

Delving into the minds of employees

WHAT does your job entail? Organisational psychologists apply psychological insights, techniques, tests and principles to situations in commerce and industry.

We work with corporate management and worker organisations to help groups and individuals improve motivation, productivity and job satisfaction, enhance negotiation skills, help resolve conflict and facilitate change.

My particular area of interest is career psychology, which deals with why people choose particular careers, what keeps them in their jobs, what motivates them, why they want to change careers, and how they can draw on all their skills.

My clients include financial and manufacturing organisations, universities, state organisations and University of Stellenbosch Executive Development Limited, where I teach on the senior management programme.

I recently presented a workshop called Conscious Career Strategies for Women, which provides information about various career options and helps women become aware of the issues affecting their careers.

Workshop participants gain insight into their own situations, develop their social networks and learn how to take their careers and organisations to their full potential.

Average work day: My working week is divided into lecture time, research and catching up on administration, report writing and marketing. On lecture days I'm engaged from morning to evening delivering workshops. On other days

I spend time on research and preparing for future workshops. I'm also on the board of an NGO, and for the rest I respond to e-mail and other correspondence.

Best part of the job: Helping others gain insight into their strengths and having the flexibility to be able to travel whenever my husband and I want to.

Worst part of the job: I like order and structure and being able to plan ahead and in this type of work you can't always plan too far in advance.

Why did you choose this career? I used to work for one university and when I decided to leave after 18 years I made the decision very consciously and shaped exactly what I wanted to do.

I wanted autonomy to take on projects that appealed to me and run them as I think they should be run, and the time to do research and increase my own knowledge and expertise. I don't want to manage other people, so I don't employ anyone.

What else would you have liked to do? I would probably have enjoyed a travel job, but I'm happy, so I wouldn't like to change now.

Are you paid enough? Yes, but you get paid for contact time, not for research or planning.

Rate your work stress on a scale of 1 to 10: At the moment my stress levels are around 10 because of the extraordinary workload, but it's usually not unmanageable if you are well-organised and able to say no.

Travel opportunities? I travel on behalf of my clients, presenting workshops and courses in Namibia, Botswana and other African countries.



PSYCHED: Dr Sarah Riorden gives organisations insights into why people choose certain career paths and what keeps them motivated.

Organisational psychologist

**Real jobs,
real people**



- **Today:** Dr Sarah Riorden
- **Job:** Organisational psychologist
- **Qualifications:** PhD Organisational Psychology
- **Place of work:** Self-employed

By Sarah-Jane Bosch

Every Monday Sarah-Jane Bosch interviews real people at work in Cape Town.

optimally. Many people are surprised to learn that a wide network of weaker social and business contacts is more beneficial to a career

than a small network of stronger connections. This is not a question of cronyism or nepotism – it's just

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