

CRITERIA USED BY ADVANCED M.B.A. STUDENTS
IN WEIGHING THE MERITS OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES

by

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A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

in the Department of
ECONOMICS AND COMMERCE

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

February, 1976

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Title of Thesis/Dissertation:

Critique Used by Advanced
M.B.A. Students in Weighing
The Merits of Job Opportunities.

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30/3/76

(date)

ABSTRACT

This research project replicates a study carried out by Fraser Isbester and William Meder of the School of Business at McMaster University. Their research was conducted on the basis of a similar study by John Ryan and Richard Hise at the University of Maryland.

This survey is designed to examine whether or not the four most important criteria in job selection (as established by the Maryland and McMaster studies) are equally applicable to M.B.A. students at Simon Fraser University. The four major criteria which ranked identically in both of the previous studies were, in order of rank: Nature of Work; Opportunities for Advancement; Starting Salary and Working Conditions.

An analysis of the responses in this study indicates an outcome similar to both the Maryland and McMaster studies (i.e. with respect to the four major criteria employed by advanced M.B.A. students in weighing the merits of job opportunities). The most significant conclusion derived from a comparison of the Maryland, McMaster and Simon Fraser University's studies is that, although it is dangerous to stereotype advanced M.B.A. students, it is clear that Nature of Work; Opportunities for Advancement; Starting Salary and Working Conditions, constitute the most important criteria in job selection.

Both the recruiting literature and the conclusions of the three studies indicate that the ranking of similar criteria by company recruiters varies considerably from the M.B.A. student ranking. This indicates that company recruiters are not aware of the major considerations in which to concentrate their efforts. Recruiters are basing their appeals on considerations which are inappropriate.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Writer would like to express his appreciation to Dr. W. Dickson and Dr. A. Guthrie for their guidance and assistance in the development of this study.

Appreciation is extended also to the M.B.A. Students who participated in this study by completing the questionnaire and to Mrs. L. Taverner, and Miss S. Woycenko for typing, and proofreading the completed document.

T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

TITLE PAGE	i
APPROVAL PAGE	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. PURPOSE OF STUDY	2
III. RESEARCH STRATEGY	3
IV. RESEARCH TECHNIQUE	4
V. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS	6
VI. ORGANIZATION THEORY AS RELATED TO THIS STUDY	11
VII. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS	13
APPENDICES	16
REFERENCES	30
BIBLIOGRAPHY	31

I. INTRODUCTION

M.B.A. graduates are in great demand by companies in both the United States and Canada. Consequently, companies are constantly in search of the ways and means to provide challenging and interesting work to prospective M.B.A. employees.

In a survey conducted by Clarke^{1*} it was established that organizations agreed that background, skill, aspirations and motivation of a prospective M.B.A. employee must be examined on an individual basis and that one should not be treated as a member of a homogeneous group. It was understood, however, that, since in practise it is the M.B.A. graduate who is interviewing the employer and not the other way around, it is the students' criteria of evaluation and comparison of the career opportunities available that needs to be clearly understood.

In his survey, Clarke¹ asked M.B.A. graduates, who were presently employed, what they had been looking for when job hunting. Their response was: "a meaningful, challenging job with opportunities for personal and professional growth". Interestingly, Clarke's¹ respondents reflected the same M.B.A. student attitudes borne out by the literature in general and the Maryland, McMaster and Simon Fraser studies to be described in this research project.

*Footnotes appear in the Reference section (page 30)

II. PURPOSE OF STUDY

Studies similar to this one have been conducted by Fraser Isbester and William Meder² of the School of Business at McMaster University, and by John Ryan and Richard Hise³ at the University of Maryland.

The purpose of this research project is to test the applicability of the above studies by a replicated survey administered to advanced M.B.A. students at Simon Fraser University. Since two surveys of various job criteria have been previously undertaken, (Maryland and McMaster studies), the Simon Fraser research will provide additional data for comparison and contrast. This study will contribute to a more complete understanding of matters relevant to job selection criteria for both the prospective employee and employer.

III. RESEARCH STRATEGY

The Maryland study was based on a responding group of sixty-three full-time M.B.A. students, which constituted 92% of the total number of students polled and incorporated eleven criteria, one of which was Opportunities for Graduate Study. This criterion was not tested by either the McMaster or this Simon Fraser study. The Maryland study also included Prestige of Industry, which was replaced by Size of Company in both the McMaster and the Simon Fraser research.

