



ORGANIZING 'CONTRIBUTIONS TO PRACTICE' IN RESEARCH ARTICLES ON INNOVATION

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Introduction

This editorial comment is dedicated to discussing the importance of explicitly stating the practical contributions applied in academic research. Academic research plays a crucial role in the expansion of knowledge, but its relevance extends beyond theoretical contributions. It is important to clarify the impacts on practice, as well as the alignment of research with global sustainability challenges (Belmonte-Ureña et al., 2021).

The contributions to practice that are usually presented in the discussions of articles should connect findings to the realities of the business world. However, it seems that often these contributions are placed as mere formality due to the requirements of the journals (Bouma, 2019). We argue that contributions to practice are important and need to be seriously considered.

This comment was based on two relevant references (Bartunek and Rynes, 2010; Simsek, Li, and Huang, 2022). Bartunek and Rynes (2010) examine the presence and

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construction of practical implications in academic management articles. They emphasize the importance of communicating results in a clear and relevant way for practice. Simsek, Li, and Huang (2022) present a framework for formulating practical implications in management research. This framework seeks to identify the target audience, define how the implications can be applied, and describe the expected progress.

Based on these studies, we suggest a guideline and evaluate the practical contributions of two articles on innovation published in relevant international journals. The suggested guideline and the way we evaluate the contributions can help our authors and reviewers to ensure that the articles published in the IJI have their practical relevance more evident and better guide managers in their daily challenges.

Contributions to Practice in Academic Article Discussions

The section on contributions to practice is usually presented in the discussion section of academic articles. It is dedicated to translating theoretical and empirical research findings into contributions that can inform and enhance management practice.

To ensure that these contributions are relevant, Bartunek and Rynes (2010) suggest clarifying the target audience, which can range from high-level executives to sector managers, each with unique needs and contexts. By understanding and clearly defining the target audience, contributions can be more effectively targeted to address the specific challenges and opportunities faced by practitioners.

The essence of the practice contributions section lies in its ability to offer pragmatic, evidence-based recommendations. These should be directly derived from the study's findings, providing a foundation for the proposed actions. The recommendations should be articulated as clear and practical steps that practitioners can implement to improve processes, strategies, and outcomes within their organizations (Bartunek & Rynes, 2010).

Practical contributions in management research should elucidate how the application of recommendations can lead to tangible improvements in organizational efficiency, innovation, employee engagement, and business success (Bartunek & Rynes, 2010). The use of persuasive language, as they suggest, can reinforce the argument for these contributions and encourage practitioners to adopt the recommendations. To facilitate the adoption of these contributions, it is important for the practice contributions section of an academic article to detail practical ways of operationalizing the recommendations (Bartunek & Rynes, 2010).

The practice contributions section should summarize the main contributions and the positive outcomes expected, reinforcing their relevance to practitioners (Bartunek & Rynes, 2010). A call to action can encourage practitioners to consider integrating these contributions into their organizational practices. The inclusion of references to underlying research provides interested practitioners with the means to further explore the foundations of the practical recommendations.

Guidelines for Orienting Contributions to Practice in Academic Articles

Below, based on the articles, we organize a roadmap into items to compose and evaluate the practical contributions in research articles on management and innovation:

- **Establish Relevance:**
Start by stating the practical contributions' relevance to the field. Reference relevant journals that emphasize the importance of relevance to practice (Bartunek & Rynes, 2010).
- **Clarify Research Focus:**
Clearly define the scope of the research and how it translates into practical applications. Address the target audience, the nature of the recommendations, and the expected outcomes (Bartunek & Rynes, 2010).
- **Address Readability:**
Assess and improve the readability of practical contributions to ensure they are accessible to practitioners (Bartunek & Rynes, 2010).
- **Engage in Discussion and Future Directions:**
Highlight the study's intervention and the potential broader contributions to society (Bartunek & Rynes, 2010).
- **Incorporate Practitioner-Centered Structure:**
Follow an organized structure that includes identifying a target audience, specifying the mode of use, and characterizing the type of progress (Simsek et al., 2022).

- Identify the Right Audience:
Recognize the diverse needs and wants of different audience groups and tailor the practical contributions accordingly (Simsek et al., 2022).
- Specify Mode of Use:
Clearly outline how the findings can be used in practice, whether instrumentally, conceptually, or symbolically (Simsek et al., 2022).
- Characterize Type of Progress:
Define whether the contributions are focused on prevention or gain, and align them with the mode of use (Simsek et al., 2022).
- Highlight Common Recommendations:
List common recommendations such as policy changes, training initiatives, and the adoption of new models or frameworks (Bartunek & Rynes, 2010).
- Discuss Expected Outcomes:
Articulate the positive impacts of implementing the recommendations, such as improved organizational performance and employee well-being (Bartunek & Rynes, 2010).
- Use Rhetorical Strategies:
Use persuasive language and concrete examples to make the research findings relatable and actionable (Bartunek & Rynes, 2010).

By adhering to these recommendations, researchers can effectively organize their practical contributions to be meaningful, accessible, and actionable for practitioners in the field of management and innovation.

Next, we use these recommendations to check the contributions to practice in two innovation articles (Table 1). The first article is by Mayer, Xing, and Mondal (2022), recently published in the Strategic Management Journal (SMJ). The SMJ has, for some time, included managerial summaries in addition to practice contributions in the discussion; these summaries and the practice contributions presented in the articles were analyzed.

The second article by Nasiri, Ukko, Saunila, and Rantala (2020) was published in the journal *Technovation*. The article examines the impact of digital transformation on Finnish SMEs, concluding that smart technologies are essential for improving performance in the digital supply chain. The implications for practice were also analyzed in this article.

