

# How to write an acceptable MC paper

*Emmanuel Monod, PhD, Shanghai University of International Business and Economics*

What are the different types of papers one can submit to MC Division? And who can submit a paper to the AOM MC division? The second question is the most straightforward to respond to because, the vision of MCD starts with the sentence “*We are an inclusive, multi-generational division that welcomes all who study and/or engage in responsible management consulting.*” (Tonya Henderson, AOM MC division chair, 2018). Therefore, whether you are a PhD student, a practitioner or an academic, all of you are invited to submit. The frequently asked questions by MCD members and friends include the nature of the paper, the topic, the structure, the reasons for rejecting papers, the key success criteria.

## **1. The nature of the paper**

The first question regarding the nature of the paper may be broken into four question: 1) should the paper be conceptual or empirical? 2) Should it be case study? 3) A qualitative or a quantitative paper? 4) How about comparative study between different organizations?

### **1.1- Conceptual or empirical?**

First, conceptual papers are very welcome. They may for instance describe fractal patterns in storytelling in order to lead to a deeper understanding of organizational complexity (Henderson, 2014) or consulting management methods such as Organizational Development (OD) (Sanders and Tourangeau, 2014; Savall and Gephart, 2015) or Socio-Economic Approaches to Management (SEAM) (Datry, Savall, Zardet, and Williams, 2017). One of the distinctions of our division being that “*We are the home division of true scholar-practitioners*” (Henderson, 2018), empirical papers are preferred. An empirical study may be for instance conducted at the organizational level (Savall and Cai-Hillon, 2016), at the individual (Sanders, 2013), or at both levels (Sanders and Tourangeau, 2014). What is for sure is that simulations papers belong to other AOM divisions. As a matter of fact, most of the conceptual papers include a field as an illustration or as concept-proof, and most of the empirical paper are strongly motivated through concepts such as MC methodologies or more broad theories related to AOM such as organizational behavior or change management.

### **2.2- Case studies**

Most of the papers published at MCD are case studies. These case studies may be related for instance to the internationalization process of family businesses (Savall, 2014), the strategy of a German company in China (Monod, Davis, Sun, Wang, and Gong, 2018), the Integration of a US Acquisition into a French Group (Savall and Gephart, 2015), the inter-organizational conflicts between an American company and Chinese distributors (Monod, Eisner, Hillon, Tian, Wang and Li, 2018) a strategic venturing (Savall and Cai-Hillon, 2016) or the organizational consequences of a practitioner journey (Sanders, E. & Tourangeau, 2014). The best papers award of AMR are more and more often case studies.

Case studies may also be easier to write for PhD students or new-comers to the division. Remember: “*We welcome newcomers with open arms*” (Henderson, 2018).

### **1.3- Qualitative or Quantitative?**

Papers accepted in MC division are usually qualitative. Quantitative papers are welcome as soon as they are not related to simulations only. MC division wish to have real data about real companies. Beyond this distinction, keep in mind that triangulation papers combining qualitative and quantitative methods are also welcome. They are common in sociology through the “triangulation approach”

### **1.4- A comparative case study between different organizations?**

Comparative case studies are an important research trend. However, beyond comparing similar problems, make sure that you also compare practices across organization. Of course, the selection criteria of these different organization will be an important discussion topic with your reviewers. This multi-organization level is often linked to the topic of the paper that may for instance compare the effectiveness of organizational change through SEAM multi-level intervention (Datry, Savall, Zardet and Williams, 2017) or contribution of SEAM to the internationalization process of family businesses (Savall, 2014)

## **2- Topics**

What are the topics that have more chance of being accepted and subjects that have less chance of being accepted? Major topics of MCD include the consulting process, ethical issues in consulting, the roles and responsibilities of academics in the field, the role of consultants in leading change initiatives, the management of consulting firms, the marketing of consulting, and the expanding role of consultants in organizations and society, boundary-spanning, strategy, change management, ethics of consulting, scholar-practitioner education, and organization development.