The McMaster survey was based on a group of fifty-five full-time M.B.A. students, which constituted 68% of the total number of students polled.

The Simon Fraser study is based on the 'responses' from forty part-time M.B.A. students, which constitute 40% of the total number of students polled. The questionnaire was only distributed to candidates for the degree of Master of Business Administration who were presently enrolled in the third and final year of their program at Simon Fraser University. As indicated by the demographic data of the study, the group represents business, industry and the professions and varies in age, professional qualifications, working experience, salary, and educational levels.

IV. RESEARCH TECHNIQUE

The questionnaire was distributed in class during the final session of the spring term (1975) and most forms were completed at that time. Some respondents requested additional time to complete the questionnaire and returned their responses by mail at a later date. The questionnaire was distributed to fifty M.B.A. students and forty were returned, establishing a response rate of 80%.

As a preliminary step toward the completion of the questionnaire, data of a demographic nature was requested. Respondents were asked to indicate: age, marital status, undergraduate degree, professional qualifications, working experience, job title, present salary, and what starting salary they would expect in considering a new position. The respondents were asked to rank in order of importance the criteria that they believed to be important in selecting an employer. The job opportunity selection criteria that they were asked to rank were:

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Training Program | 6. Fringe Benefits |
| 2. Starting Salary | 7. Working Conditions |
| 3. Job Security | 8. Company Reputation |
| 4. Location | 9. Size of Company |
| 5. Nature of Work | 10. Opportunities for Advancement |

Subsequently the answers to the questionnaire were tabulated and the results compared to those obtained in the McMaster and Maryland

studies. In contrasting and comparing the results from all three studies, a rank and percentage basis was employed. A copy of the questionnaire is attached as Appendix C, pages 27 - 29.

V. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The conclusions of the Simon Fraser study were derived from a statistical analysis of the acquired data (see Appendix A pages 16-21). The results have been compared as a function of rank with the data of the two previous studies and are as follows:

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Simon Fraser</u>	<u>McMaster</u>	<u>Maryland</u>
1	Nature of Work	Nature of Work	Nature of Work
2	Opportunities for Advancement	Opportunities for Advancement	Opportunities for Advancement
3	Starting Salary	Starting Salary	Starting Salary
4	Working Conditions	Working Conditions	Working Conditions
5	Location	Location	Job Security
6	Fringe Benefits	Training Program	Company Reputation
7	Job Security	Company Reputation	Training Program
8	Company Reputation	Job Security	Fringe Benefits
9	Training Program	Fringe Benefits	Location
10	Size of Company	Size of Company	Prestige of Company*
11	Not Tested	Not Tested	Opportunities for Advancement (GS)

It is very significant to note that the first four rankings for all three of the groups tested are identical. Interestingly, 65% of the Simon

*See page 3 for explanation of the difference between the Maryland criterion and the criterion in the other two studies.

Fraser respondents chose Nature of Work as number one, (see Appendix A page 21) while 60% of the Maryland group and 57% of the McMaster students considered Nature of Work to be the most important criterion. Isbester and Meder² concluded that it is reasonable to expect that Nature of Work and Opportunities for Advancement, will be regarded as most important to the respondents, since M.B.A. students are already committed to a business career. They attribute Starting Salary to be of concern to most students because salary is a function of the financial sacrifices which they have made to extend their educations.

The literature discusses the question of Starting Salary expectations quite extensively. In a recent study Muir⁴ says that: "anticipated as well as immediate salary plays an important role in their (students) decisions". Clarke's¹ survey of M.B.A. attitudes pointed out that salary was mentioned only indirectly. Although Clarke's¹ findings were inconsistent with those of Muir⁴, they do reflect attitudes expressed by respondents to the Simon Fraser study.

The results of this survey indicate that Starting Salary is a significant criterion used by M.B.A. students in evaluating a firm as a potential employer. It is, however, important to note that Muir⁴ reported in his study that university recruiters tend to rank Starting Salary much higher than either the McMaster, Maryland or Simon Fraser studies' indicated

to be necessary.

Working Conditions was ranked fourth by all three studies. The McMaster study indicated that 70% of the respondents ranked Working Conditions fifth or better while, in the Simon Fraser study, the percentage was 77.5%. (See Appendix A page 17-ii). It is evident that Working Conditions are an important criterion to M.B.A. students in seeking employment. It is also of interest to note that Muir's⁴ survey found that university recruiters tend to rank Working Conditions higher than the students in the three studies.

