

Amplifying Management Research For The Common Good: Lessons For Curious Individuals And Organizations

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PREFACE

Research papers appear almost exclusively in academic journals and/or in sponsored journals of professional associations. Access to those papers is typically blocked unless you are a paid member of one of these organizations. Consider for instance, the publications of the Academy of Management and those of the International Association of Applied Business Research. Each one of these organizations has five journals that can only be accessed by their paid members.

Similarly, the American Psychological Association with its 89 different journals operates from the same premise. Put differently, the possibility of non-members gaining access to published management research in any of those journals is very slim. So, the reader may ask, what practical value do such papers have for audiences outside academia? Keeping a lid on scientific knowledge does very little for the common good.

Common sense suggests that to be of value to society at large, scientific journals should be open and available to any interested party, whether an organization or an individual, regardless of their membership status. This has yet to happen. A more recent development involves the trend to turn management of scientific journals, once university-based, to publishing houses. You may be granted access to an article of interest but it would cost you a fee. Nothing is free. This of course further limits dissemination of knowledge to non-members and non-paid audiences.

Of particular interest to us is how management research can promote a more applicable and transparent knowledge for the benefit of the public good? This very question shapes the principles that guide movements such as the Responsible Research in Business and Management movement. This question is also central to initiatives taken by the Principles for Responsible Management Educations, and is aligned with the more recent writings of leading scholars (e.g., Kitchener & Delbridge, 2020; Wickert, Post, Doh, Prescott & Principe, 2021). Similarly, and more recently, the American Psychological Association's January 2023 *Monitor on Psychology* highlighted the field's desire to communicate the psychology science to a wider audience.

Looming large over these movements and initiatives is the challenge of repurposing management research for the benefit of wide audiences. Following in this vein, this book seeks to make empirical evidence more inclusive, impactful, and public good relevant, while exploring knowledge applicability to various stakeholders that live and work in the broader community. In essence, we sought to bridge the chasm that separates the non-academic audience from the typically less-accessible empirical papers by opening a small portal to practitioners in the field and to curious individuals with keen interest in management research.

Co-edited by R. H. Tiell and S. C. Malka, the title of the book says it all - "*Amplifying management research for the common good: Lessons for curious individuals and organizations – Insights from practitioners in the field.*" The book's chapters are written by leading practitioners from different fields rather than by academics. We looked for experts that can build on empirical research in various areas of management and synthesize it through their work experience and field of expertise. Furthermore, we asked them to apply such knowledge to real world situations, with the manager and their organization in mind. Thus, the book's chapters are largely written in layperson language, straightforward, and illustrated with practical examples drawn from each contributor's work experience. And, each chapter concludes with practical lessons and suggestions for self, and for workplace improvement. We wanted it to be a book that tells stories from the field.

A few words about the actual process that was used may be of value to the reader. We made available to our chapter contributors a collection of published papers, some authored by the editors of this book, and others co-authored with other researchers. The papers cover a diverse set of business topics all of which we believe hold much relevance for management today. As a trigger, we aligned each contributor with one or two empirical papers based on their background, interests, and work experience. Using the assigned papers as a springboard, we asked each author to identify emerging themes around which they can build their chapter as they see fit.

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This process resulted in a collection of chapters covering a wide range of subjects. Among them are such topics as supply chain challenges in Central America, assessment of C-suite leaders, logistics capabilities pre-post Ivan in the Cayman Islands, pandemic's long-term effects, delivery of services for mental health and suicide, the new workplace, labor market shortages, pandemic induced trauma, workforce system's service pathways, talent optimization, individual and organizational performance. We would like to believe that the breadth of the topics covered and the amount of information being disseminated through the book's chapters are timely, meaningful, practical, and relevant to a wide audience of curious readers.

