



# EAM White Paper Series

Editor's Introduction

## Linking theory and practice

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Members of the academic community have been concerned about the gap between management research and practice; for example, a recent 2007 issue of the *Academy of Management Journal* Editor's Forum was devoted to "Research with Relevance to Practice." Shapiro *et al* (2007) in that issue of *AMJ* reported that the gap can really be seen as two distinct types – the first is "the lost in translation" gap, where managerially relevant research fails to reach practitioners, and the second is "the lost before translation" gap where academics fail to undertake research that is meaningful and relevant to managers (e.g. Markides, 2007). Academics tend to view rigorous and relevant research as distinctly separate silos of knowledge and are therefore guilty of either not creating or not transferring knowledge appropriate to the practitioner community. Hambrick (1994) argued that academic research cannot be done in "ivory towers" and it is time for us to matter (p. 13). As academics, our work has to incorporate the "practitioner lens" and we need to engage in "interpretative synthesis" to outline the relevance our research has for the numerous stakeholders who can benefit from our discipline (Hambrick, 2007). All of which leads us to the White Paper Series.

The explicit purpose of the White Paper Series, jointly sponsored by the Eastern Academy of Management and the *Organization Management Journal*, is to serve as a vehicle that will aid in the creation and interpretation of critical areas of management research. We hope that this vehicle works in a way that will help managers better understand situations in their organizations (Bartunek, 2003). Gulati (2007) suggests multiple mechanisms for academic research to become more relevant. First, he urges us academics to become "bilingual interpreters" for practicing managers where we translate and co-create knowledge with the managers. Second, he recommends a "big tent view" in which we can emerge from our small, private umbrellas to erect tall and thick poles to prop up a big tent where rigor, relevance and broader areas of learning can be meaningfully synthesized. The White Paper Series attempts to do both.

As the special editor of the second issue, I am continuing with the suggested structure of the White Paper Series. Each of the four papers is written in a practitioner-friendly format and is structured as follows: (1) Past – Key ideas and fundamental insights of the field; (2) Present – Practices of some groups or companies leveraging these ideas and insights; (3) Future – Forecasts, trends and developments; and (4) Actions – Some prescriptions as to what managers can do with the above information (Kessler, 2007).

This White Paper Series deals with many critical issues for the 21st century. First, the relationship between theory and practice has been complex (Tranfield and Denyer, 2004; Bartunek, 2008). Weick (2001) argues that the relevance gap decried by academics and practicing managers is as much due to managers being wedded to gurus and fads as it is to academics being wedded to abstractions and fundamentals. Therefore, it is imperative to management scholars and practitioners to build links and collaborate in order to create theory that is more robust and has greater applicability. Thus, the first paper addresses the issue of ways of doing collaborative work in the Organization development (OD) arena. Second, in recent times, the incidence of corporate scandals like those involving Enron, WorldCom and Tyco, the role of lobbyists and large businesses in influencing legislation, and the vast disparities in compensation between the top management and the rest of the employees, have all resulted in numerous demands for human rights, environmental sustainability, transparency, security, and avoidance of abusive regimes. All of these have created pressures on businesses where being responsible corporate citizens and supporting sustainability have become integral to how they express themselves. The next two papers synthesize theoretical insights on how organizations can build sustainable systems and behave as responsible corporate citizens. Finally, as individuals and organizations, we need to be cognizant of changing career paths of men and women in the new and transformed world. The increasing diversity of the workforce, the pervasiveness of technology, and the dynamic career goals of men and women all require us to recognize the new emerging realities. The final paper addresses the changing expectations of individual career aspirations in the new era.

