FROM THE EDITORS

WHAT MAKES FOR A GOOD AMP ARTICLE?

The latest *Academy of Management Perspectives* Best Paper (Kryscynski & Ulrich, 2015)—which, incidentally, drew the highest citation count in 2015, is a good model of an ideal *AMP*-type article. It illustrates what we mean by an exposition of a scholarly issue. The article points to an apparent contradiction between generally held assumptions in strategic human capital theory and what is observed in practice. The contradictions highlighted by the authors challenge the basic theoretical framework rather than the mere limitations of its practical application.

The article implicitly suggests an approach to how we can improve theorizing and human capital theory by drawing attention to the questions that arise when theory collides with organizational or marketplace reality. It does not attempt a new theoretical model but initiates a conversation on how we should field-test the assumptions in our models. Implicit in the discourse is a call for management scholars to be closely connected to the organizational phenomenon they study. Hence, although the article is not written for the practicing manager—no *AMP* articles are—it tells us to bring the manager along in our theorizing.

Like the Kryscynski and Ulrich article, all articles we accept should be of general interest to all management scholars, not management executives. This has been our approach since 2005, when *Academy of Management Executive* ceased operations and changed its name (and its mission) to *Academy of Management Perspectives*. Despite the fact that *AMP*'s impact factor is at its highest ever, such that we now rank ninth among business journals, there continues to be some confusion over the identity of *AMP*. As editors, we would like to address this problem directly.

First, let's talk about what *AMP* is not. Many people think of *AMP* as *AME* 2.0, even though we do not publish articles written for a practitioner audience. Despite this, we still receive proposals for papers that go something like this: "We observe that managers often encounter problem *j*, which has not been addressed in the literature. We propose to close this gap using theory *t* and to provide an explanation why problem *j* exists, which suggests the following managerial solutions." Also, because *AMP* does not publish single-study empirical papers, others mistake it to be a version of *Academy of Management Review*, so some proposals look like this: "The literature on *x* phenomenon, which has been explained by theory *z*, has reported the following results. ... However, theory *y* suggests an important theoretical gap because some aspect of *x*, when theory *y* is used, is not explained. We propose to close this gap by using theory *y* to explain the missing link(s)." Neither of these proposals (or their variants) meets the threshold for an *AMP* paper. In the first instance, the proposal is aimed at managers, who are not the core readership of the journal. In the second, the proposal offers a new theory that might be too narrow to be sufficiently interesting to the broader Academy membership.

Now let's talk about what *AMP* is. Following the model set out above, a successful *AMP* proposal could look something like this: "We know from the literature that when *x* happens *y* also happens. However, we see that the obverse (when *x* does not happen, neither does *y*) is not always true. The reason is that theory *z* and our own observations tell us there are at least two (or more) contingencies in the *x*–*y* relationship. We would like to discuss what this means for the way we build or test the model of the phenomenon in the future." There are many variants of this model, but they have similar ingredients. A successful proposal almost always highlights some contradiction, conundrum, or unexplained aspect of a phenomenon. It could also seek to revive an old discussion gone fallow because some aspect of its history (empirical method, data, theoretical framing, etc.) has stagnated. The key to a successful proposal is a clear statement of why the gap is important to scholars. Simply stating that it has not been researched sufficiently is not enough because the question may be uninteresting or too trivial for scholarly attention. Finally, a successful proposal should say something about what the discussion *could* lead to: a different way of theorizing, a better way to estimate the data, and so on.

To broaden interest in the journal, we are now cautiously considering proposals that discuss methodological issues. We say "cautiously" because *AMP* is not a methods journal. That is, we do not publish how-to papers. However, there are discussions about the choice or limitations of methods that might bear on the theoretical or policy implications of a research question. For example, many organizational outcomes are endogenously determined. The choice of personnel, strategy, or market segment is driven by what is available in technology, human capital, financial resources, and market exposure. Therefore, how we choose to test these relationships will have a significant impact on how we interpret the findings, and so move the field forward. The key here is to frame the discourse more generally to appeal to the wider Academy membership in that it should have theoretical or policy implications that generate more conversation.

To the previous point, we encourage authors to discuss the policy implications of their work when publishing with *AMP*. This will require effort beyond the obvious "future research" hand waving we often find in academic papers. Policy can be understood as a set of principles guiding an action or decision proposed by a government, organization, group, or person. Generally, policy refers to a set of goals and procedures within a defined set of constraints. It is broader than a strategy because it involves principles that remain relatively stable over time (strategy can be a set of well-rehearsed responses to stimuli). The policy discussion is a method to bridge the divide between scholarship and practice in a meaningful way for scholars. Scholars with experiences in industry or government may not find this a terribly novel idea, but those who have less exposure will find it challenging, and ultimately useful, to think about the policy implications of their findings. Such discussions lead to generalizations about key features of their conclusions that could further develop the research implications.

Finally, we would like to extend a special invitation to the smaller divisions of the Academy to consider submitting proposals. We would like to showcase the future-oriented conversations their members are having. For example, those in management consulting may propose topics related to research in consulting practice, consulting firms, or consulting processes. Those in management history should consider proposals around the history of managerial thought around work arrangements, organizational structure, or the evolution of business and politics. Members of the public and nonprofit division will undoubtedly have a lot to say about how management theories and approaches might evolve when nonprofit or governmental settings are considered. While there has been research on this in recent years, there has not been enough reflection on what it all means for scholarship.

We look forward to hearing your best ideas and seeing them come to fruition in the pages of our journal.

REFERENCE

Kryscynski, D., & Ulrich, D. (2015). Making strategic human capital relevant: A time-sensitive opportunity. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, *29*(3), 357–369.