Table 1

Examples of Contributions to Practice

Item	Description	
Article	Mayer, K. J., Xing, Z. (A.), & Mondal, P. (2022). Contracting for innovation: Designing contracts that account for exchange hazards and the need for innovation. <i>Strategic Management Journal</i> , 43(11), 2253–2278. https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.3409	Nasiri, M., Ukko, J., Saunila, M., & Rantala, T. (2020). Managing the digital supply chain: The role of smart technologies. <i>Technovation</i> , 96–97, 102121. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.technovation.2020.102121
Contributions to Practice	<p>Managerial Summary: Managers must understand how contract design can aid in the success of interfirm innovation endeavors as radical innovation is frequently developed in an interfirm context. Our findings suggest that contract negotiators should pay special attention to several contractual elements when designing contracts for tasks that require more radical innovation. In particular, the payment structure, specifications of outcomes and processes, and contingency planning clauses influence the innovative output of suppliers. Employees who understand the task should participate in contract negotiation and design, allowing them to outsource more innovative tasks and manage them more effectively. These results have several important implications for managers. Since radical innovation is often done in interfirm contexts (Arora et al., 2016), managers need to understand whether contract design can help these interfirm innovation efforts bear more fruit. Our results suggest specific things that contract negotiators can do when designing contracts for tasks that require more radical innovation, including paying particular attention to specifying outcomes and/or processes, as well as the potential for more general contingency planning clauses and the tradeoffs among different payment options. The framing tradeoffs in contracts when task innovation is required are important for managers to consider. The need for detailed knowledge of the task suggests that those involved in the task should be involved in negotiations rather than letting lawyers draft the contract independently (in line with Argyres and Mayer (2007)). In addition, if firms can design better contracts to govern innovative tasks, they will be more</p> <p>This study increases awareness and understanding of the scant previous studies on the links between digital transformation of companies and smart technologies to achieve relationship performance. The empirical evidence of the study showed that digital transformation provides many opportunities for organizations to support smart technologies, leading to relationship performance. Thus, the managers of SMEs should invest in different types of smart technologies that may improve relationship performance in the supply chain. Because smart technologies help transform digitality into value for relationships throughout the supply chain. Additionally, this study provides guidance for managers of SMEs on how to develop relationship performance in the digital supply chain. This study suggests that managers considering digital transformation should focus on how this phenomenon integrates with current systems to support their relationship performance. While the vast number of firms might be able to implement digitalization in their business, turning this phenomenon into opportunities to enhance both internal and external relationship performance will likely necessitate the investment in smart technologies to support and complement firm strategies.</p>	

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	successful in generating innovative outputs from suppliers, enabling them to outsource increasingly innovative tasks.	
1. Establish Relevance	The text clearly establishes the relevance of practical contributions to the field of management, emphasizing the importance of contract design in interfirm innovation.	The importance of digital transformation and smart technologies for relationship performance is established, showing practical relevance and highlighting the scarcity of previous studies. However, there are no specific references to management journals.
2. Clarify Research Focus	The research focus is outlined, specifying the need for special attention to contractual elements in tasks of radical innovation. The target audience are managers and contract negotiators.	The scope of the research is defined, connecting digital transformation to relationship performance in SMEs. The practical recommendations are clear regarding the investment in smart technologies.
3. Address Readability	The summary is presented in a clear and accessible manner.	The managerial implications are clearly presented and are accessible to practitioners.
4. Engage in Discussion and Future Directions	There is a discussion about the practical application of findings, but future directions are not explicitly mentioned.	The text suggests future directions for SME managers, but does not address the strategic intervention of management scholars or potential contributions to society.
5. Incorporate User-Centered Structure	It partially follows the structure suggested by Simsek et al. (2022), identifying a target audience and specifying the mode of use, but could elaborate more on the type of progress.	The implications identify a target audience (SME managers) and provide guidance on developing performance in the digital supply chain, but could better characterize the expected type of progress.
6. Identify the Right Audience	The summary identifies 'managers' and 'contract negotiators' as the audience, but could benefit from a broader recognition of the needs and desires of more diverse audience groups.	The target audience is appropriately identified, focusing on SME managers.
7. Specify Mode of Use	The mode of use is partially specified, suggesting attention to specific contractual elements and the participation of informed employees in negotiations.	The implications suggest how the results can be utilized - through investment in smart technologies to enhance the performance of relationships.
8. Characterize Type of Progress	The summary suggests progress focused both on prevention and gain, but does not explicitly define it in alignment with the mode of use.	Progress focused on gain is suggested, but not explicitly aligned with the mode of use.
9. Highlight Common Recommendations	There is no clear enumeration of common recommendations in the summary.	The implications do not enumerate common recommendations such as policies or training initiatives.
10. Discuss Expected Outcomes	The summary mentions the expected outcome of generating innovative outputs from suppliers, but does not articulate other potential positive impacts.	The expected positive impact is mentioned - the improvement of relationship performance - but is not comprehensively articulated.
11. Use Rhetorical Strategies	The summary uses clear language, but could benefit from the use of more persuasive language and concrete examples.	The use of language is clear, but could be enhanced with concrete examples to make the implications more relatable and actionable.

Final Considerations

In this editorial comment, we highlight the importance of establishing clear connections between academic research and management and innovation practices. We emphasize that, in addition to advancing theoretical knowledge, research should also offer practical contributions, avoiding being merely ceremonial and becoming central in justifying the importance of the work. The references from Bartunek & Rynes (2010) and Simsek et al. (2022) provide a framework for creating well-defined and user-centered practical implications, recognizing the specific needs of the various target audiences. The application of the proposed roadmap in the analysis of innovation articles suggests how practical contributions can be more effectively communicated and potentially adopted by managers. This editorial underscores the need for research that not only contributes to theory but also promotes practical and sustainable changes in management.

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