge required. Obviously, there's a big difference between the in both the objectives and the clients typically treated by clinicians and those "treated" by an executive coach, but the transition is manageable.

6. Are there specific resources for open positions in your career field, and if so what are they?

SIOP (Society for Industrial & Organizational Psychology (www.siop.org) is a great general resource for learning about the field. There's a career section on the website which includes current job openings.