It is my pleasure to present the four papers for Volume two of the EAM-WP Series. Our first paper titled "You're an Organization Development Practitioner-Scholar: Can you contribute to Organizational Theory?" is authored by Jean Bartunek. Jean is a past president and a fellow (since 1999) of the Academy of Management. She has published over 100 journal articles and book chapters, as well as five books. She sits on the Editorial Board of many prominent journals including *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Academy of Management Journal*, and *Academy of Management Learning and Education*. She has had a long association with the Eastern Academy of Management and has served on its

Board of Governors. This EAM White Paper is addressed in particular to OD practitioner-scholars who see their primary contribution as practitioners but are also attracted to contributing to academic scholarship. Historically, OD theorizing was based on intervention research and there were definite links between theory and practice but they had not made their way into mainstream management theory. Now that the mainstream management scholars are interested in creating academic-scholar relationships, this piece articulates ways for OD scholars to become more engaged by acting as boundary spanners with organization theory scholars. It suggests how OD practitioner-scholars can use more credible practices like evidence-based research and "engaged scholarship" to bring together different stakeholder groups (researchers, users, clients, sponsors and practitioners) so that they can work together to define and solve management problems.

Our second EAM-WP titled "Enabling New Careers of the 21st Century" is co-authored by Freida Reitman and Joy Schneer. Freida is Professor Emeritus at Pace University and has been a long-standing member of the EAM. She has published numerous articles in journals like *Academy of Management Journal*, *Organizational Dynamics* and *Group and Organization Management*. Joy is a past chair of the Gender and Diversity in Organizations Division of the Academy of Management as well as a past EAM Board member. Her research has been published in *Academy of Management Journal*, *Organizational Behavior* and *Human Decision Processes*, among others. Their previous work focusing on the effects of employment gaps and family structure on career success has received widespread media attention (i.e. *Business Week*, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *London Times*). This paper discusses the effects of factors like entry of women into the workforce, declining job security, increased focus on the psychological aspects of success and the impact of individual movement to non-traditional career paths. The new career paths include changes in employers and occupations, over time, lateral rather than vertical job moves, and often include interruptions in employment. Given individuals are switching to more self-directed careers, this EAM-WP provides organizations with pointers on the use of career enabling policies that are likely to be more effective in the current times with the changed realities of individual careers.

Our third EAM-WP titled "The Development of Corporate Responsibility/Corporate Citizenship" is



authored by Sandra Waddock. Sandra is a Professor of Management at Boston College. Sandra has written numerous journal articles and seven books including *Total Responsibility Management* and *Leading Corporate Citizens: Visions, Values and Value Added*. She is on Editorial Boards of journals like *Academy of Management Learning and Education* and *Journal of Corporate Citizenship*. She was the immediate past chair of the Social Issues in Management Division at the Academy. Sandra's research interests are broadly in the area of Corporate Social Responsibility. Her EAM-WP outlines the emergence of corporate citizenship as an integral part of corporate practice. Many external pressures like the Social Investment Movement, pressures from non-governmental agencies and stakeholder engagement have necessitated incorporating corporate responsibility into a company's business model. This EAM-WP offers important suggestions on how corporations can proactively engage in corporate citizenship behavior by being more transparent and recognizing the importance of multiple bottom lines that include environmental, social and governance performance.

Our final EAM-WP titled "Building and Maintaining Sustainable Organizations" is co-authored by Dilip Mirchandani and John Ekerd. Dilip is the President-elect and a Fellow of the EAM. He has also served in leadership roles in the Academy of Management and the International EAM. His

teaching and research interests include strategy, international business, management education and sustainability issues along with regional expertise in Asia and Central America. His co-author John Ekerd is Professor Emeritus of Agricultural Economics at the University of Missouri and is the author of several books related to sustainability including *Sustainable Capitalism, A Return to Common Sense*, and *Crisis and Opportunity*. He was the keynote Speaker at the 2007 EAM Conference in New Brunswick, New Jersey, NJ. Like the earlier paper on Corporate Citizenship, the final paper also discusses the corporation's responsibility beyond profits to sustaining and maintaining the natural environment. This EAM-WP discusses the organizational priority of being able to meet the needs of the present without compromising the promise of the future. The authors outline actions that organizations can undertake to incorporate the principles of sustainability into their strategy, operations and decision processes.

These four papers together continue the dialogue among researchers and practitioners on some of the most significant management issues of the 21st century. Each of them outlines key issues with respect to dialogue between research and practice, changing career paths, corporate citizenship and sustainability. Taken together, they help managers anticipate developments in the future and provide guidelines for action.

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