

TITLE: Voice and Vision: Results of the 2016 Journal of Employee Assistance Reader Survey

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This article summarizes the findings of a survey conducted in January 2016 of the readers of the *Journal of Employee Assistance*. The Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA) publishes the Journal. Highlights of the findings were published in two brief notes in the Journal (see below). This report presents more in-depth quantitative and qualitative analyses of the survey data and comments. It is important to hear the voice of our readers and see their vision for the future direction of the Journal.

Editor. (2016). EA Roundup: JEA Reader Survey Results Listed, *Journal of Employee Assistance*, 46(2), 23.

Attridge, M. (2016). EA Roundup: More on JEA Reader Survey, *Journal of Employee Assistance*, 46(2), 23.

METHODOLOGY

Marina London developed the questions on the survey with assistance from other members of the EAPA Communications Advisory Panel and editor Mike Jacquart. The data was collected in January of 2016 using an online website survey tool. The target population included all members of EAPA with an e-mail address who get the Journal as a benefit of membership and also the mailing list for other non-member subscribers to the Journal. The invitation to participate in the survey was distributed via e-mail to approximately 4,000 people. We received back a total of 430 completed surveys. This is a response rate of about 10%, which is typical for these kinds of market feedback surveys. This sample size is much bigger than the 124 people who completed the last JEA reader survey in 2009.

The background questions on the survey concerned: which country the reader lived in, his/her membership status in EAPA and whether he/she had the CEAP professional certification. No other demographic or professional characteristics of the respondents were asked. The focal items on the survey were each tested statistically to examine if there were differences based on EAPA membership status (Yes No), CEAP status (Yes or No) or by country (USA vs. Global). However, few significant differences for these factors were found.

As expected, almost all of the respondents were members of EAPA (90%, $n = 388$). Thus, 10% of the sample was not a member of EAPA. About half of the respondents had earned the CEAP[®] ($n = 203$; 47%). The vast majority of respondents lived in the United States (92%) with 8% ($n = 33$) who lived in other countries. This group included 8 people from Canada, 6 from the Caribbean or Central America, 5 from Africa, 4 from Asia, 4 from Europe, 3 from Australia/New Zealand, and 3 from the United Kingdom. This distribution by country is similar to the overall membership for EAPA. Note that being a CEAP was twice as likely among the US respondents than among the Global respondents (49% vs. 27%, respectively).

RESULTS

The survey questions examined: 1) How much of each issue of JEA is typically read; 2) If low readership, what were the reasons for not reading JEA; 3) How often are the various regular features and columns read; 4) How appropriate is the length of most articles; 5) Which distribution format is read most (print or online); 6) What is unique about JEA; 7) What specific topics are most of interest for future issues; and 8) general comments.

How Much of Each Issue is Read?

Answered by 429 people (missing data from 1 person). A majority of the respondents (60%) read at least “some” of the articles and another 1 in 4 people (24%) typically read the “entire issue from cover-to-cover.” This high level of content consumption is good as it provided these respondents with enough direct experience with JEA to answer the remaining items on the survey. Less common responses were “I seldom read it” (11%) and “I never read it” (5%). Of those who did not read it much, most (n = 40) did so primarily because of a lack of time (51%), while others had trouble getting access to the journal (mostly non-members; 27%) or felt the content was not of enough interest (21%).

Which Regular Columns Are Read Most Often?

Answered by all 430 people. We also asked if six regular sections and columns were read regularly. The part of JEA read most often was the News Briefs – which were read regularly by 70% of the sample. The other parts read regularly by between 42% to 25% of the respondents. Thus, the different columns are effectively appealing to different segments of the readership. Also, each of the six sections was read on a regular basis more by members of EAPA than by non-members. The News Briefs and the Front Desk parts were also read regularly more often by respondents living outside of the US than by those living in the US. Note that some of the columns had higher readership based on respondent characteristics of EAPA membership (usually more if a member), CEAP status and US vs. Global location. The new column “Integration Insights” by Mark Attridge started in 2015 was mistakenly left off of the list of columns for this survey item.

- **70% News Briefs**
 - Note: Read more by EAPA members vs. non-EAPA Members (72% vs. 52%, $p < .01$)
 - Note: Read more by Global vs. US (85% vs. 69%, $p < .05$)
- **42% Jeff Harris’s Effective Management Consulting column**
 - Note: Read more by EAPA members vs. non-EAPA Members (45% vs. 12%, $p < .001$)
- **39% Marina London’s Tech Trends column**
 - Note: Read more by EAPA members vs. non-EAPA Members (42% vs. 12%, $p < .001$)
- **39% Sandra Nye’s Legal Lines column**
 - Note: Read more by EAPA members vs. non-EAPA Members (42% vs. 14%, $p < .001$)

- **35% Maria Lund’s Front Desk column**
 - Note: Read more by EAPA members vs. non-EAPA Members (39% vs. 10%, $p < .001$)
 - Note: Read more by CEAP vs. non-CEAP (41% vs. 31%, $p < .05$)
 - Note: Read more by Global vs. US (52% vs. 35%, $p < .05$)

- **24% Web Watch**
 - Note: Read more by EAPA members vs. non-EAPA Members (25% vs. 12%, $p < .001$)

Are the Articles in JEA the Right Length?