Isbester and Meder² (in contrasting their study with the Maryland results) observed that: "given their remarkable concurrence on the first four criteria, it is equally remarkable that the two groups showed considerable variation in their ranking of the remaining common criteria". It is germane to note that the Simon Fraser results are also at variance with both the Maryland and McMaster studies in the ranking of the remaining criteria.

At McMaster and Simon Fraser, Location was marked fifth while at Maryland it was ranked ninth. The low rank obtained at Maryland was attributed by Ryan and Hise³ to the fact that over 50% of the respondent group at Maryland was married. With respect to Location, Cooney⁵ reports, based on the result of his study, that: "if your company gives full

information about locale, you have an excellent chance of being first choice". Since Canadian university M.B.A. students have ranked Location fifth, it is reasonable to assume that Canadians are more concerned with this criterion than are American students, who, by contrast, have ranked Location ninth.

The Simon Fraser study ranked Fringe Benefits sixth while Maryland ranked it eighth and McMaster ninth. The literature considers the question of Fringe Benefits from the point of view of security, and security, it is suggested, may be of more concern to married employees.

While Job Security was ranked seventh at Simon Fraser it was ranked eighth at McMaster and fifth at Maryland. The results obtained from all three studies with respect to ranking, suggest that, in general, those students who had Bachelor of Commerce or Bachelor of Arts undergraduate degrees ranked Job Security highest.

The Company criterion was ranked eighth at Simon Fraser, seventh at McMaster and sixth at Maryland. At Simon Fraser 22.5% of those reporting ranked this criterion seventh and 30% ranked it eighth, thereby indicating a degree of similarity when compared to the McMaster study. This distribution does suggest that this particular criterion enjoys a relatively similar weight as a job evaluation criterion from the perspective of graduate M.B.A. students in all three studies.

Although Training ranked ninth at Simon Fraser it ranked sixth at McMaster and seventh at Maryland. It appears that although this criterion is not relatively important as determined by the Simon Fraser study, it is in the other cases, and particularly so at McMaster University. It is of interest to note that Muir⁴ reported in his study that this criterion (as is also often the case with Starting Salary) is too frequently over-emphasized by university recruiters.

Size of Company it is clear, does not constitute a job selection criterion of any significance from an M.B.A.'s perspective. This fact is abundantly clear in light of the findings from all three studies.

VI. ORGANIZATION THEORY AS RELATED TO THIS STUDY

The findings of this study (with respect to those criteria ranked from one to four inclusive) support insights advanced by several leading behavioural scientists.

The Nature of Work criterion which was ranked number one supports a position taken by Argyris⁶. He points out that many organizations have systems wherein mature adults have the capability to assume responsibility and make decisions relative to factors which determine the nature of their own work. Certainly, a firm which makes such a provision would be regarded by an M.B.A. as a desirable place to work.

The Opportunities for Advancement criterion, which was ranked number two, supports a position taken by Herzberg⁷. He explains that organizations which include "motivators" in their systems (such as advertizing that opportunities for achievement, clear-cut responsibility, and interesting and challenging work are integral parts of their employment opportunities) tend to attract motivated people. This is consistent with the findings of this study in that Opportunities for Advancement is advanced by M.B.A. graduates as a very important job selection criterion.

The Starting Salary criterion, which was ranked number three, supports Herzberg's⁷ assertion that, to be most effective, salary plans should reflect a parity within the area and industry in question and should

also include a motivational feature (such as a merit increase system) to reflect an employee's opportunity for growth and advancement on the job. The findings of this study indicate that M.B.A. graduates support Hertzberg's⁷ view.

The Working Conditions criterion is very difficult to define. However, it appears reasonable to assume that working conditions could be understood to be in keeping with McGregor's⁸ Theory of Environment. Certainly M.B.A. graduates attach considerable significance to this criterion. It is also interesting to note that the findings of this study do not agree with the assumptions of most university recruiters.

VII. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion this comparative study clearly points out that Nature of Work; Opportunities for Advancement; Starting Salary and Working Conditions, constitute the most important criteria used by advanced M.B.A. students in weighing the merits of job opportunities.

The Demographic data (see Appendix B pages 22-26) obtained in this study does not provide a consistently clear indication with respect to the ranking of criteria.

The data such as work experience, professional qualifications, job title, and present salary, does not contribute a great deal beyond establishing a profile of the respondents who contributed to this study, but may be of value in regard to future studies of this kind.

