

Interview with a PAGSIP Alumnus: Bill Byham, PhD '63



For this issue of the PAGSIP Newsletter, we caught up with Dr. William C. Byham. Dr. Byham is the Co-Founder and Executive Chairman of DDI, an internationally renowned human resource consulting company. Dr. Byham's influence in the field of I-O is extensive with contributions including 23 books and more than 300 monographs and articles. His adherence to the scientist-practitioner model is highlighted in his extensive work advancing the assessment center method, behavioral interviews, and training and development. The full interview can be found [here](#).

Thank you for taking time to connect with us!

What was Purdue like when you were a graduate student?

I really liked it. I loved the classes, loved the professors... even though there were about 50 I-O psychology students there at the same time, we felt close to the professors. About once a month, a group of students would have dinner at a professor's home with an important psychologist visiting the campus. The professors seemed to be thinking, "how can I help this person move ahead?" We all helped each other on research topics, which were extremely varied and many fascinating – like putting a man on the moon. You felt part of a big enterprise that was making a difference in the world...

What do you see the role of I-O psychologists being moving forward in today's society?

Bridging the gap between technology and humans, helping people survive in a very complicated world.

Any other advice for students, faculty, or professionals?

Question everything! I read magazines aimed at HR professionals and executives and find that many articles are not based on any kind of scientific proof. Many solutions are not as effective as they claim to be. A role of I-O psychologists is to point out weak points in articles and proposals being put forth.

What would you say has been your 'secret' to a successful career?

Writing books and articles aimed at non-I-O psychologists about successes. After putting in the first assessment center in a retail organization, I wrote the first general article about assessment centers for the *Harvard Business Review*. It was a huge success with executives from around the world contacting me for more information. It allowed me, with Doug Bray, who had given me help along the way, to start DDI. I have written books about behavioral interviewing, supervisory training, leadership, executive development, meeting EEO requirements, and many other areas AFTER I had development and proven what worked and what didn't work.

Looking back, is there anything that you would have done differently in your career?

I would have had more children. We have two great ones, but I would have loved more.

Interviewed by Louis Hickman