



The Future of Work: Leading with People Analytics

Friday-Saturday, January 9-10, 2026
(8 sessions)

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Faculty Bio

Emilio J. Castilla is the NTU Professor of Management at the MIT Sloan School of Management. Castilla joined the MIT Sloan faculty in 2005, after being a faculty member in the Management Department of the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. He is a member of the Institute for Work and Employment Research at MIT, as well as a Research Fellow at the Wharton Financial Institutions Center and at the Center for Human Resources at the Wharton School. He received his post-graduate degree in Business Analysis from the Lancaster University Management School (UK) and his PhD and MA in Sociology from Stanford University.

Professor Castilla studies how social and organizational processes influence key employment outcomes over time. He tackles his research questions by examining different empirical settings with longitudinal datasets, both at the individual and company levels. His focus is on the recruitment, hiring, development, and job mobility of employees within and across organizations and locations, as well as on the impact of teamwork and social relations on performance and innovation. His work has been published in top academic journals and edited volumes, including *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Organization Science*, *American Journal of Sociology*, and *American Sociological Review*. He has also written a book on the use of longitudinal methods in social science research (Elsevier/Academic Press).

Professor Castilla has taught in various degree programs at MIT Sloan, the Wharton School, and a number of other international universities. His teaching interests include Strategic Human Resource Management, Leading Effective Organizations, Talent Management, and Organizational Behavior. In addition to teaching full-time MBA and executive courses, he has taught several PhD-level seminars.

Course Overview

In a rapidly changing world of work, effective leaders combine human judgment with analytical insight. People analytics offers a data-driven approach to attracting, developing, and retaining talent—helping leaders make better decisions about people and performance.

This program equips executives with the frameworks and tools to lead organizations that learn from data while staying deeply human. Through cutting-edge cases and research, participants will explore how analytics can inform decisions about hiring, evaluation, promotion, compensation, and organizational change.

Designed for senior leaders and managers, the course emphasizes strategy over statistics—focusing on how to translate data into action, communicate insights effectively, and foster a culture of evidence-based decision-making. By the end of the program, participants will understand how to leverage people analytics to advance both business performance and employee well-being, positioning themselves and their organizations at the forefront of the future of work.

Course Pre-Requisite(s)

Organizational Processes or a similar course in organizational behavior/theory that provides key tools needed to understand, manage, and lead organizations. While a good background in basic statistics will be helpful, it is not required for this course.

This course could be complemented with other courses in advanced statistics and/or business/operations analytics (though not required).

Similar (Related) Subjects

Strategies for People Analytics; Building Successful Careers and Organizations.

Life in the Classroom

This will not be a lecture course only. Classroom discussion is a vital part of your learning. Please come to class prepared to discuss the day's readings and cases and to respond to the ideas and comments of others. I will facilitate a dialogue among the class participants rather than deliver a monologue. I expect your interactions to be informed, well-reasoned, and constructive. Effective discussion depends on your willingness to take risks in communicating ideas and to be supportive of and responsive to others.

Required Readings

The readings are drawn from a number of sources, including academic research articles, book chapters, short articles from both business presses, and case studies. Additional handouts may be distributed throughout the course.

Not all class materials will be discussed to the same extent. Most classes include a case/exercise, which will typically serve as the basis of class discussion.

Course Requirement and Grading

There are three basic requirements for the course: participation in class discussion, written work, and a group presentation.

1. Class participation. Attend all sessions and actively participate in class discussions and exercises.
2. People Analytics Plan. The second day of the course (beginning of Session 5), an individual one-page essay will be due in which you: a) briefly describe a people-related challenge to address in a real organization you are familiar with, and b) propose how you might address this issue analytically. More details will be given in class.
3. People Analytics Final Deliverable. This group project typically involves helping an organization address an important people challenge. The goal is to give you some first-hand experience in thinking about how to design and implement people analytics in the real world. This mini project will involve two deliverables due by January 22, 2026: a) a PowerPoint project proposal (max. of 12 pages), and b) a final report (if any, max. of 3 pages). More details will be given in class.

Contact Information

I am usually in my office (at E62-332) for about an hour before and after each class. I will be available at other times by appointment. I can also be reached by phone at (617) 253-0286 and by e-mail at ecastilla@mit.edu. I encourage you to talk to me about any questions or concerns you might have about the course. We all benefit when the lines of communication are kept open.

Schedule of Classes

Day 1: Friday, January 9, 2026

- 9am-noon: Sessions 1 and 2
- 1pm-4pm: Sessions 3 and 4

Day 1: Saturday, January 10, 2026

- 9am-noon: Sessions 5 and 6
- 1pm-4pm: Sessions 7 and 8

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

Session 1. Why Talent Analytics?