Capturing in a cursory fashion highlights from each author's contribution may be of value to the reader. Our first chapter builds on supply chain visibility as an emerging empirical theme. Through it, the visibility of a critical chain actor – land-haulers of cargo from-and-to seaports in Central America – is assessed. The author's analysis points to a striking power imbalance between ocean carriers and the largely disadvantaged truckers. The relatively weak standing of this critical provider of service threatens the supply chain's resilience and stability in that part of the globe. Necessary actions and recommendations for mitigating potential supply chain risks and disruptions are proposed.

The book's second chapter builds on a recent pandemic related volume published in early 2022. In particular, the chapter revisits the triple themes of remote work, remote learning, and change in consumer behavior, while exploring long-term related trends and their profound impact on individuals, organizations, and society at large. This preliminary effort stresses the need for a new employee-employer contract that is more suitable for the emerging new workplace, as a way to accommodate, among other things, the widespread preference for both remote work and remote learning.

Our third chapter builds on a recent paper that explored synchronous and asynchronous learning during the pandemic. The author applies both approaches to the field of mental health, with a particular focus on pandemic induced suicide. Implications and recommendations for teams in the helping fields, and especially for administrators of mental health service agencies, are explored and proposed.

The book's fourth chapter revisits findings from a recent supply chain related study with a focus on antecedents of logistics capabilities. Stressing the importance of communication technology, integration, cooperation and social trust, the author assesses the role they jointly played in the recovery efforts following devastating hurricanes that hit the Cayman Islands and disrupted their supply chain networks. Recommendations for further building of such capabilities are suggested.

Our fifth chapter applies themes derived from a recent paper that explored parallels between chaos theory and conflict resolution approaches. The author builds on the chaos theme, and proposes viewing the pandemic as a classic case of chaos, specifically – as conflictual, chaotic and traumatic phenomenon. This fundamental event is linked to a 'workforce shortages trauma,' as well as to other trauma induced work related challenges. A confluence of contributing factors are identified and discussed, along with career and management implications, and with trauma being perceived as a significant mediating factor.

Chapter six is devoted to the long-term unemployed. The author explores related themes that appeared in a couple of recent published papers on subject matter. Alternatives are proposed as viable ways for reducing the personal and societal burden of long-term unemployment. Among them are a transformation of the workforce system and its services, the integration of such services across a workforce-human, service-physical, and a behavioral health spectrum, and the need for experimenting with universal basic income as an alternative. Recommendations for further actions by workforce systems administrators are suggested.

Our seventh chapter deals with talent optimization with an eye on human service organizations and their unique environment. The author explores themes borrowed from two published papers that highlight the challenges inherent in employee assessment approaches and the benefits derived from participatory management that views an employee as a whole person. Failing to consider these aspects is costly and threatens the viability of the organization. Steps for creating a healthier organization are proposed.

Chapter eight deals with the construct of 'organizational performance' and approaches it from a very unique angle. The author argues for the need to recognize the multidimensionality of the term. Failure to do so hampers the diffusion of related knowledge. Attempting to overcome the current inconsistencies in the study of this construct, the author proposes a corresponding theory of employee performance (i.e., job performance). Parallels between measurement of job performance and organizational performance are presented, and suggested steps for improving clarity of measurement and subsequent aggregation of research results for organizational science are provided, along with practical implications for managers and their organizations.

Our ninth chapter - while building on two previous papers that focused on the long-term unemployed, extends the discussion to another at-risk group of interest - the youth. At the core of this chapter are lessons learned from the two

most recent recessions that took place in 2008 and 2020. Differences between the impact of these two events, as they relate to the youth and the long-term unemployed, are discussed along with concrete lessons for policy makers and practical implications for career and employment delivery practitioners.

Chapter ten is the book’s closing chapter that is devoted to hiring and developing effective leaders, particularly at the organization’s top echelon. Our author refers to a previously published paper that explored the benefits of using a multitrait–multirater approach for assessing employees, with 360⁰ being an important model to pursue. The author provides information on how tests and assessments can help organizations identify leaders who can face current challenges and ensure they are prepared to adapt to future workforce needs. We attempted to briefly capture key nuggets of the book authors’ arguments in the next table.