Answered by 382 people (with missing data from 48 people). Most articles in JEA are between 1,000 and 2,000 words that span two to four printed pages. A substantial majority of respondents found the length of the articles to be “just right” (84%). Only 9% considered the articles as “too long” and another 7% as “too short.” This finding is important, as the main reason for limited reading of the Journal by some people was not having enough time to read; thus having articles that are the right length is valued. Note: Result does not differ by EAPA member status, CEAP or US vs. Global location.

What is the Preferred Format to Receive the Journal?

Answered by 417 people (with missing data from 13 people). JEA is offered in both a print/paper format and as an electronic online format available on the EAPA website. About half of respondents reported reading both formats (51%); with about 1 in 4 preferring the printed version and another 1 in 4 instead preferring the online version. Reading the online version was more popular among non-members of EAPA than by members of EAPA (51% vs. 22%, respectively). Note: Result does not differ by CEAP or US vs. Global location.

What is Unique About JEA?

The item: “What can the JEA give you that you do not get anywhere else?” was answered by only 52% of the total sample ($n = 222$; missing data from 208). The open-ended responses to this item were coded into several categories with more than one answer allowed. The most defining feature of JEA was its focus on the field of employee assistance (commented on by 78%). Other unique attributes of JEA included an emphasis on current news and future trends (16%), a focus on the workplace (9%) and the credibility of the articles created by use of research data and expert authors (6%).

What Topics Are of Interest for Future Issues?

About 3 in 4 respondents ($n = 318$; missing data from 112) made suggestions for topics to included in future articles. Up to three ideas were allowed per respondent, with an average of 2.7 ideas provided per person. These open-ended comments were first sorted into general themes

(about 20 topics) and then each person's first, second and third comments were coded into one of the themes. A total of 850 unique comments were analyzed. From this analysis, a dozen higher-order categories were then identified that best represented common elements of similar sub-groups topics. These 12 categories are presented below and are further grouped into three primary themes that (perhaps) represent the desired editorial mandate of the Journal:

Future Trends Theme I: Clinical & Provider Issues in EAP

- *Organizational Health & Management Consultation* (n = 99): Leadership, work culture, employee engagement, bullying & incivility, organizational change, conflict, teams, supporting HR issues, training, consulting skills.
- *Critical Incidents* (n = 98): Workplace violence, domestic violence, trauma & PTSD, terrorism, threat, natural disasters, policy development, prevention and training, onsite expert crisis response, psychological first aid.
- *Best Practices for EA Counseling Services* (n = 85): Practical advice on clinical techniques, assessment and referral, types of client problems, understanding special client populations.
- *Substance Abuse & Other Addictions* (n = 79): Screening & assessment tools, SBIRT, referral to treatment, recovery & relapse prevention for alcohol, drugs, prescription medications, gambling, eating, sex, Internet use and other process addictions, dual addiction issues & comorbidity.
- *Professional Development in EA* (n = 78): CEAP, PDHs & continuing education, ethics, avoiding counselor burnout, private practice tips, coaching vs. counseling, EAPA chapters & networking.

Future Trends Theme II: Business Management of EA Services

- *Business Management Basics for EAP* (n = 93): Delivery models, mergers, pricing, account management, contracting, marketing, increasing utilization, global markets.
- *Integration Partners for EAP* (n = 47): Work-life, wellness and health coaching, financial & legal services, disability & return to work, disease management, workplace safety, peer support programs.
- *ROI and Business Value of EAP* (n = 47): Strategies for account retention and new sales, return on investment (ROI) customer examples, how to convert outcomes into financial metrics, aligning purchaser value expectations with different price points, moving from ROI to VOI - Value on Investment.
- *Applied Research in EAP* (n = 38): Research studies of EA program effectiveness, clinical and health outcomes, employee work outcomes (absenteeism, presenteeism,

turnover), workplace training needs, drivers of service satisfaction and quality, patterns and profiles in program utilization, client user profiles

Future Trends Theme III: EAP Industry Issues

- *Future Trends in EAP Industry* (n = 72): Innovation in EA services and product development, ways to stay relevant, forecasting our customer needs, attracting new EA professionals, serving the younger generation of employees (Millennials), EAPA's vision for the future of the field.
- *Legal Aspects of EA* (n = 58): Affordable Care Act, medical and legalized marijuana, DOT regulations, SAP guidelines, client confidentiality, liability with new technology, other topic-specific legislation.
- *Technology and EAP Delivery* (n = 56): technology delivery options, website advances, telecounseling, video counseling, smart phone apps, mHealth, related utilization reporting and outcome issues.

These 12 topic areas provide a road map for the editorial team in to follow selecting future articles in JEA. Most of these requested topics, however, are already evident to some extent in recent past issues and we have regular columns now on several of these themes (integration of EAP, legal, management consultations, technology, and the world of EAP). Most of the topic areas are also represented in various committees for EAPA and featured as talks at the annual EAPA conference and pre-conference trainings.

Closing Comments

Only about 1 in 4 respondents provided an optional closing comment (n = 124). Comments were coded into several categories. Most people (n = 63) offered praise for the Journal, 22 people offered suggestions for improvement, others wanted to see future articles on various topics. Finally, 16 readers made useful criticisms on style, format, regular features and columns.

Summary

Overall, the results of the survey are largely positive about the depth of readership activity with each issue, the value of having both print and online formats, proper article length and interest in the various ongoing columns in the Journal. The Journal is valued for providing authoritative and up-to-date information that focuses on the field of EAP. Readers are also most interested in future content that addresses topics of a clinical nature, issues relevant to the business side of EAP, and other issues related to industry trends, legal developments and technological advances.