



## Management Science

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:  
<http://pubsonline.informs.org>

### Commentary

Fred Hanssmann,

To cite this article:

Fred Hanssmann, (1965) Commentary. Management Science 12(2):B-22-B-23. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.12.2.B22>

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://pubsonline.informs.org/Publications/Librarians-Portal/PubsOnLine-Terms-and-Conditions>

This article may be used only for the purposes of research, teaching, and/or private study. Commercial use or systematic downloading (by robots or other automatic processes) is prohibited without explicit Publisher approval, unless otherwise noted. For more information, contact [permissions@informs.org](mailto:permissions@informs.org).

The Publisher does not warrant or guarantee the article's accuracy, completeness, merchantability, fitness for a particular purpose, or non-infringement. Descriptions of, or references to, products or publications, or inclusion of an advertisement in this article, neither constitutes nor implies a guarantee, endorsement, or support of claims made of that product, publication, or service.

© 1965 INFORMS

Please scroll down for article—it is on subsequent pages



With 12,500 members from nearly 90 countries, INFORMS is the largest international association of operations research (O.R.) and analytics professionals and students. INFORMS provides unique networking and learning opportunities for individual professionals, and organizations of all types and sizes, to better understand and use O.R. and analytics tools and methods to transform strategic visions and achieve better outcomes. For more information on INFORMS, its publications, membership, or meetings visit <http://www.informs.org>

## COMMENTARY

FRED HANSSMANN

*IBM Deutschland, Sindelfingen, Germany*

Although the authors of the paper have qualified the meaning of "mutual understanding," it still seems hard to see how anybody could seriously advocate any other of the four positions considered in the paper. In fact, I am convinced that all authors that have been quoted in connection with one or the other position would view what they have said as steps in the direction of mutual understanding as defined in the present paper. After all, mutual understanding cannot be built in one step. In my opinion, the problem is not so much which position should be the preferred one as how to get there. If all earlier attempts are viewed as attempts to move in the direction of mutual understanding, then I wonder if the present investigation has brought us any closer to the goal desired by all.

Perhaps more attention should be given to the question: how should management science be modified in order to make mutual understanding possible? Clearly, the problem is not science and management but management science and management. As far as the physical sciences are concerned, mutual understanding between management and science may be said to exist. Management has long since learned what physical research is trying to do and how it can be used by management to contribute toward the goals of the corporation. It appears that this coincides with the authors' definition of managerial understanding. Conversely, the researcher, especially the research-administrator, has also learned what the corporation is trying to do. There is now no basic questioning on either side. For example, no management today questions the necessity and usefulness of physical research. This mutual understanding has come about without sophisticated research into the problem as such. Management has eventually realized that here is something useful. It has been convinced by the "product," not by the "sales talk."

Unfortunately, the situation is not the same with respect to management science. The reason may be that management science in its present form is not strikingly useful, and certainly not a necessity from the standpoint of management. The block to mutual understanding may be that management science in its present form cannot be used by management to help it accomplish its managerial goals. Putting it differently, the management scientist may be trying to do something management does not want him to do. Along these lines, it is worth considering the question whether management science should not sacrifice the notion of optimality, refrain from making definite recommendations, and assume the more modest role of producing information intended to facilitate the manager's own decision making. The term information is here used in a rather wide sense. It includes the type of information contained in an "outcome matrix," that is, a display of the outcomes of alternate decisions for alternate contingencies where outcomes may be expressed in terms of multiple criteria. In other words,

emphasis is on "conditional" rather than factual information, and there is not necessarily a single criterion and, consequently, no concept of optimality. Viewing it somewhat differently: if the management scientist would clearly separate his assumptions and his deductive conclusions and restrict himself to assumptions that are of interest to management then he might produce sets of conditional information that are very welcome to management. In fact, he would provide the manager with a number of "if-then" statements. It has been my observation that management acceptance is much better where this more modest position is taken. No manager has a basically negative attitude toward information. To the contrary, he is eager to get it. But he may be very sceptical of recommendations.

Thus, a certain reorientation of management science may well remove basic obstacles to mutual understanding between manager and management scientist, and mutual understanding may develop without great difficulty.

Copyright 1965, by INFORMS, all rights reserved. Copyright of Management Science is the property of INFORMS: Institute for Operations Research and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.