



STRATEGY'S INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY WORKSHOP

in cooperation with the UCLA Sociology Department's Knowledge & Cognitive Systems Working Group and Contentious Politics & Organizations Working Group
presents



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12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Cornell Hall, Room D-307
UCLA Anderson School of Management

“Preparing New Recruits for Promotion in Silicon Valley: Results From a Field Experiment Using Pre-mortems During Employee Socialization”

The literature on socialization neglects how newcomers bring lay conceptions of new jobs to the workplace. Thus, in Silicon Valley, newcomers approach new jobs as tours of duty lasting a few years unless they get promoted rapidly. Consequently, newcomers can become consumers focused on skill acquisition, and thereby overlook the obstacles to promotion. We conducted a field experiment in a Silicon Valley technology firm to assess if pre-mortems would help people garner promotions. Newcomers in the control condition were asked to write what they imagined their first year at the firm would be like and focused on the new skills they would acquire. Newcomers assigned to the pre-mortem treatment condition(s) were asked to imagine that either they (or a peer) had failed (or succeeded) in the first year and to write a story about the events leading to the outcome. Pre-mortems, especially of a peer's failure, are correlated with promotion at the end of the first year. Pre-mortems led respondents to consider a wider range of contingencies, especially, help-seeking and team processes. Both topics mediated the effect of pre-mortems on promotion. Implications for research on socialization and the use of narratives are outlined.
