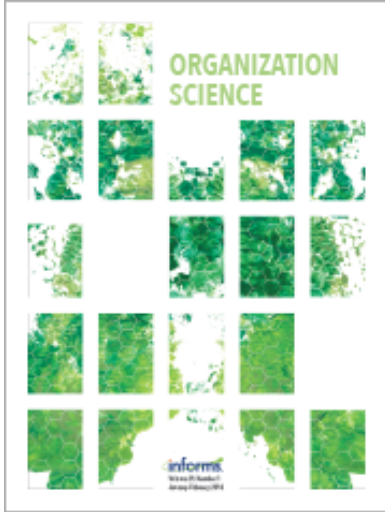




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# CROSSROADS—Designing Institutions for Applied Impact: Lessons from Engineering for Organizational Research

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**Abstract.** Organizational researchers increasingly call for applied impact, yet institutional structures continue to privilege theoretical novelty over practical relevance. In contrast, engineering fields have built mechanisms that legitimize rigorously validated, usable contributions—often publishing proven solutions before fully developed theories. Drawing on our experiences in both engineering and organizational research, we examine how institutional design—not just individual motivation—shapes what counts as legitimate scholarship. We identify structural levers that support applied impact across three institutional pillars: cognitive (what counts as knowledge), normative (what confers prestige), and regulative (what gets published and rewarded). By analyzing how engineering disciplines use diverse publication formats, evaluation rubrics, and inclusive authorship norms, we outline feasible reforms for organizational research. We propose a framework for institutional redesign that expands the definition of scholarly value while preserving rigor.

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**Keywords:** organization and management theory • institutional theory • research design and methods • culture

## Introduction

Many scholars in management aim to make the field more applied, yet structural tensions—such as incentives that favor theoretical rigor over practical relevance—impede the production and use of prompt, actionable insights (Daft and Lewin 1990, Rynes et al. 2001, Vermeulen 2005). The system often undervalues empirically rigorous, problem-solving work that lacks conceptual novelty. Although theory rightly advances our understanding, it should not be the only currency of scholarly value. Our goal is not to displace theory, but to broaden the definition of legitimate contributions to reflect the full spectrum of valuable research (Davis 1971, Tsang 2022).

In this paper, we use the term “engineering” expansively to refer to a range of applied research disciplines—including human-computer interaction (HCI) and design—that are often situated within engineering schools or share similar institutional logics. Although epistemological commitments differ across subfields, these disciplines offer common institutional mechanisms that reward usefulness, reproducibility, and timely contribution. Throughout the paper, we refer to “engineering” as shorthand for this broader family of applied fields. Our perspective is shaped by

our own training and academic homes: both of us are based in engineering schools, and our work spans organizational research, HCI, and design. These interdisciplinary positions allow us to observe how institutional structures in engineering enable applied impact, while also engaging deeply with the challenges of publishing in top management journals.

Despite its growing methodological rigor, organizational research struggles to demonstrate timely, applied impact on urgent global challenges (Vermeulen 2005, Van de Ven 2007, George et al. 2016, McGahan 2022, Davis 2024). The gap between what top journals reward and what practitioners need is widening—especially amid shrinking public trust, funding cuts, and crises like climate change, inequality, and job displacement (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2020). Academic timelines rarely align with the pace or complexity of real-world problems. In this void, consultants have stepped in to translate insights into action—without the peer review, transparency, or cumulative learning that academia aspires to deliver.

Engineering disciplines have institutional structures that integrate rigor with relevance. Applied success often justifies publication, even without novel theory.

In many cases, theory follows empirical validation. These fields embrace diverse formats—technical briefs, design reports, simulations—and emphasize speed, clarity, and usability. In areas like HCI, such flexibility supports rapid learning and collaboration with industry, government, and civil society. Strong norms around coauthorship and joint problem solving reinforce a culture where scholarly rigor and practical relevance are not in conflict but mutually reinforcing.

