Will they join the team and stay?
A study of potential and new program evaluators

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2008 CES Conference, Québec
May 12, 2008

This material may be freely cited, as follows:
Outline

- Study objectives
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Study objectives

- Regarding new evaluators and evaluators-to-be:
  - Describe perceptions of the profession
  - Identify attractors/detractors to evaluation
  - Measure likelihood of joining/staying
  - Describe the role played in evaluation
  - Identify levers available to ensure renewal
Study methodology

- **Population**
  - Evaluators in all sectors who have worked in evaluation for 3 years or less
  - Students who have taken some evaluation courses in university

- **Questionnaire**
  - Replicates portions of our 2005 questionnaire
  - Includes items used in the literature on career decisions
Study methodology

- **Sampling**
  - E-mail invitation to (1777) CES members to fill out the questionnaire and/or refer new evaluators
  - Invitation to (64) employers and (132) university professors involved in evaluation to refer

- **Operations**
  - Web-only survey
  - March 24, 2008: invitations; April 7: reminders to professors
  - Field closure on April 23
  - 276 completed questionnaires
  - Can’t calculate a response rate since population unknown
Factual description

Profile

- Predominantly female (77%)
- More than half are over 30 years of age (average age = 34.4 years)
- Located largely in Ottawa-Gatineau (34%) and Ontario (24%)
  - 79% of those in Ottawa-Gatineau work for federal government
- Well-educated: 95% have a university degree (38% undergraduate, 53% Masters, 4% PhD)
  - Of those currently studying (n=102), 64% are at a Masters level and 25% at PhD level
- Within workers, one quarter make under $45,000 annually (28%)
  - Another 28% make between $35,000 and $60,000
- 58% are members of CES, 15% are members of a discipline-related association and 23% are members of some other professional association
Factual description

Current involvement in evaluation

- 70% of workers spend at least half their time on evaluation
- Nearly half of workers have been in evaluation for less than one year (47%)
- Three in four (75%) workers are in a permanent position
- Almost three quarters (74%) of workers are producers of evaluation results

\[\text{(n = 274 respondents)}\]
Factual description

**Responsibilities of workers in evaluation**

- The federal government (43%), private sector (16%) and provincial governments (15%) are the main employers.
- Most workers are junior (24%) or intermediate (36%) officers / consultants.
- More than two in three (69%) describe their major responsibility as research / data collection / analysis.
- Employees in the private sector tend to have been involved in more evaluation projects in their career (average of 13 versus 5.9 to 7.9 in other sectors).

**Issue:** Should new evaluators be more involved in planning, designing and reporting?
Perceptions of evaluation

- Not surprisingly, people who are interested in entering or staying in evaluation tend to have a more positive perception of evaluation.
- Respondents who were 40 years of age or older tended to hold less positive perceptions of evaluation.
- Students were more likely than workers to feel that evaluators enjoy an enviable position of influence in organizations (53% vs. 35%).
- Individuals with a mentor were more likely to feel the field of evaluation is prestigious (49% vs. 31%) and that evaluators held an enviable position of influence (43% vs. 24%).

Issue: Is this a realistic picture of evaluation or should we worry about less positive perceptions?
Evaluation as a career

Pathways to evaluation

- 76% did not plan to become an evaluator

- Federal evaluators most likely to enter evaluation to enhance CV (39%)

Issue: More efforts needed to make evaluation a real profession?
Evaluation as a career

Intentions for the future

- Among employed, 54% intend to stay in evaluation
- Likelihood of staying in evaluation highest in private sector
- Intention to leave highest in federal government

Issue: What can we do to avoid likely turnover?
Evaluation as a career

Evaluation as a career choice

- **Majority would pick evaluation as a career, especially among youth**
- **Older respondents would prefer a management position**

**Issue:** How can evaluation be made more appealing?
Evaluation as a career

**Sector**

- Federal government top choice in terms of organization
- 76% of federal government workers would pick federal government (although they are most likely to leave evaluation)
- Only 53% of private sector workers would pick their own sector (although they are most likely to stay in evaluation)

**Issue:** Is the sector of belonging more important than the profession?
Training

Sources of training and PD

- 33% (52% of federal workers) have not taken any university courses in evaluation
- 34% of respondents (44% of workers, 56% of federal workers) have taken ESS courses
- 42% (49% of workers) have taken other evaluation PD
- 17% of respondents (38% of workers) have attended the national conference; 31% have attended local events

Issue: Is there enough evaluation training?
Training

Usefulness of training

- 87% of workers have applied their education (81% federal, 100% nonfederal government)
- Training has been useful to 85% (79% federal)
- 88% are using their research skills

BUT

- 70% have had no training for some of their evaluation work
- 85% feel they need additional training to carry out their responsibilities as an evaluator
- 89% feel they need additional training to move ahead as evaluators
  - No differences across any categories

Issue: Is evaluation training complete enough?
Job features
Importance for evaluation employees

- 18 features of a job rated in importance “in gauging the attractiveness of a work offer”
- Emphasis on intellectual stimulation of the work but rated balanced lifestyle high as well
- Tangible features ($, workload) low
- Accidental evaluators emphasize pay increases, benefits, security

Issue: Are employers able to offer intellectually stimulating yet balanced working environments?
Job features

Satisfaction for evaluation employees

- Evaluator satisfaction with the same 18 job features was measured
- Most satisfying:
  - flexibility of work arrangements
  - intellectual challenge
  - nature of the work
- Least satisfying:
  - compensation for overtime
  - opportunities for promotion
  - stress involved in the work
  - clarity of the work objectives
- Accidentals more satisfied than planners (regarding extrinsic factors)

Issue: Accidentals stay for extrinsic factors; will they leave when given a better offer?
Job features

Satisfaction and importance for employees

- Feature by feature, satisfaction with the current employment generally increases with importance.
- Three features show lower than average satisfaction while being higher than average on importance:
  - (g) the clarity of the work objectives
  - (h) the opportunities for promotion
  - (j) the potential for pay increases

Issue: How much latitude do employers have to address these gaps?
Job features
Satisfaction and intention to stay in evaluation

- Not surprisingly, people who intend to stay in evaluation are more satisfied with their job than those who do not
- The extent of the differences is significant
- Key drivers of retention:
  - Intrinsic factors
  - Opportunities for promotion
- Much less important:
  - Extrinsic factors (benefits and pay)

**Issue:** Employers have control over many of the intrinsic factors. Do they act on it?
Job features

Importance for evaluation students

- Evaluation students tend to give attribute importance to many of the job features, in particular, pay increases, the level of responsibility, the classification level and opportunities for PD
- However, they value significantly more compensation for overtime (McDonald’s factor)

Issue: Reality needs to be clearly communicated to new employees.
Conclusions and questions

- New evaluators are middle-age and predominantly female. Impacts on job expectations?
- One-half intend to be in evaluation in 5 years; one-half would prefer another field. What can be done to avoid high turnover?
- High demand for training but limited offer and take-up. Is the right training offered? Is training the right solution?
- Evaluation perceived as interesting by most but new evaluators not as involved in key phases of the work. How can we build on these positive attitudes?
- Those in evaluation for pay and benefits will not stay. How can we be competitive and focus on the intrinsic interest of the job?
- Evaluation is a stumbled-upon occupation. How to make it a career choice?

Possible solutions:
- Training and mentoring?
- Certification?
- Job enrichment?
- Communication with new evaluators?
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