

TITLE PAGE

- Academy-assigned submission number: **10344**
- Title of the workshop: **Questioning for Relevance: A Dialogue of Scholarship and Practice**
- Divisions to which this proposal has been submitted:
 - PTC (1) – Practice Theme Committee – **Primary Sponsor**
 - MED (2) – Management Education and Development
 - GDO (3) – Gender and Diversity in Organizations
 - ALL (4) – All-Academy PDWs
- Abstract of the workshop:

This PDW will provide a space to discuss and critically reflect on the recent initiatives to bridge the research-practice gap, and to inspire extensions of current efforts to increase the relevance of academic work. Presenters have volunteered based on their work, recent experience and research interests. We approach the research-practice gap from several angles, including researcher, editor, teacher, and practitioner perspectives. We seek to interactively explore with participants how each role contributes to the creation, translation, and dissemination of research that achieves relevance. Reports from founding participants in the Evidence Based Management Collaborative will be included.

OVERVIEW OF THE WORKSHOP

AOM Professional Development Workshop 2008 The Questions We Ask

Title: **Questioning for Relevance: A Dialogue of Scholarship and Practice**

Short Title: **Questioning for Relevance**

Submission Number: **10344**

Divisions to which this proposal has been submitted (co-sponsorship possibilities):

- PTC (1) – Practice Theme Committee – **Primary Sponsor**
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- GDO (3) – Gender and Diversity in Organizations
- ALL (4) – All-Academy PDWs

Full Description:

The existing gap between academics and practitioners is no longer a reality that we can afford to disregard. Many critics have noted that the search for rigor in business schools has damaged our ability to produce relevant results. There have been calls for our research to play a more influential and practical role in society. Academy of Management's Past-President, Donald Hambrick is frequently credited as one who sounded the early alarm. During his 1993 Presidential Address, he lamented the *lack* of relevance of the association. Since that time, several of his successors have followed suit, expressing their disappointment with the slight (at best) impact that research from business schools has on society.

In the present day, however, the business press and even mainstream media have joined their powerful voices to this cry, forcing academics to focus our energy in a search for relevance. Though the emerging consensus still seems to be convicting academia, we might observe with optimism concerted actions that are taking hold to bridge this chasm and make more useable the work of management researchers for practicing managers.

Momentum has been building to revolutionize the status quo in a systematic fashion. Influential voices are not only echoing those alarms, but also designing ways to bridge the gap between scholarship and practice. Recent issues of all four Academy of Management publications (AMJ, AMR, AMLE and AMP) have included articles, commentaries, book reviews and even special forums attempting to better understand the root causes of this problem and propose solutions. New journals have appeared recently, designed with an "ambidextrous" mindset (i.e., aiming to engage both scholars and practitioners in a mutually beneficial dialog). Also noteworthy, the Evidence Based Management Collaborative (EMBC, 2007) is a group whose work is raising expectations because it aims to close the gap between management research and the ways practitioners make managerial and organizational decisions and educators teach organizational behavior, theory, strategy and human resources management.

Still, it is obvious that there is much work to be done. The event space provided by Professional Development Workshops is an ideal one for the purpose of disseminating these

efforts. The call for papers for the 2008 Conference of the Academy of Management explicitly requests Academy members to ponder “Are those questions [the ones that inspire our research] the right ones to be asking? What do they tell us about what is still unknown in our field?” This PDW will provide a space to discuss and critically reflect on the recent initiatives to bridge the research-practice gap, and to inspire extensions of current efforts.

Participants have volunteered based on their work, recent experience and research interests. We approach the theory-practice gap from several angles, including researcher, editor, teacher, and practitioner perspectives. We seek to explore how each role contributes to the creation, translation, and dissemination of research that achieves relevance. Participants include:

David Denyer (Cranfield U, School of Management) is also a Scholar of the Advanced Institute for Management (AIM); he will discuss the ways that evidence-informed management bridges the gap. Dr. Denyer is an associate of the Research Methods Group of the Evidence Network (funded by ESRC and based at Queen Mary College, University of London), a multi-disciplinary community of senior scholars from the natural sciences (medicine) and social sciences to promote and investigate Evidence-based policy and practice in the UK. He was one of only two management scholars invited to attend a series of seminars funded by the health development agency (HDA) and delivered under the auspices of the Evidence Network Research Methods Group.

Donna Maria Blancero is the Vice President of Research for the National Society of Hispanic MBAs (NSHMBA) and editor of its new journal, *The Business Journal of Hispanic Research*. This publication was designed to act as a conduit between academic research and practice, with both academic/scholarly and executive sections. All manuscripts must include implications or guidelines for practice. Dr. Blancero will discuss publishing articles for both research and practitioner audiences.

Melanie P. Cohen spans the boundary of the academic and practitioner worlds, first in her role as the Information Technology Strategist for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); and second in her faculty role as an adjunct Assistant Professor at the University of Maryland (University College Graduate School of Management and Technology). Prior to joining HUD, she was the Chief of the Strategic Planning Unit at the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) responsible for developing the strategic planning process culminating in the DEA’s Strategic Plan (FY 2000 – FY 2006). Dr. Cohen is an expert in strategy development in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Her experience includes organizational restructuring, change, and culture. Her research interests focus on public management and the 21st century organization. She is teaching a graduate course in organizational theory. She will share her observations on the connection between theory and practice, specifically how theory informs practice and practice implements theory.

Joy Beatty (U of Michigan – Dearborn) reflects on the relationship between our research questions and teaching. If we are looking at having direct impact on practice, how does teaching serve that in relation to discipline-based research? Are we there to translate or transmit the “real” work from other areas into plain English? Or are we preparing the students to receive new ideas by opening their minds and teaching topics like critical thinking? And whose needs do we serve when we form our research questions?