Reading through the book, the curious reader may notice a common thread that bonds several chapters together. Largely a consequence of the lingering pandemic, the common thread points to a new reality - a new workplace where unfolding changes in work behavior drives the need for a corresponding new reset in employee-employer relations. This, in turn, may require revisiting the current employment contract in light of the unique opportunities that have presented themselves to both the worker and the manager in the new workplace.

	Emerging theme	Relevant boundaries	Core challenge	Potential impact	Conduct
Ch.1	Critical role of	First/Last mile providers of	Actor low visibility	Power imbalance;	Get organized; leverage
	supply chain visibility	land-hauling service	in current chain	Chain resilience	Collective chain role
Ch.2	Pandemic induced	Individuals and organizations;	Adjusting to a new	Disruption in the	New workplace contract;
	long-term trends	Society at large	workplace	labor market	New traits/competencies
Ch.3	Synchronous and	Individuals and families;	Managing multiple	Ease of access;	Expand delivery;
	asynchronous delivery	Service agencies	delivery systems	Manage challenge	System responsiveness
Ch.4	Critical role of	Territories and communities;	securing logistic	Ease of recovery	Install comm. techno.;
	logistics capabilities	supply chains	capabilities	from disasters	Reinforce capabilities
Ch.5	Chaos and conflict;	Individuals and organizations;	Trauma induced	Labor shortage;	Use radical adaptability;
	adaptability	Workforce market	work challenges	Traumatic grief	Informed counseling
Ch.6	Long-term	Workforce systems;	Return to workplace	Overall workforce	Skill up; Transform,
	unemployment	Individuals	Skills obsolescence	participation	integrate, or discontinue
Ch.7	Employee/Job match;	Individuals and organizations;	Complex environs;	Turnover; Profit;	Consider the whole person;
	Hire, retain, motivate	Workforce market	Proper matching	Bottom line	Employee well-being
Ch.8	Job vs. Organizational	Employees; Managers;	Multidimensionality	Inconsistency in	New theory of
	Performance	Organizations	of construct	Research	Employee performance
Ch.9	Recessions’ impact on youth , LTU	Two at-risk population groups; Workforce market	Unemployment challenges; Gen Z	Shrinking of labor force participation	Hybrid delivery model; Manage 2 nd stressors.
Ch.10	Multitrait-Multirater	C-Suit executives; Org. as a	Scope, level, timing,	Turnover; Profit,	Consider implementing -
	assessment	whole; Workforce market	of assessment	Disruption	360 degree assessments

Navigating the changes may not be an easy task given the potential for conflict that is associated with the new dynamics at work. This, of course, necessitates considering the relevant evidence and its practical interpretation for the benefit of all parties involved. Remaining true to the book’s stated intent, our concluding commentary touches on a couple of work related items and their possible implications for individuals and organizations, and for society at large.

The New Workplace. We are fast approaching a tipping point in the new office where a shift in power continues to gain traction by strengthening workers’ hand. This very transition in bargaining power can potentially be explosive. The change in work behavior, three years into the pandemic, coupled with a tight labor market are likely to turn the workplace into a collision course between employee and employer. Premier conflict areas involve remote work, compensation transparency, and productivity related expectations. How employers approach each of these conflict areas, and how deep is their understanding of the need for a new reset in the relationship with their employees, will determine to a large degree the future and viability of their companies. Remote work has been a thorny issue for many companies. Several large employers, like GM, have called for employee return to the office just to backtrack in the face of a strong employee pushback. A hybrid approach is emerging as a preferred trend by companies like Apple Inc. and Alphabet Inc.’s Google, a trend that may be adopted by other employers.

Aside from remote-work related tensions, transparency of compensation is emerging as an additional area of contention.