With respect to recruiting procedures, a company should be prepared to define the job for the candidate. Vague terms about the nature of the work to be performed will not satisfy the M.B.A. graduate, since this is his most important criterion for selection. How many students have been told the job will involve working in many areas of the company, solving various problems? Clearly, more is needed and a successful company must be prepared to talk specifics rather than generalities.

With respect to career paths, a company should develop specific paths which show possible avenues for advancement. It is important for

the job applicant to know how he can progress under normal circumstances. This can be done by showing him career paths of present executives or other possible approaches to senior management. It is recognized that companies' circumstances change and new opportunities arise, but the M.B.A. graduate is vitally concerned with his advancement and any hedging by an interviewer in discussing this will result in a suspicious job applicant.

Starting Salary may not be as important to the M.B.A. graduate as it was previously thought to be. Of greater importance may be information about potential earnings during the years immediately following employment. Recruiters perhaps should provide full and explicit details on the current salary range of higher level positions.

Discussion of Fringe Benefits; Working Conditions; company Training Programs, and other aspects of employment may be of lesser importance to the M.B.A. job seeker at the time of interview than currently assumed. Job details are important, but such details could be more efficiently presented in a company brochure, thus ensuring sufficient time in the interview to fully present information on the prime criteria developed by this study which will influence the candidate's decision.

It is important to recognize that the demand for M.B.A. graduates

will continue both in Canada and the United States. Therefore, university recruiters will need to appreciate that it is they who will be interviewed and not the students. Given this anomaly, the matter of evaluation and comparison of job selection criteria deserves exploration.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

AS

PERCENTAGES

(i) Starting Salary:

<u>Rank</u>	<u>No. Reporting</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1	2	5.0
2	5	12.5
3	14	35.0
4	10	25.0
5	3	7.5
6	2	5.0
7	2	5.0
8	0	0.0
9	2	5.0
10	0	0.0
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	40	100.0
	<hr/>	<hr/>

(ii) Working Conditions:

<u>Rank</u>	<u>No. Reporting</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1	3	7.5
2	5	12.5
3	8	20.0
4	7	17.5
5	8	20.0
6	2	5.0
7	3	7.5
8	2	5.0
9	0	0.0
10	2	5.0
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	40	100.0
	<hr/>	<hr/>

(iii) Job Security:

<u>Rank</u>	<u>No. Reporting</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1	0	0.0
2	1	2.5
3	2	5.0
4	5	12.5
5	2	5.0
6	5	12.5
7	9	22.5
8	5	12.5
9	7	17.5
10	4	10.0
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	40	100.0
	<hr/>	<hr/>

(iv) Company Reputation:

<u>Rank</u>	<u>No. Reporting</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1	0	0.0
2	3	7.5
3	1	2.5
4	0	0.0
5	8	20.0
6	2	5.0
7	9	22.5
8	12	30.0
9	4	10.0
10	1	2.5
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	40	100.0
	<hr/>	<hr/>

(v) Training Program:

<u>Rank</u>	<u>No. Reporting</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1	0	0.0
2	0	0.0
3	0	0.0
4	2	5.0
5	3	7.5
6	6	15.0
7	0	0.0
8	8	20.0
9	10	25.0
10	11	27.0
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	40	100.0
	<hr/>	<hr/>

(vi) Fringe Benefits:

<u>Rank</u>	<u>No. Reporting</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1	0	0.0
2	1	2.5
3	0	0.0
4	4	10.0
5	3	7.5
6	13	32.5
7	10	25.0
8	5	12.5
9	3	7.5
10	1	2.5
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	40	100.0
	<hr/>	<hr/>

(vii) Location:

<u>Rank</u>	<u>No. Reporting</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1	5	12.5.
2	6	15.0
3	4	10.0
4	5	12.5
5	2	5.0
6	7	17.5
7	3	7.5
8	3	7.5
9	3	7.5
10	2	5.0
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	40	100.0
	<hr/>	<hr/>

(viii) Size of Company:

<u>Rank</u>	<u>No. Reporting</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1	0	0.0
2	0	0.0
3	0	0.0
4	0	0.0
5	5	12.5
6	1	2.5
7	2	5.0
8	4	10.0
9	9	22.5
10	19	47.5
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	40	100.0
	<hr/>	<hr/>

(ix) Nature of Work:

