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Call for Papers—Proposal for an M&SOM Special Issue on Practice-Focused Research

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Call for Papers

Proposal for an *M&SOM* Special Issue on Practice-Focused Research

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1. Rationale and Objectives

Although the scholarly field of Operations Management (OM) is motivated at its core by practice, its relevance to practitioners has been questioned on various occasions. To a large extent, these questions arise from a perceived dearth of high-quality research that is focused on the practice of OM, possibly arising from inherent challenges in completing and publishing this type of research. At the same time, recognition of this type of research may have suffered from a perceived lack of differentiation with consulting, which is typically not subjected to the same standards of academic rigor. In this setting, the goal of this special issue is to motivate, highlight, and consolidate high-quality scholarly work that is focused on the practice of OM, contributing to the greater recognition of such work as a rigorous and important academic endeavour within our field. In keeping with this goal, co-authored papers by academics and practitioners presenting original and rigorous research work are particularly encouraged.

2. Scope Definition

The types of papers we are particularly interested in include, but are not restricted to, the following:

- Applications of advanced and/or innovative OM methodologies to problems in practice, yielding significant and quantifiable benefits and/or related general managerial insights;

- Detailed and well-documented descriptions of innovative or prevalent industrial practices not yet described in the academic literature, along with a rigorous quantitative analysis of their rationale and/or relative impact;

- Empirical analyses of field data providing original and broadly generalizable insights on the relative effectiveness of different OM practices. Such data could include, for example, operational data, sales data, contract forms, and/or customer perceptions and characteristics.

While the above list is not exclusive, authors considering the submission of papers that do not belong to one of the above categories are strongly advised to consult the co-editors in advance. In particular, we will not publish the following types of papers:

- Mathematical models (sophisticated or not) with a *potential* impact on practice only established through speculation or numerical experiments, even if those numerical experiments involve input parameters estimated with real data;

- Case studies of how a single organization addresses some OM challenges with no clear transposable knowledge or broadly generalizable insights generated;

¹Others may be solicited depending on the nature and volume of submissions.

- Reports of implementation of standard methodologies with no convincing novelty or relevance to other settings.

The aim of the special issue is to present a single, consolidated outlet for the highest-quality practice-focused research in contemporary OM. It will uphold the specific standards of *M&SOM* for scholarly rigor and exposition, and it will be differentiated from other venues publishing practice-focused papers, such as the following:

- *Interfaces*, by focusing more on the ideas and theory underlying the application, rather than the implementation itself (implementation details may of course be described, but this should not be viewed as the primary contribution of a paper);
- The Practice section of *Operations Research*, by its unified contextual focus on cutting-edge applications within the broad domain of OM.

3. Evaluation Criteria and Methodological Requirements

The criteria that we will apply to evaluate the submissions to this special issue are the following:

- How *important* and *challenging* is the OM problem considered?
- How *applicable* and *relevant* are the research results presented for practitioners—are the results having a significant effect on practice now and/or are they likely to have a significant effect in the near future?
- How *novel* is the problem considered, the methodological contribution, and/or the insights generated?
- How large and convincing is the *impact* reported (if applicable)?

Given our goal of disseminating enduring knowledge, we will require thorough and rigorous analyses of the drivers of any reported impact. More generally, we will expect high scholarly standards for any quantitative analysis being presented, of course, but also for the methodology being used to estimate the impact of the application and the discussion of related literature and other documented methods used by practitioners to solve the same problem, if applicable. Ideally, impact estimations relying on statistical analyses of controlled experiments would be undertaken and reported. We recognize that in some practical applications such experiments are impractical, if not impossible. In such cases, we will require appropriate

discussion and qualification of the impact results presented. Finally, in those cases where any implementation or impact reported is material (e.g., when assessing “significant and quantifiable benefits”), we will also require a verifying statement from the implementing organization and other related evidence as appropriate. While it is preferable that this material be made public, it could potentially be shared only with the review team.

4. Timeline and Process

The planned timeline for this special issue is consistent with our goal of motivating more practice-based research. Specifically, is it conceivable for a research project to be initiated shortly after the call is issued and a paper on that project to be completed by the submission deadline.

First call for proposals: January 15, 2013

Letters of intent due: April 15, 2013

Feedback on letters of intent provided: June 2013

Absolute deadline for submission: January 31, 2014

Target date for publication: June 2015

Although this is not required for publication in the special issue, the co-editors strongly encourage prospective authors to email a letter of intent (with a maximum length of four pages) to them by April 15, 2013. This letter should outline the proposed research, including its relationship relative to the existing literature, and explain how it meets the criteria set forth in the call for papers. The co-editors will review those letters for fit and possibly redirect some authors to other outlets. They may, if warranted, offer suggestions to authors that will help them improve the fit of their work with the objectives of the special issue. Having the letters of intent will also help the co-editors identify and recruit appropriate reviewers.

The review process will otherwise follow the usual *M&SOM* guidelines, including appropriate procedures to eliminate conflicts of interest among editors, associate editors, and referees. Authors will be strongly encouraged to revise and resubmit their papers within three months. (Papers of high quality that are revised too slowly might eventually be published in a regular issue of *M&SOM*, rather than in the special issue.) All existing paper formatting requirements of the *M&SOM* journal, including the length restriction of 32 pages, will be strictly adhered to.