1. Davenport, Thomas H., Jeanne Harris, and Jeremy Shapiro (2010): “Competing on Talent Analytics.” *Harvard Business Review* (October): 6pp. (<https://hbr.org/2010/10/competing-on-talent-analytics>)
2. Emilio J. Castilla (2025): “The Meritocracy Paradox: A Strategic Risk and Opportunity for Leaders.” (<https://ceoworld.biz/2025/09/03/the-meritocracy-paradox-a-strategic-risk-and-opportunity-for-leaders/>)

Session 2. Opportunity and Motivation in the Workplace

3. James N. Baron and David M. Kreps (1999): “Employment as a Social Relation.” From Chapter 5 in *Strategic Human Resources: Frameworks for General Managers*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc: pp. 95-117.
4. Chapter 2 of Emilio J. Castilla, *The Meritocracy Paradox: Where Talent Management Strategies Go Wrong and How to Fix Them* (Columbia University Press, 2025). Available at the MIT Coop or online: <https://cup.columbia.edu/book/the-meritocracy-paradox/9780231208420/>.

Session 3. Job Analysis, Competencies, and Individual Differences

5. Daniel Goleman (1998): “What Makes a Leader?” *Harvard Business Review Article* No. 3790: pp. 82-91. (<https://hbr.org/2004/01/what-makes-a-leader>)

Session 4. Recruiting and Selecting the Best Talent

6. Case:
Thomas DeLong and Vineeta Vijayaraghavan (2006): “S.G. Cowen: New Recruits.” *Harvard Business School Case* No. 9-402-028: 15pp.

Session 5. Evaluating Performance

7. In-Class Simulation Exercise.

Session 6. Rewarding Top Performers

8. Case:
Brian Hall, Edward Lazear, and Carleen Madigan (2000): “Performance Pay at Safelite Auto Glass (A).” Harvard Business School Case No. 9-800-291: 11pp.

Session 7. Developing and Building Successful Careers

9. Case:
Robert Kelley and Janet Caplan (1993): “How Bell Labs Creates Star Performers.” *Harvard Business Review Article* 93405: 128-140.
(<https://hbr.org/1993/07/how-bell-labs-creates-star-performers>)

Session 8. The Future of People Analytics: Your Action Plan

Additional readings may be assigned by the instructor at the completion of the course.

Further *optional readings* (after taking the course):

- Parts 3 and 3 of Emilio J. Castilla (2025): *The Meritocracy Paradox: Where Talent Management Strategies Go Wrong and How to Fix Them* (Columbia University Press, 2025).
- Edward Lazear (2000): “Performance Pay and Productivity.” *American Economic Review* 90: 1346-1361.
- Emilio J. Castilla and Hye Jin Rho (2023): “The Gendering of Job Postings in the Online Recruitment Process.” *Management Science* 69 (11): 6417-7150.
- Castilla, Emilio J. (2015): “Accounting for the Gap: A Firm Study Manipulating Organizational Accountability in Pay Decisions.” *Organization Science* 26 (2): 311-333.
- Emilio J. Castilla (2005): “Social Networks and Employee Performance in a Call Center.” *American Journal of Sociology* 110 (5): 1243-1283.

PREPARATION FOR THE CASES/READINGS:

What Makes a Leader (Session 3):

- Read the Goleman and Behling articles.
- Be prepared to discuss the following questions:
 1. Are Goleman and Behling talking about the same things? Where might there be overlap between the two articles?
 2. What attributes are of equal importance for all jobs and across all companies?
 3. If these attributes are important, then how do you get them into your organization? Buy them (hire)? Rent them (temporary workers, contractors)? Build them (training)? Does the same approach work for each attribute?

S.G. Cowen (Session 4):

- Read the SG Cohen case.
- In this class, we will be discussing recruitment and selection by addressing your own concerns as executives. Think through your recent experiences and we will discuss the different approaches and practices used in today's job market.
- Be prepared to discuss the following questions:
 1. What are the key decision points used by S.G. Cowen in making hiring decisions? What is your evaluation of the process used by the firm?
 2. What is your evaluation of the criteria used by SG Cohen when making hiring decisions?
 3. Which two candidates would you select if you were a member of the recruiting committee?

Bell Labs (Session 7):

- Read the "Bell Labs".
- Be prepared to discuss the following questions:
 1. How would you design and implement the best training program for core professionals?
 2. What are the challenges of gathering and transmitting knowledge-based experiences?
 3. The methodologies discussed in these readings differ from traditional training. In what ways do they differ, and why?