<u>Rank</u>	<u>No. Reporting</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1	26	65.0
2	5	12.5
3	6	15.0
4	1	2.5
5	1	2.5
6	0	0.0
7	1	2.5
8	0	0.0
9	0	0.0
10	0	0.0
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	40	100.0
	<hr/>	<hr/>

(x) Opportunities for Advancement:

<u>Rank</u>	<u>No. Reporting</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1	4	10.0
2	14	35.0
3	5	12.5
4	6	15.0
5	5	12.5
6	3	7.5
7	0	0.0
8	1	2.5
9	2	5.0
10	0	0.0
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	40	100.0.
	<hr/>	<hr/>

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

(i) Age:

<u>Age</u>	<u>No. In Category</u>	<u>Percent</u>
28 - 30	6	15.0
31 - 33	11	27.5
34 - 36	5	12.5
37 - 39	7	17.5
40 - 42	2	5.0
43 - 45	6	15.0
46 - 48	2	5.0
49 - 51	0	0.0
52 - 54	0	0.0
55 - 57	1	2.5
	<hr/> 40 <hr/>	<hr/> 100.0 <hr/>

(ii) Marital Status:

	<u>No.</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Married	33	82.5
Single	7	17.5
	<hr/> 40 <hr/>	<hr/> 100.0 <hr/>

(iii) Undergraduate Degree:

	<u>No.</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Hold Degrees	22	55.0
Do Not Hold Degrees	18	45.0
	<hr/> 40 <hr/>	<hr/> 100.0 <hr/>

(iv) Work Experience:

<u>Range</u> (Years)	<u>No. In Category</u>	<u>Percent</u>
5 - 7	4	10.0
8 - 10	6	15.0
11 - 13	7	17.5
14 - 16	7	17.5
17 - 19	4	10.0
20 - 22	5	12.5
23 - 25	3	7.5
26 - 28	2	5.0
29 - 31	1	2.5
32 - 34	0	0.0
35 - 37	0	0.0
38 - 40	1	2.5
	<hr/> 40 <hr/>	<hr/> 100.0 <hr/>

(v) Professional Qualifications:

Representative Sample

Certified General Accountant
Professional Engineer
Administration Diploma
Administration Certificate
R.I.A. (?)
Teaching Certificate
Instructor Certificate
Medical Doctor
Dentist
Librarian

(vi) Job Title:

Representative Sample

Controller
Assistant Director (Health)
Construction Manager
Salary Supervisor
Vice-President Sales
Operations Manager
Data Processing Manager
Office Manager
Administrative Assistant
Instructor

(vii) Present Salary:

<u>Range (\$000)</u>	<u>No. In Category</u>	<u>Percent</u>
0	2	5.0
12 - 15	4	10.0
16 - 19	7	17.5
20 - 23	13	32.5
24 - 27	5	12.5
28 - 31	6	15.0
32 - 34	2	5.0
35 - 38	1	2.5
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	40	100.0
	<hr/>	<hr/>

(viii) Preferred Starting Salary (New Position):

	<u>No. In Category</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Answered	31	77.5
Unanswered	9	22.5
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	40	100.0
	<hr/>	<hr/>

Mean Reported Starting Salary With Respect to Seeking a New Position:

\$27,000/year

APPENDIX C
QUESTIONNAIRE

TO: THIRD YEAR, S.F.U. - M.B.A. STUDENTS

SUBJECT: RESEARCH PROJECT - JOB SELECTION CRITERIA

Dear Colleagues:

You are being asked to complete the questionnaire toward my completing, in turn, my research project; which is that of evaluating job selection criteria from the perspective of M.B.A. students.

Although the questionnaire is brief it is very important that your replies be very carefully considered.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

J. L. McInnis

17 April 1975

1. This questionnaire will be used to establish what criteria are most important to you the M.B.A. student in considering a firm as a potential employer:

AGE:

MARRIED: (Yes) (No)

UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE:

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS:

WORKING EXPERIENCE: (Full Time)year

JOB TITLE:

PRESENT SALARY: \$.....per year

2. Rank in order of importance from 1 - 10 the criteria that you feel are most important for selecting an employer. The most important should rank one, the next rank two, etc.

STARTING SALARY	
WORKING CONDITIONS	
JOB SECURITY	
COMPANY REPUTATION	
TRAINING PROGRAM	
FRINGE BENEFITS	
LOCATION	
SIZE OF COMPANY	
NATURE OF WORK	
OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT	

If you are anticipating seeking a new position, what starting salary would you expect. \$ per year.

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