## **3. Structure**

About the structure of papers, should all papers have a classical theoretical part, methodology and empirical part? What should be the length of each section? Whereas theory and methodology are important for conceptual papers, theory, methodology and empirical part is important for empirical paper. However, there is no reason why these different parts should have the same length. Usually, empirical should be the longest one, followed by theory regarding the length. However, let us keep in mind that methodological discussions are one of the main criteria of scientific rigor. In addition, let us make sure to include other parts such as 1) An introduction aimed at justifying and positioning the research 2) A discussion section that may appear either as an analytical summary, or as a comparison with alternative theories and 3) A conclusion including both contribution to theory and contribution to practice

## **4- Rejection**

What are the major reasons for rejecting papers at the MC Division? 1) Unfortunately, missing the deadline remains an important reason for rejection. The deadline is a firm one, and keep in mind the system becomes extremely slow within the few hours before the deadline. 2) The lack of compliance with requirements, including, sadly, format issues, or an over-sized paper are classical motives of rejection. 3) The lack of academic structure is also a motive for rejecting papers that, through their lack of theory or methodology, may be rather related to professional journalism. 4) Paper who do not match MC division are also rejected, especially simulation papers or papers that have nothing to do to Management Consulting and should have been sent to other divisions. 5) The English language is a requirement at the all-academy level. 6) Ignorance of the MCD literature is a legitimate criteria of rejection; 6) and, finally, maybe the most important criteria for an academic conference, the lack of contribution is a common motive of rejection. Both contribution to practice and contribution to theory.

### 5. Key success criteria

However, many papers are accepted. What are the key success criteria for a paper to be accepted to MC Division? Do all papers have the same success criteria? As all academic paper in management, the successful papers should both include a contribution. Keep in mind that this contribution should not only be to theory, but also to practice in “*the house of scholar practitioners*” (Henderson 2018). In addition, as the AOM annual meeting includes a different theme each year, the fit with the MCD call for paper is important. Probably nowhere else at the Academy, the question of relevance is more important than in MCD, which, as we all know, does not exclude rigor through the methodology. What would be maybe specific to MCD would be new and interesting consulting methods, including from outside of the USA (Savall, 2014) as much as a deep description to a company’s problems (Henderson, 2014). A final question may be: is MCD open to new perspectives? The response is also in the vision of our division: “*we appreciate the richness of varied perspectives while cherishing our heritage and ‘standing on the shoulders of giants.’*” (Henderson 2018).

### References

- Datry, F., Savall, A., Zardet, V., and Williams, H.E. 2017. Effective Organizational Change through SEAM Multi-Level Intervention. *Academy of Management Proceedings*, 15557.
- Henderson, T.L. 2014 Fractal patterns in storytelling: A deeper understanding of organizational complexity. *Academy of Management Proceedings*, 14390.
- Monod, E, Eisner A, Hillon, Y, Tian, A., Wang, L. and Li, Y.. (2018) “New consulting theories for hyper competition in China? Network Model, Hypercompetitive Trajectories and Institutional logics: a German company based in China *Academy of Management Proceedings*, Chicago, USA, 12808
- Monod, E, Davis, J. Sun, K. Wang, L. and Gong T. (2018) “Broadening Socio-Economic Approaches to Management with power analysis and technology impact Bourdieu’s practice theory and electronic brokerage theory: The case of an electronic

platform of a US company in China. *Academy of Management Proceedings*, Chicago, USA, 12801

Sanders, E. (2013). "An American expatriate in China: Evidence of organizational culture crossvergence". *Proceedings of the Southwest Academy of Management*, Albuquerque, NM, March 12 - March 16, 2013, pp. 282-291.

Sanders, E. & Tourangeau, J. (2014). "On death and living – how the death of cohort member Franchee Harmon promoted facing personal and collective transitions along the scholar-practitioner journey with courage. Proceedings of the Conference and Doctoral Consortium, "Current Challenges in Organizational Change and Interventions," Organized in partnership with the ISEOR Research Center (Magellan, IAE Lyon, University of Jean Moulin), the *Organization Development and Change Division and the Management Consulting Division of the Academy of Management* (USA), Lyon, France.

Savall, A., 2014. Contribution of SEAM to the Internationalization Process of Family Businesses. *Academy of Management Proceedings*, 12092.

Savall, A. and Cai-Hillon, Y., 2016. New Insights of Strategic Venturing Through a Socio-Economic Approach to Management. *Academy of Management Proceedings*, 13053.

Savall, A. and Gephart, R.P., 2015,. The Effective Integration of a US Acquisition into a French Group: The Role of OD Intervention. *Academy of Management Proceedings*, 16557.