Chad Smith (Clarion U of Pennsylvania) has recently sold his manufacturing business, a company in ten different industries with annual sales of ten million dollars. During his time of ownership, the Pennsylvania-based company employed eighty individuals within three different internal divisions and two distributorships located in Florida and Texas. He has been in the manufacturing industry for the past fourteen years and owned this business throughout the latter twelve years. While operating the business, he earned his Doctorate of Science in Information Systems and Communications and has recently entered academia as a member of the Business Faculty at Clarion's College of Business Administration. Dr. Smith's presentation will emphasize differences in issues that the different worlds present for individuals.

Josetta McLaughlin (Roosevelt U) addresses the problem of translating research, based on her work with journalists. She has studied how psycho-metricians are presenting the data associated with standardized testing and the problems the journalists face in interpreting the numbers. Her perspective about these professionals will encourage the audience to ask the questions that make their work more translatable for non-specialists.

Miguel R Olivas-Luján (Clarion U of Pennsylvania and Tecnológico de Monterrey – Mexico) is Liaison to Practice for the MED division in 2007-08 and organizer of this session. He represents MED in the Evidence-Based Management Collaborative (EBMC) convened by Denise Rousseau in 2007. Dr. Olivas-Lujan's contribution is twofold: report on the progress of the EBMC and make a presentation on "Holographic writing," a writing style suitable for reporting research to non-technical audiences in layers of gradual and increasing complexity.

Key Words: Research-practice gap, Evidence-based Management Collaborative, Relevance

WHY THE WORKSHOP SHOULD BE OF INTEREST TO THE SPECIFIED GROUPS

PTC (1) – Practice Theme Committee. Among the main purposes of this committee is increasing "awareness of what practice means and how it can usefully inform our scholarship in terms of both research and teaching" as well as "profile exemplar initiatives that bridge the gap between theory and practice and engage practitioners and academics in the co-creation of knowledge" (2008 PDW Call for Submissions, pp. 27-28). This PDW brings together practitioners and researchers to achieve the former. In addition, Drs. Denyer and Olivas-Luján are founding contributors to the Evidence-Based Management Collaborative; their experience and comments should contribute to achieve the latter purpose.

MED (2) – Management Education and Development. Three characteristics have been identified in the MED section of the Call for PDWs: (1) joint sponsorship by two or more AOM divisions or interest groups, (2) inclusion of non-US based colleagues, and (3) inclusion of practitioners, as well as academics. As it may be easily observed, this PDW proposal has been designed to satisfy all three. In addition, the proposal has been originated as part of the Division's "Liaison to Practice," an elected office that has not had much activity in the past few years.

GDO (3) – Gender and Diversity in Organizations. Among the goals of GDO that this PDW satisfies are: “embrace diverse perspectives in organizational research and education, and [...] inclusion of marginalized voices in members’ research and practice.” Several presenters are GDO members whose research focuses on Hispanics (Blancero and Olivas-Luján) and people with disabilities (Beatty). The proposal’s innovative design and inclusion of practitioners specifically aims to satisfy the GDO call (p. 13).

ALL (4) – All-Academy PDWs. This PDW is also designed with the purpose of “stimulate the audience and engage them to think and act in new ways,” as the All-Academy call (p. 9) requests. The main intention for this proposal is to foster changes in the way academics have been doing business so that our work acquires more relevance. Finding dissidence toward this objective is probably the more difficult task.

DESCRIPTION OF WORKSHOP’S FORMAT

Proposed schedule is shown below –

Time	Theme	Presenter
8:00-8:05 AM	<i>Opening</i>	Miguel R Olivas-Luján
8:05-8:15	Evidence-Informed Management –The European Perspective	David Denyer
8:15-8:30	Publishing for Both Academic and Practicing Audiences: The <i>Business Journal of Hispanic Research</i>	Donna Maria Blancero
8:30-8:45	Living in Both Worlds	Melanie P. Cohen
8:45-9:00	The Roles that Educators Play	Joy Beatty
9:00-9:15	The Business Owner Perspective	Chad Smith
9:15-10:00	<i>Break out into Discussion Tables</i>	<i>Round Tables Discussion</i>
10:00 - 10:10	Translating Research for Business Practitioners	Josetta McLaughlin
10:10-10:20	Holographic Writing –A Style for Knowledge Dissemination	Miguel R Olivas-Luján
10:20-11:00	<i>Open Discussion and Conclusion</i>	<i>Round Tables Discussion</i>

NOTES: After the first 15-min presentations, a 45-min discussion period has been allocated to allow exercises facilitated by the presenters to engage the audience through discussions in round tables. In the second phase, two 10-min presentations are scheduled to switch gears and think about concrete ways in which our research can be made more accessible to practitioners and consequently relevant.

Proposed Timing & Logistics

Date: Saturday, August 9, 2008
 Start time: 8:00 AM
 End time: 11:00 PM
 Room Size: 35 / 40
 Seating Configuration: Banquet-Rounds
 Catering: Coffee

Participants' contact information:

Submitter and Presenter (Contact Person):

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Role in PDW: Organizer / Presenter

(MED Liaison to Practice)

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Role in PDW: Presenter

Donna Maria Blancero

Business Journal of Hispanic Research, Editor-in-Chief

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Role in PDW: Presenter

NB: Because of conflicting events, Lourdes Hassler, CEO of NSHMBA kindly covered Dr. Blancero's role as presenter during this PDW. These changes were duly reflected in the AoM Program.

Joy Beatty

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Role in PDW: Presenter

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Role in PDW: Presenter

STATEMENT FROM THE ORGANIZER

I have received personal statements from all intended participants agreeing to participate for the entire workshop, AND stating that these participants are not in violation of the Rule of Three + Three.

Miguel R. Olivas-Luján