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**The Executive Skills Profile:  
A Method for Assessing Development  
Needs Among Family Medicine Faculty**

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# The Executive Skills Profile: A Method for Assessing Development Needs Among Family Medicine Faculty

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***Background and Objectives:** The purpose of this paper is to report on how the Executive Skills Profile, a measure of job demands and employee skills, can be used as a faculty development tool in academic family medicine departments. **Methods:** The Executive Skills Profile (ESP) identifies 72 work activities and groups them into 12 scales, each of which is displayed graphically. Faculty identify the work activities that are relevant to their jobs and then identify the personal skills they must have to carry out those work activities. **Results:** The ESP successfully characterized the job demands and personal skills of one family medicine department. The evaluation showed that overall perceived job demands were greater than the faculty's perceived personal skills, particularly in the areas of interpersonal and behavioral skills. **Conclusions:** The ESP can be used to characterize the job demands and personal skills of faculty.*

(Fam Med 1993; 25:100-3)

The success of family medicine faculty in academic settings requires skill in balancing research, teaching and clinical practice. The demands of the academic environment require special skills of clinical faculty not necessary in other professional and practice environments.<sup>1</sup>

This paper reports a useful method for examining the job demands and personal skills of family medicine faculty. The faculty of the Department of Family Medicine at Case Western Reserve University served as the subjects. For purposes of this study, job demands are defined as the specific task requirements of an individual's job. Personal skills are defined as the "combination of ability, knowledge, and experience that enables a person to do something well."<sup>2</sup>

## METHODS

The research reported here emerged from a year long project aimed at fostering the career development of faculty of the Department of Family Medicine at Case Western Reserve University. The total of 31 faculty members at five sites voluntarily participated in the study. The faculty consisted of 13 women and 18 men, five senior and 26 junior faculty, 24 physicians

and eight non-physicians, and 21 full-time and 10 part time faculty.

## The Executive Skills Profile

The Executive Skills Profile (ESP), the instrument used in this research, is an assessment instrument designed to measure job demands and personal skills for management populations in business, education, and health care. The ESP can be either interview administered or self-administered in approximately one hour.

The ESP identifies 72 general work activities and groups them into 12 scales. The scales are displayed graphically with each of the 12 scales radiating from the center of a circle. Scales are further grouped into four major quadrants defined as interpersonal, perceptual, analytical, and behavioral. The ESP quadrants are consistent with the four learning modes of Kolb's experiential learning theory.<sup>3</sup>

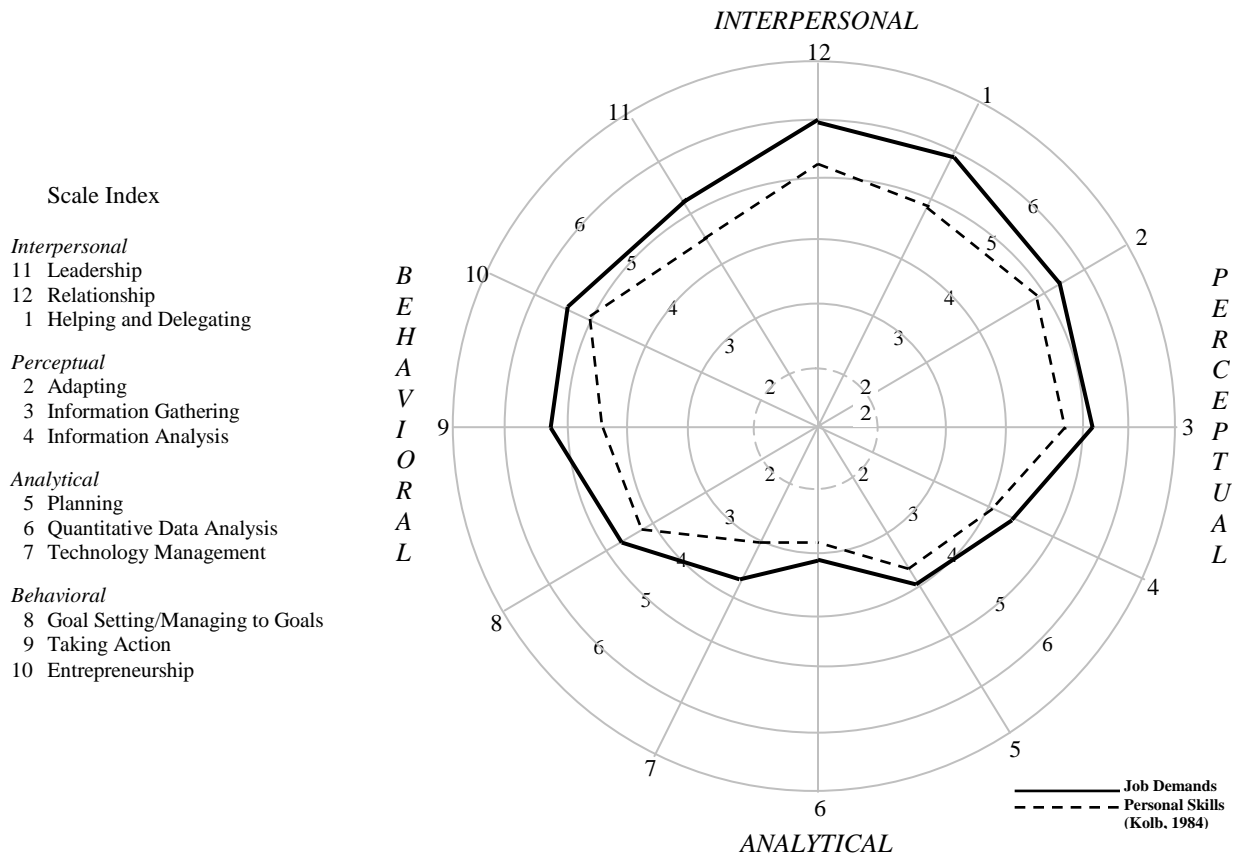
To use the ESP, faculty identify the demands of their job by rating reach of the 72 ESP work activities on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 ("not relevant to my job or career") to 7 ("a top priority in my job or career"). Higher scores are plotted further from the center of the circle. In this report, responses of all participants were averaged to produce job-demand scores for the entire department.