More employees are posting their pay levels on sites such as LinkedIn for all to see. Furthermore, recent legislation that requires companies to publicly post pay ranges with job posting has been adopted by several states including California, Washington, and Colorado as well as other cities like New York. This new trend has likely emboldened employees. And, further widening the divide between employee and employer are their conflicting perceptions concerning productivity in an era of remote work. As we enter 2023, and faced with escalating inflation levels and a looming economic slump, many companies are resorting to cost-cutting measures including layoffs, particularly among technology companies like Meta Platforms, Microsoft, Amazon.com, and Twitter. These companies are pressing employees and managers alike for gains in productivity. Namely, the expectation of ‘doing more with less,’ at a time when they feel they have been doing so for a long while. Surveys point to a productivity paradox suggesting a divide between employees and managers with the way each party views productivity. For instance, a recent Microsoft survey of 20,000 of its employees reported that close to 90% of employees believed they are productive at work, while only 12% of their managers shared that view (Cutter, Bindley & Dill, 2022). Addressing such conflicting views while urgent, also calls for companies to revisit the way they view their employees in the new workplace. A reset in employer-employee relationships, perceptions, and employment arrangement is today a new must.

And, as the waves of pandemic infections wind down, and the voices of the ‘return to the office’ are getting louder, employers are advised to account for and be sensitive to employee related ambivalence to in-person work. The expectation for a new workplace that is more accommodating and supportive is shared by millions of employees. Consider the roots of the ‘great resignation’ movement along with survey data that suggests that many of the returning employees are not content any longer with their places of work. Also, consider surveys data suggesting that 42 percent of people who found a new job after quitting say that the new work didn’t live up to their expectations (Genovese, 2022). Thus, transformational leaders are presented with a unique opportunity to make the workplace a much healthier and a happier one. Employers must seize the moment to improve the workplace and the work climate.

TOP LEADERS' TRAITS AND COMPETENCIES		
	2020	2022
TRAITS	Tolerance of ambiguity	Tolerance of ambiguity
	Adaptability	Trust
	Risk-taking	Curiosity
	Openness to differences	Risk-taking
	Trust	Adaptability
COMPETENCIES	Builds effective teams	Global perspective
	Drives engagement	Manages Ambiguity
	Communicates effectively	Interpersonal savvy
	Collaborates	Collaborates
	Cultivates innovation	Instills trust

(See: Wartzman & Tang (2022))

Within the context of post pandemic leadership, more recent data suggests that emerging top executive competencies in 2022 include *managing ambiguity* and *installing trust* (Wartzman and Tang, 2022). Wartzman and Tang, of the Drucker’s Institute, contend that the pandemic has changed some of the most critical qualities that characterize leaders of the best-managed companies. To illustrate their argument relative to the shifting behaviors attributed to the pandemic, they offer a glimpse into traits and competencies of leaders as assessed in 2020 and again in 2022, two years into the pandemic. Keep in mind that for establishing characteristics demonstrated by leaders, researchers at the Drucker’s Institute assessed 20 traits and 30 competencies of several thousands of senior leaders. Their sample was based on executives of well managed companies. The above Figure captures changes in executives’ behavior from 2020 to 2022.

So, what has changed in the course of these two years? In 2022, *curiosity* replaced *openness* to differences, and *trust* moved up almost to the top from the very bottom. The changes under competencies are as remarkable with four new competencies that replaced all but collaboration in 2022. There is little doubt as to the changing business landscape triggered by the pandemic along with new demands that are reshaping the workplace. Such demands are also redefining leadership as they now call for competencies that are essential for managing today’s companies and for leading employees in the new workplace. The role that *trust* plays is becoming critical, as is the ability to cut through the pandemic created chaos and *ambiguity*. And as essential is the ability of re-evaluating external constraints on a *global* scale, and the ability to demonstrate *interpersonal* skills for effective interactions with employees and beyond. In many ways, the information depicted in Wartzman & Tang’s figure encapsulates the essence of repurposing managerial research for improving people’s lives, as well as for making organizations more responsive and efficient.