Drawing on our interdisciplinary backgrounds in organizational research and engineering, we argue that barriers to applied research stem less from individual motivation than institutional design. The field's cognitive, normative, and regulative pillars (Scott 2001) reinforce formats, criteria, and norms that often misalign with today's societal needs. We draw from engineering not as a blueprint, but as a source of institutional principles that support timely, useful, and rigorous contributions. Our aim is not to mimic engineering's epistemology, but to adopt mechanisms that facilitate applied impact without compromising scholarly rigor. This shift is especially pressing given the challenges currently confronting universities—the credibility crisis, rising scrutiny over the societal value of research, and increasing demands for accountability from funders, students, and policymakers (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2020). Building institutional mechanisms that legitimize important, relevant, ready-to-use products can help organizational research respond credibly to these pressures.

Unlike prior calls for greater relevance, which often emphasize cultural or motivational change, we focus on institutional mechanisms—specific design levers inspired by engineering fields—that make applied impact both feasible and legitimate. Whereas economists have long examined the importance of long-term systemic incentives for applied vs. basic research (Stephans 1996), and many advocate for a cultural shift in values and identity among scholars (Davis 2015), our approach is distinct in grounding its proposals in the institutional architecture of engineering. These disciplines have not only articulated values around importance, relevance, and usability—they have built formal structures (e.g., differentiated publication formats, usability rubrics, applied conference tracks) that make timely and useful contributions both visible and legitimate. We use these models to identify actor-specific levers that can be adapted for organizational research. Our goal is not simply to advocate for impact, but to identify and design structural mechanisms that make such impact both feasible and legitimate.

We propose a framework for institutional redesign focused on three structural levers: rebalancing theory and evidence, supporting diverse research products and evaluation criteria, and reducing barriers to inclusive, timely knowledge production. Each maps to one of the three

institutional pillars, together outlining a more responsive and resilient research ecosystem. We approach this as both institutional theorists and designers, asking: How might scholarly production, evaluation, and dissemination be reimagined to better serve the people, organizations, and industries we study?

Redesign requires action from editors, funders, researchers, and administrators—each with distinct incentives. Although we draw on engineering for inspiration, our audience is organization and management scholars seeking to enhance the field's societal relevance and impact. These comparisons are not critiques, but design insights to guide institutional reform. Our core contribution is to identify specific institutional mechanisms—and actor-specific levers—that can make applied, rigorous contributions both feasible and legitimate in organizational research. In contrast to prior calls for cultural change or individual reform, we focus on structural redesign, drawing on lessons from engineering disciplines that have already institutionalized these practices.

## Challenge 1: Rebalancing Theory and Evidence

Organizational research is shaped by a theory-first institutional logic. Cognitively, the field equates knowledge with conceptual novelty. Normatively, abstraction and elegance confer prestige. Regulative structures—especially journal review processes—reinforce these norms by requiring theoretical contributions for publication.

Our publications in *MIS Quarterly* (Eesley and Wu 2020) and *Organization Science* (Armanios and Eesley 2021) required extensive theoretical framing, despite using rigorous designs like randomized experiments and institutional analysis. In contrast, our publications in engineering require research grounded in utility, reproducibility, and field impact. In *Human-Computer Interaction*, we conducted a qualitative study on workplace skill development that emphasized empirical reproducibility and practical insight over theory-building (Hui et al. 2019). In *Nature* (Ahmad et al. 2024), we evaluated large-scale behavioral interventions to reduce online misinformation financing—valuing transparency, empirical scale, and actionable insights. Also, in *Design Studies*, we observed the metacognitive process in new product development planning to inform product management and support tools—valuing usability and practical performance over theory (Carlson et al. 2020). Our engineering disciplines institutionalize that design artifacts, methods, and case studies count as scholarship if grounded in utility, reproducibility, and field impact (Easterday et al. 2018, Li et al. 2021). Flexible formats (e.g., ACM conference proceedings), fast feedback, and recognition of system-building promote rapid learning cycles.

