

Academy  
of Management

Perspectives



# Publishing in AMP

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# The Mission Statement

- AMP publishes articles... aimed at the **non-specialist academic reader** with a secondary audience that include... **"thought leaders."** ...**focus on evidence** rather than the development of theory. ...**synthesizes and translates theoretical and empirical research** in... in an authoritative evidential manner that makes these findings accessible for scholars outside that subfield. ...includes: (a) **reviews...**; (b) **integration of diverse theories and findings that inform in new and interesting way**; (c) **forward-looking expositions... with new and provocative ideas**; and (d) **integration of research in management with advances in other non-management sciences...**

# What is an AMP contribution?

- **Authoritative expositions** of a scholarly issue that deserve reexamining or further discourse
- Not *comprehensive* literature review (not AM Annals) but must be anchored in the literature
- Not theory building (propositions) (not AM Review) but must be theory or evidence based
- Not based on empirical data from a single study (not AM Journal) but can involve a summary of a series of studies or empirical examples to illustrate the points in the arguments
- Could be ideologically driven but must cite the relevant literature to show the theoretical etiology of the core argument and demonstrate understanding of opposing arguments. Need not be 'fair and balanced' but must not be ignorant of the current discourse
- Could include expositions of issues in research methods with suggestions on alternative approaches. But is not a 'how to'-type contribution
- Unlikely to be on questions for which there is little existing research but can be speculative if there is enough literature to speculate on
- Contributors are likely to be experts on the question with a strong history of research in that domain
- Must be problem driven: why is this important? What have we not resolved? Why must we rethink?

# Anatomy of a AMP Paper

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# S Y M P O S I U M

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## MAKING STRATEGIC HUMAN CAPITAL RELEVANT: A TIME-SENSITIVE OPPORTUNITY

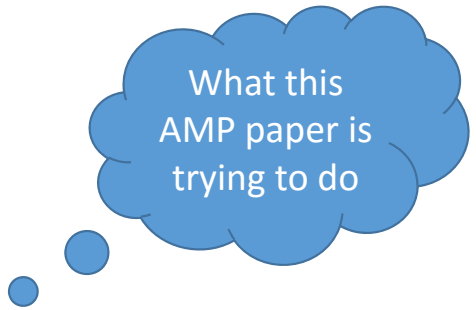
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The domain of strategic human capital is emerging at the intersection of strategy and strategic human resource management. Because it is still in the development phase, its core underlying assumptions have not yet solidified. This presents a unique and time-sensitive opportunity to explore and challenge these core assumptions and, specifically, to evaluate whether these assumptions mesh with the lived experiences of practicing managers. We argue that now is the time for the field to ground itself in practical phenomena so that its insights moving forward can be both academically rigorous and practically relevant. In this paper we illustrate the problems of theory for the sake of theory by systematically comparing the assumptions required in firm-specific human capital theory against the lived experiences of workers and managers. We then identify several phenomena that present new and useful opportunities to expand theory in the strategic human capital domain.

“There is nothing more practical than a good theory.”  
—Kurt Lewin (Lewin, 1951, p. 169)

meta-analysis), firm-specific human capital (Hatch & Dyer, 2004; Wang & Barney, 2006; Wang, He, & Mahoney, 2009), and mobility constraints (Campbell,



What this  
AMP paper is  
trying to do

# The Problem Statement (page 358)

...when they shared their results, a thoughtful observer asked, “So how serious is the problem of regrettable losses in the company?” The researchers responded that the company was experiencing less than 2% regrettable losses for the key positions and top levels, a practically insignificant figure given the other business challenges business leaders face at this company such as global market penetration, product innovation in declining markets, an activist investor trying to strong-arm changes, a culture of silos rather than collaboration, and so forth. The problem is that the academics led their work with theory and assumptions about what was important rather than with questions about the substantive business challenges facing this company. As a consequence, they provided a carefully crafted and rigorous answer to a strategically unimportant question for this particular company.

We worry, however, that the natural approach of academicians is to meld the assumptions of strategy and HR as primarily a theoretical exercise rather than a merged theory–practice exercise. Specifically, while strategic human capital scholars examine and evaluate which core assumptions to inherit from strategy and which from human resources, we worry that there may not be enough engagement with the phenomena. Assumptions are, by definition, simplifications that allow theorists to abstract away from the inherent heterogeneity in real-life situations. They provide the theorist with a convenient ability to explore one key mechanism while holding all other factors constant across units of analysis. The problem is that by starting with assumptions in one theoretical domain and comparing to assumptions in a different theoretical domain, theorists continuously live at least one step removed from managers' lived experiences.

# The Approach (page 359)

Our position is unabashedly normative. We believe that strategic human capital scholars should... look for what Christensen and Carlile (2009) called “anomalies.” Doing so may allow strategic human capital scholars to...leveraged the complexity of actual phenomena to generate new and useful theories.

We first briefly discuss the theory–practice gap... then describe why the strategic human capital domain is at risk of widening rather than closing this gap... We illustrate this potential by describing several emerging phenomena that we observe in practice and explore the possibilities... to leverage these kinds of phenomena to develop “good theory.”



# The Arguments (page 360)

Our key concern with the firm-specific human capital paradox is that it rests on a set of assumptions that do not square well with the practical realities of everyday employees or managers. To illustrate this point, we articulate...

**Assumption 1: Firm-specific human capital is important for a firm's competitive performance**

There must be a clear line of sight between unique and difficult-to-transfer employee skills and the firm's ability to continuously outperform competitors... (page 361)

Lazear (2009) suggested that firm-specific human capital is not particularly important in practice...

**Assumption 2: Employees must be able to evaluate which investments will yield firm-specific versus general human capital before making those investments**

If we think carefully about this assumption, we can see that it requires an uncommon level of employee knowledge, awareness, foresight, and ability to process alternatives.

We suspect that this assumption fails in practice in several important ways...

# Illustrating the Opportunity to use Phenomena to Close the Theory-Practice Gap (page 364)

## **Case 2: Organizing to Benefit From Innovation**

This global leader in the consumer electronics industry meets consumer needs by continuously inventing new products and services. They have learned that innovation requires creative and forward-thinking people. They have hired... anthropologists...

## **Case 3: Managing Extreme Culture Change**

This case is a leading semiconductor firm with 40 years of experience successfully innovating new products. Despite this success they now want to shift to a new customer base (mobile) and a new focus on services... They now need to shift to a new business model...

This brings up several research questions: How does a company manage an extreme cultural shift without losing everything? How does a company...

## Recommendations (page 367)

One of us has been deeply immersed in the phenomena for more than 30 years, with extensive experience solving human capital challenges in organizations. The other has been deeply immersed in management theories for the past eight years and has been theoretically exploring the natural tensions between assumptions in the traditional strategy and HR literatures. We are both excited about...

# Conclusions

- Not all award winning papers have to follow this structure but they should have the following elements in the contribution...
- Has a focused, research-relevant, and problem-driven question
- Based on a deep understand of the existing literature; its strengths and weaknesses
- Is forward looking toward a research relevant suggestion but with a link to a practice or policy orientation
- Written in a conversational style that is immediately accessible by a *scholarly* audience not researching primarily in the domain