Working from Home and Mental Health. With remote work becoming an engrained phenomenon, its impact on people's mental health cannot be ignored. Working from home has resulted in a radical change to the working arrangements of millions of employees. Such a significant behavior change has triggered a host of mixed reactions, with some being positive, while others being negative. Positive benefits that have been empirically supported suggest an improved family and work integration, a reduction in fatigue, and improved productivity. On the other hand, blurring of work and home boundaries can negatively affect worker's mental and physical health due to extended work hours, unclear delineation between work and home, and lack of organizational support. Research evidence has established ten health outcomes – pain, safety, well-being, stress, depression, fatigue, quality of life, strain, self-reported health, and happiness (Fílarđí, de Castro, and Zaníní, 2020; Gimenez-Nadal, Molina, and Velilla, 2020; Kazekami, 2020; Kim, Henly, Golden, and Lambert, 2020). Just how severe have these reactions been, depends on the degree of organizational support provided to employees. The effects of organizational support for remote workers is essential and positively associated with less time pressure, less role conflict, and greater autonomy (Bentley, Teo, McLeod, Tan, Bosua, and Gloet, 2016; Sardeshmukh, Sharma, and Golden, 2012). But, remote work is also associated with negative effects including reduced social support, lower feedback and greater role ambiguity (Vander Elst, Verhoogen, Sercu, Van den Broeck, Baillien, and Godderis, 2017).

Considering the empirical evidence that deals with the relationship between remote work and health, what can employers do to mitigate some of the negative outcomes of working from home? Among the most critical practices are – formalizing remote work policies, defining work-home boundaries, establishing management support mechanisms, improving role clarity, assessing workload, identifying performance indicators, providing technical support, facilitating worker networking, and elevating managers training (Oakman, Kinsman, Stuckey, Graham, and Weale, 2020).

Implications for Practice. Among the themes that appear to be central to developing working conditions for the remote worker are organizational support, peer support, technical support, and boundary management support (Oakman, et al., 2020). Indeed, continuous communication is encouraged to ensure clarity with role expectations, performance measures, and optimal workload. Likewise, systems designed to increase coworker support must be in place. Remote work requires the undertaking of technologically driven work roles within one's home; thus, also requiring technology supported devices and the availability of a Help Desk line for technical challenges. Finally, work-home boundaries calls for boundary management in establishing clarity and expectations concerning working hours and the separation of work from recreational time.

The role of employers in establishing and maintaining those support systems is critical no matter the level of remote work that is permitted in their respective companies. At the same time, those very companies are exposed to legal and tax liabilities triggered by work from home that compels companies to consider some restrictions by setting boundaries for remote work for payroll reasons and because of potential legal and cybersecurity liabilities. Consequently, companies have begun to impose restrictions on remote work. Consider, for instance, that the rules that govern business registrations, payroll and income taxes, and workers' comp insurance vary from state to state. This requires both employer and employee to recheck obligations in cases where an employee spends more than a month in a different state. Recent reports suggest that revenue departments in states that are popular for remote workers are getting more aggressive in enforcement. In some cases, an employee's personal income taxes can alert a state that the employee's company has a presence there. This would trigger government agencies' claim that such a company failed to register as a business and thus owed taxes (Borchers, 2022). Such dynamics are turning remote work into a complex phenomenon that is likely to continue to evolve. Ultimately, it should reach a point where a balance between employee wants and employer needs is reached. This of course requires a fresh collaborative effort between employers and employees in the new workplace.

The preceding commentary stresses the link between empirical evidence and implication for practice, a link that runs through this book's chapters. Our hope is that other authors follow in this vein, thus enriching curious audiences that are eager to learn and grow. Just how beneficial has this book's content been, is left for the reader to decide.

--S. Charles Malka & Robert H. Tiell -- Louisville, KY March 2023

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