Our engineering subfields are unique in illustrating alternative logics. In civil engineering, strong empirical performance justifies publication—even without full theoretical explanation. Yang et al. (2009), for instance, published a study in *Cement and Concrete Research* based solely on a self-healing material’s strength recovery. In biomedical engineering, Mannsfeld et al. (2010) published in *Nature Materials* by demonstrating sensor performance. In electrical engineering, Wong et al. (2012) published in *Proceedings of the IEEE* by benchmarking metal–oxide resistive switching random access memory (RRAM), focusing on reliability rather than theoretical insight.

Although engineering disciplines may sometimes overemphasize technical novelty, they demonstrate that performance-driven, problem-solving work can meet rigorous scholarly standards. In these fields, proven solutions often precede theory, and empirical validation alone can justify publication. Research is legitimized through utility and real-world impact—unlike in organizational research, where conceptual novelty often remains the primary gatekeeper. We do not seek to diminish the role of theory, but to expand what counts as legitimate scholarship. Pluralistic formats should reflect the multifaceted nature of real-world problems, recognizing empirical rigor (e.g., internal validity), practical performance (e.g., adoption), and societal relevance as distinct yet complementary dimensions of impact. Theory matters—but so do solutions. Recognizing performance and usability as scholarly contributions can deepen theory, not dilute it.

In contrast, top organizational research outlets often retain theoretical novelty as a primary publication filter—even when empirical findings are robust. To shift this logic, we propose revisiting the field’s institutional foundations. Table 1 maps organizational research’s current cognitive, normative, and regulative pillars and outlines redesign levers inspired by engineering fields.

Cognitively, organizational research could broaden its definition of knowledge to include validated solutions. Normatively, we could elevate implementation rigor alongside conceptual elegance. Empirically robust research should not be dismissed for lacking novel theory. Regulative systems can support this shift by introducing new formats—such as Evaluation Briefs, Design Notes, and replication studies—that

legitimize performance-based contributions. Editors and reviewers are well-positioned to pilot differentiated rubrics and create journal sections for applied work.

This is not a call to lower standards but to recognize other forms of rigor: reproducibility, empirical validation, and usability—core to engineering. Clear rubrics can ensure quality in these formats. The goal is to expand impact without sacrificing rigor. To address urgent challenges like climate change, AI safety, and global health, organizational research must support research aimed at real-world performance. Otherwise, consultants will continue to fill the gap—implementing ideas without transparency, peer review, or cumulative learning.

Challenge 2: Supporting Diverse Research Products and Evaluation Criteria

Organizational research produces many valuable outputs—empirical findings, design artifacts, data sets, methods, and interventions. Yet, the field primarily recognizes long, theory-driven manuscripts. Review processes emphasize conceptual novelty and theoretical rigor, sidelining other contributions. Some change is under way. Journals like *Academy of Management Discoveries* and *Academy of Management Perspectives* have taken important steps to legitimize practitioner-oriented and empirically grounded formats (Ben-Menahem 2024, Barnett 2025). Their success demonstrates that the field can evolve beyond theory-first conventions. Yet without broader institutional alignment—including support from conferences, doctoral programs, and promotion committees—these innovations remain siloed. Our aim is to build on these proof points and embed diverse contribution types more systematically across the cognitive, normative, and regulative pillars of the field.

Engineering disciplines use pluralistic frameworks—encouraging diverse research outputs judged by different evaluation standards: data sets by reuse potential, interventions and diagnostic tools by performance, and methods by reliability (Wobbrock and Kientz 2016, Easterday et al. 2022). This flexibility allows researchers to produce products that align with societal needs, not just disciplinary conventions.