Similarly, faculty identify their personal skills to meet job demands by ranking the same 72 ESP

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From the Department of Family Medicine and Organizational Behavior, Case Western Reserve University.

Figure 1  
Executive Skills Profile of the Department of Family Medicine at Case Western Reserve University



activities on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 ("I have no skill or experience in this area") to 7 ("I am a leader or creator in this area"). Again, individual responses were averaged to produce personal skills scores for the department.

Development need is determined by noting the difference between the job demand score and the personal skill score for each of the 72 ESP activities. In concept, therefore, developmental needs can be scored in three ways: 1) job demand equals personal skill, 2) job demand exceeds personal skill, and 3) personal skill exceeds job demand.

**Results**

Figure 1 displays the averaged ESP profile of the family medicine faculty in this study. The shape of the profile suggests that job demands and personal skills are highest in the interpersonal area. The profile shows that, overall, the perceived job demands are greater than the

faculty's perceived personal skills to meet these demands. Developmental needs (the difference or spread between job demands and job skills) are greatest in the interpersonal and behavioral areas.

Table 1 shows the mean scores for the 31 departmental faculty. Faculty perceived interpersonal abilities (scored 5.65 out of 7.00) as the greatest job demand, behavioral abilities (5.16) as the second greatest demand, perceptual abilities (4.98) as the third greatest, and analytical abilities (3.58) as least demanded. Quadrant ratings of personal skills show that faculty perceived themselves as most skilled in interpersonal abilities (4.88), followed by perceptual abilities (4.60), then behavioral abilities (4.56), and finally in analytical abilities (3.28). Quadrant ratings show a similar pattern of developmental needs: interpersonal abilities first (0.77), behavioral abilities second (0.60), perceptual abilities third (0.38), and analytical abilities last (0.30).

Table 1

## Means and Standard Deviations of Demands, Skills, and Development Needs (n=31)

<i>Interpersonal</i>			<i>Analytical</i>		
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>		<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>
11 Leadership			5 Planning		
Demands	5.23	.67	Demands	3.91	.90
Skills	4.52	.76	Skills	3.80	.92
Development needs	.71	.66	Development needs	.11	.95
12 Relationship			6 Quantitative Analysis		
Demands	5.95	.72	Demands	3.09	1.10
Skills	5.21	.89	Skills	2.75	1.06
Development needs	.74	.77	Development needs	.34	.85
1 Helping Delegating			7 Technology		
Demands	5.77	.79	Demands	3.75	.74
Skills	4.91	.91	Skills	3.30	.79
Development needs	.87	.85	Development needs	.45	.79
Total Interpersonal			Total Analytical		
Demands	5.65	.63	Demands	3.58	.62
Skills	4.88	.78	Skills	3.28	.71
Development needs	.77	.66	Development needs	.30	.66
<i>Perceptual</i>			<i>Behavioral</i>		
2 Adapting			8 Setting/Managing Goals		
Demands	5.39	.88	Demands	4.72	.92
Skills	4.91	.77	Skills	4.23	.96
Development needs	.48	.82	Development needs	.49	1.01
3 Information Gathering			9 Taking Action		
Demands	5.09	.82	Demands	5.30	.76
Skills	4.75	.77	Skills	4.46	.76
Development needs	.34	.68	Development needs	.84	.88
4 Information Analysis			10 Entrepreneurship		
Demands	4.47	.91	Demands	5.47	.80
Skills	4.12	.76	Skills	5.00	.88
Development needs	.34	.81	Development needs	.47	.71
Total Perceptual			Total Behavioral		
Demands	4.98	.60	Demands	5.16	.68
Skills	4.60	.65	Skills	4.56	.77
Development needs	.38	.48	Development needs	.60	.70
<i>Overall Total</i>					
Demands	4.85	.54			
Skills	4.33	.60			
Development needs	.52	.50			

**Comments**

This profile reflects a clinical organization, that is, an organization oriented toward interpersonal, perceptual, and behavioral tasks. This orientation is consistent with the demands of caring for the health-related needs of patients and responding to the educational needs of resident physicians and medical students. Because this department of family medicine exists within a broader academic environment, departmental demands also include the analytical processes of critical inquiry and research into health and illness.

The department profile derived from the ESP describes the tension between faculty's clinical roles and responsibilities on the one hand and their scholarly tasks of research and writing on the other. Managing this tension is a critical responsibility for departments and individuals.

The results of the ESP suggest that the faculty in this department perceive that their jobs place the greatest demands on interpersonal activities. They also perceive themselves as most skilled in this area. Attention to continued development of these abilities is essential to meeting the demands of their academic roles. Although analytical activities are least demanded of the faculty in this department, skills are low in this area as well.

This evaluation revealed individual and organizational biases toward interpersonal and behavioral skills, a situation that may exist in many family medicine departments. The findings of this study suggest that the ESP can be used to evaluate faculty needs and skills and to define areas in which faculty development interventions will be most useful.

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*Authors' Note:* For further information regarding the Executive Skills Profile, contact McBer & Co., 137 Newbury St., Boston, MA 02116.617-437-7080.

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