

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

Departmental Research Seminar



How Do I Get on that List: Theory and Evidence on Relationship's Influence on CEO Rankings By

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Date : 15 May 2019 (WED)
Time : 10:30 am – 12:00 nn
Venue : M802

Abstract

Rankings of many kinds have proliferated and attracted much scholarly attention over the past three decades. We are interested specifically in rankings of individuals within organizations (e.g., CEOs, coaches). These present a particular puzzle. These rankings are typically framed as ability assessments, but actor ability is known to be difficult to assess in organizational contexts. Evaluators may look first to organizational performance measures, for instance, but such measures only partially indicate an individual's ability. Evaluators are accordingly known to look to quite indirect measures (gender, cultural similarities) as they attempt to solve this challenging evaluation problem. In the face of these difficulties, we point to working relationships that evaluators have with ranked actors as a rich and underexplored source of information that may shape the rankings process. We focus on a central aspect of such relationships, which is the process of expectation setting and fulfillment. We ask two questions: what kinds of information from this process will evaluators attend to, and how will that information enter into rankings. Regarding the former, we expect evaluators to look beyond the simple yes-or-no test of whether expectations are fulfilled. We propose that evaluators will look broadly and so also consider the clarity with which expectations are set as well as the precision with which they are fulfilled. Regarding the "how" question, we of course expect that strong results will directly influence actors' rank. But, we also expect an indirect effect, such that success in the more 'local' expectations process will increase the weighting that evaluators place on positive 'global' (organizational) performance outcomes. We test and find support for these ideas in the context of rankings of CEOs, and discuss contributions to work on rankings.

Dr E. Geoffrey Love is an Associate Professor at the Gies College of Business at the University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign. He received his Ph.D in organizational behavior from Harvard University and took his initial faculty position at Rice University. His research work has primarily focused on social evaluations such as corporate reputation and status. He has more recently begun research projects in the area of organizational innovation and national innovation systems, drawing on his experience as an entrepreneur and teaching in strategic innovation and management of innovation. Other research projects have examined the role of categories in institutional processes, organizational downsizing, and organizational change.

All interested are welcome.



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