In contrast, organizational journals often require full theoretical apparatus—sometimes including new constructs—before publishing empirical work, even if it has clear practical value. Yet scholars already

Table 1. Institutional Pillars in Organizational Science vs. Engineering-Inspired Redesign

| Institutional pillar | Current expression in organizational research                                       | Engineering-inspired redesign                                                                      |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cognitive            | Knowledge = theory; conceptual novelty required for legitimacy                      | Broaden what counts as knowledge to include validated solutions, artifacts, and performance data   |
| Normative            | Prestige = abstraction, elegance, and narrative polish                              | Prestige = rigor, reproducibility, utility, and societal relevance                                 |
| Regulative           | Long-form theory papers as the dominant format; journals as slow-moving gatekeepers | Support multiple formats (briefs, reports, data sets); create short-form tracks and applied venues |

generate diverse outputs. Interventions that improve team dynamics or promote prosocial behavior (Grant 2008) are often buried in larger manuscripts rather than treated as standalone contributions. Data sets and methodological tools from field studies or experiments are rarely recognized as citable scholarly products, limiting their reuse and visibility.

Engineering fields provide a compelling counterexample. Armanios et al. (2019) published a study in *PNAS* on converting existing transmission corridors to high-voltage direct current (HVDC) lines—an applied contribution focused on increasing energy infrastructure capacity. Similarly, a methodological framework to assess social equity impacts of the built environment was published in the *Journal of Construction Engineering and Management* (Jones and Armanios 2020), based on feasibility and policy relevance rather than theoretical novelty. These empirical foundations later informed conceptual advances published in leading organizational outlets. This sequence—empirical validation first, theory development later—is routinely institutionalized in engineering, yet remains undervalued in organizational research.

Organizational scholars might

- Partner with organizations to codesign interventions that address both theoretical and practical objectives;
- Conduct and report pre- and posttesting in pilot settings (e.g., onboarding processes or incentive schemes) to evaluate real-world performance;
- Include usability criteria in evaluation and promotion processes—for instance, rates of adoption, clarity of implementation, or required training;
- Develop rubrics or reporting formats that assess usability across domains like accessibility, scalability, or reproducibility.

A similar logic underpins Eisenhardt's (1989) argument that theory can emerge from rich empirical observation, especially when grounded in real-world problem solving. In this view, usability-driven outputs—such as field-tested interventions, data sets, or artifacts—do not replace conceptual contributions; they enable and enrich them. Rather than treating usability as a vague ideal, we outline how organizational scholars can operationalize it through concrete steps and institutional mechanisms. These implementation pathways are adapted from engineering disciplines where usability is codified, tested, and rewarded.

These steps are already being piloted in research-practice collaborations. For instance, Stanford's Social Impact Labs Design Fellowship guides researchers through a design thinking process—partnering with stakeholders, testing prototypes, and iterating toward usable outputs. Similarly, the Leatherbee and Katila (2020) study of Lean Startup methodology, rooted in engineering's lean manufacturing tradition, shows how structured experimentation can both advance theory

and generate field-relevant tools like the NSF I-Corps Program. The Lean Startup model adapts rapid iteration and continuous improvement for entrepreneurial and organizational contexts. It demonstrates how experimentation and testing—first developed to optimize physical production systems—can generate both practical and theoretical value in social systems. Embedding this logic into research design formats, such as implementation briefs, allows organizational scholars to produce usable outputs while spurring future conceptual contributions. This model brings engineering-style design thinking into applied organizational research and demonstrates how usability and theory can coevolve. To support this shift, we propose creating “Usability Callout Boxes” or accompanying rubrics for formats like Implementation Briefs—tools that distinguish research that is not only rigorous, but ready to be used.

We propose expanding the definition of legitimate research products and aligning evaluation criteria with each product's purpose. Design briefs could emphasize problem framing and iteration; implementation reports could distill field-tested insights. Standardizing such formats would improve replication, dissemination, and integration into theory and practice. Faculty can support students in pursuing these outputs, whereas editors and reviewers can pilot product-specific rubrics that value both rigor and relevance.

To reflect what scholars already do, publication practices in organizational research must evolve. Recognizing diverse research products will accelerate learning, reduce knowledge-sharing bottlenecks, and enhance societal impact.

### Challenge 3: Responsiveness and Inclusion in Knowledge Production

Organizational research is quick to follow theoretical trends but slower to address urgent societal challenges. Its authorship norms and institutional pathways still favor scholars from elite institutions and traditional backgrounds—limiting both responsiveness and inclusion. Our call echoes the “Mode 2” model of knowledge production (Gibbons et al. 1994), where knowledge is generated in applied, transdisciplinary, and socially accountable contexts. Despite calls for relevance, the field has yet to fully embrace this approach.

Engineering fields embed responsiveness and inclusion structurally. Research often begins with pressing societal needs like disaster response or AI fairness. Interdisciplinary teams form quickly, and funding agencies like the NSF prioritize applied problems. Standardized paper formats enable collaboration across domains. In these fields, industry, government, and nonprofit partners are not just data sources—they facilitate intervention design, field testing, dissemination, and systemic impact. Author teams commonly include 10+ contributors across

sectors, reflecting coordinated and inclusive efforts (Wu et al. 2019). Another key structural feature is the brevity and collaborative nature of engineering publications. In contrast to management’s long-form, single- or dual-authored journal articles, engineering fields often encourage short, focused contributions authored by large interdisciplinary teams. These formats enable rapid dissemination and reflect the collective nature of applied problem solving—an institutional norm that reinforces inclusion and speeds up learning cycles.

Organizational scholars already engage with practice through teaching, consulting, and fieldwork. Yet institutional systems for publishing and promotion rarely reward such contributions or appreciate the effort to pursue such work. Department chairs and deans can shift this by championing policies that recognize applied collaboration. We recommend developing accessible formats, accelerating dissemination through reports and conferences, and supporting coauthorship across academic and practitioner domains.

Responsiveness and societal relevance are no longer optional—they are essential. Scholars have demonstrated that applied, high-impact work can meet rigorous standards (Van de Ven 2007, Eisenhardt et al. 2016, Bloom et al. 2024). But institutional change requires more than aspiration—it demands concrete action by editors, funders, and academic leaders.

Importantly, this shift need not come at the expense of theory. In fact, engagement with real-world problems often surfaces anomalies, tensions, and mechanisms that spark theoretical innovation. Empirical puzzles and field-tested interventions can lay the groundwork for new concepts. As in engineering, practice-grounded research can catalyze deeper theoretical insight.

**From Vision to Implementation:  
Operationalizing Institutional Change**

Calls for broader contributions and greater responsiveness often remain aspirational without concrete institutional mechanisms. To make applied organizational research truly feasible, change must be anchored in tools,

roles, and precedents from fields that have addressed similar challenges. Although this paper outlines high-level levers of change, we also seek to clarify these contrasts through direct comparisons in evaluation norms, publication systems, and contribution types. Building on efforts to reform scholarly values (Stephen and Gokhan 2025), we emphasize institutional feasibility—clarifying who must act and how existing structures can be adapted to legitimize diverse outputs.

Table 2 presents a side-by-side comparison of management and engineering fields, illustrating how evaluation criteria, accepted outputs, and incentive structures shape institutional logics—and why engineering fields more readily support timely, real-world impact.

Engineering fields have long addressed how to reward empirical efficacy without compromising scholarly rigor. Several institutional responses stand out. Professional bodies like IEEE, AAAI, and ACM have created short-format publication types—such as technical briefs and implementation notes—that are peer-reviewed but optimized for speed and clarity. Journals like *IEEE Transactions on Electrical Engineering* and *Annals of Biomedical Engineering* accept validated methods or devices without requiring theoretical novelty, if they demonstrate reproducibility and impact. Conceptually, this aligns with Stokes’s (1997) model of use-inspired basic research—Pasteur’s Quadrant—where rigorous scholarship and practical use are both valued simultaneously.

These changes did not occur all at once. Engineering disciplines evolved their norms through small-scale pilots, conference-based experimentation, and community consensus. ACM SIGCHI introduced differentiated “contribution types” with format-specific rubrics tailored to methods, artifacts, and field deployments (Wobbrock and Kientz 2016). IEEE developed review tracks for validated systems and tools. Doctoral programs began embedding usability testing, stakeholder engagement, and iterative prototyping into training. These structural changes—layered gradually over time—helped legitimize applied outputs while maintaining

**Table 2.** Institutional Practices in Management vs. Engineering Fields

| Dimension              | Management                                                       | Engineering fields                                                                               |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Evaluation criteria    | Conceptual novelty, theoretical contribution                     | Empirical validation, utility, reproducibility                                                   |
| Accepted contributions | Long-form theory papers                                          | Diverse outputs: artifacts, methods, data sets, performance studies                              |
| Review process         | Multiround, theory-first peer review                             | Contribution-type-specific rubrics; review of performance or empirical benchmarks                |
| Publication formats    | A-journal articles (~10,000+ words)                              | Short briefs, technical notes, conference proceedings, design case studies, and journal articles |
| Conference role        | Secondary; nonarchival; limited influence on career progression  | Primary venue for peer-reviewed publication and career development (e.g., ACM, IEEE, AAAI)       |
| Incentive structures   | Tenure tied to A-journal count, novelty, theoretical advancement | Recognition for patents, standards, open-source tools, public impact                             |

high standards of rigor. For instance, Sheppard and colleagues (2021) discuss how purposeful educational reform at Stanford guided by both disciplinary knowledge and broader societal values exemplifies how engineering schools structurally support such integration of rigor and relevance.

Together, these mechanisms demonstrate that differentiated publication pathways are not only possible—they are already proven. They accelerate iteration, expand what counts as scholarly work, and enhance practical relevance without diluting quality. Similar pathways can and should be developed within organizational research. Below, we outline specific levers for reform by actor type—offering actionable paths to build a more inclusive, timely, and impactful organizational research.

- Journals can pilot sections for Implementation Briefs, Replications, and Practitioner Notes.
- Conferences can add applied tracks with rubrics focused on performance and reproducibility.
- Promotion and tenure committees can recognize open data, reproducibility, and practitioner and interdisciplinary coauthorship.
- Business schools can fund practice-oriented outputs, such as field-tested interventions and design artifacts.
- Doctoral programs can offer tracks in applied research design, stakeholder engagement, and real-world testing.

Institutional feasibility requires moving from aspiration to action. The goal is not to invent new systems, but to adapt proven structures from engineering. We recognize that some scholars may fear that new formats—such as Implementation Briefs or Design Notes—could dilute the field’s theoretical contributions. However, engineering communities have demonstrated that differentiated formats do not erode rigor when paired with contribution-specific review rubrics. Journals like *IEEE Transactions on Biomedical Engineering* and conferences such as ACM SIGCHI have preserved high standards by aligning evaluation criteria with submission type—whether empirical validation, artifact utility, or methodological transparency. Crucially, these formats complement rather than replace traditional theory-driven work.

In organizational research, journals such as *Academy of Management Discoveries* and *Academy of Management*

*Perspectives* have begun expanding accepted contribution formats—broadening what counts as scholarly value without compromising rigor. Our proposal builds on this momentum, offering a more systematic institutional redesign that ensures rigor through alignment—not uniformity. Table 3 summarizes design choices that can help legitimize a broader range of contributions and align the field with real-world impact.

### Conclusion: Designing Institutions for Relevance and Rigor

The challenges we highlight stem not from individual failings but institutional design. Organizational research has built systems that reward narrative polish and theoretical novelty, often at the expense of clarity, usability, and speed. In contrast, engineering fields legitimize practical success, support diverse outputs, and disseminate ideas through faster, more flexible formats. These fields show that rigor and relevance can reinforce one another when supported by thoughtful structures.

Achieving the field’s applied aspirations requires change across all three institutional pillars. Cognitively, we must expand what counts as knowledge. Normatively, we must value performance, reproducibility, and societal utility. Regulative systems—journals, conferences, and doctoral programs—must support faster, more inclusive knowledge production.

Reform does not require reinvention. Engineering fields offer proven models. IEEE and ACM standardized short-form formats; biomedical engineering introduced dual tracks for methods and applications. Organizational scholars can pilot similar innovations: special issues on field-tested interventions, conference tracks for evaluation-focused work, and journal sections for replication and implementation.

Of course, change brings challenges. In the short term, broadening contribution formats may face inertia, uneven adoption, and unclear incentives. Ph.D. students may worry that applied outputs will not be recognized on the job market; junior faculty may hesitate to take risks without tenure guidance. Advisors may feel unprepared to mentor interdisciplinary work, and reviewers may lack criteria for unfamiliar formats.

**Table 3.** Engineering Practices That Organization Research Can Adopt

| Engineering practice                                       | Org research current norm               | Recommendation                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Practical success justifies publication                    | Theory required for publication         | Accept evidence-based solutions              |
| Multiple publication formats                               | Mostly long-form journal articles       | Create new formats for practice-focused work |
| Evaluation based on rigor and performance                  | Evaluation based on theoretical novelty | Match criteria to paper purpose              |
| Structured writing templates                               | High emphasis on narrative polish       | Prioritize clarity and reproducibility       |
| Rapid dissemination via conferences combined with journals | Long publication cycles                 | Introduce applied short-form tracks          |

These are real risks—but they are not reasons for inaction. Engineering fields faced similar tensions—and addressed them through contribution-specific rubrics, applied conference tracks, dual publication pathways, and doctoral training in usability, prototyping, and field deployment. Organizational research can do the same: by piloting new review formats, signaling legitimacy in hiring and tenure criteria, and creating supportive structures for early-career scholars. Even if early efforts falter, they create valuable learning and institutional precedent. What matters is not getting everything right on the first attempt, but building adaptive and inclusive systems that evolve toward broader legitimacy while supporting diverse contributions.

Although other applied sciences like medicine and economics offer valuable lessons, our focus on engineering is deliberate. These fields balance scholarly rigor with timely impact through codified publication pathways that legitimize diverse outputs—such as design artifacts, usability reports, and implementation notes. In contrast, medicine emphasizes cumulative validation via clinical trials and meta-analyses, whereas economics often prizes theoretical elegance and causal identification. These approaches, though valuable, are less suited for fostering the rapid design, iteration, and usability testing needed to bridge research and practice. Engineering, by contrast, institutionalizes performance-based standards and differentiated contribution formats, offering a more direct and actionable blueprint for expanding what counts as legitimate research in organizational research.

Unlike prior proposals that focus on individual scholars or cultural norms, we disaggregate responsibility across key institutional actors. Our recommendations are not abstract appeals—they are grounded in existing practices from engineering that clarify who must act and what specific actions are both feasible and proven elsewhere. By mapping actor-specific levers, we translate institutional design principles into actionable pathways. These steps are feasible. Business schools can fund implementation briefs. Tenure committees can recognize diverse research outputs. Doctoral programs can train students to create data sets, design artifacts, and translational reports alongside theoretical work. But feasibility also requires clarity about who must act. Building on reforms in adjacent fields, we offer concrete strategies.

## Actors and Institutional Levers for Change

- *Editors and Reviewers*: Create journal sections for design briefs and implementation studies. Align review criteria with contribution type.
- *Conference Organizers*: Launch applied tracks and rapid-response symposia.

- *Faculty and Advisors*: Train students in prototyping, artifact validation, and practitioner engagement.
- *Funders*: Support real-world testing and cross-sector collaboration.
- *Deans and Chairs*: Update promotion criteria to reward reproducibility, transparency, and engaged scholarship (Van de Ven 2007).

If organizational research is to become the applied science it aspires to be, it must stop trying to reform individuals and start redesigning institutions. As institutional theorists, we understand how legitimacy is built. As designers, we know systems can be rebuilt. Now is the time to design the institutions our field needs.

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