


EDITORIAL

The Challenges of Strategic Leadership in Organizations

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In this issue our *Journal of Management & Organization* articles are grouped under the broad umbrella of strategic leadership, with the research presented here undertaken in a range of contexts. Strategic leaders include chief executive officers, company directors, and top managers (Simsek, Jansen, Minichilli & Escriba-Esteve, 2015) leading middle line managers and the wider organization workforce to deliver shareholder and stakeholder value (O'Shannassy, 2016). Strategic leaders are charged with critical choices to facilitate transfer of information, influence and resources with implications for organization performance (Simsek, Heavey & Fox, 2018).

The effective work of strategic leaders plays a key role in enhancing the well-being of society and delivering sustainable triple bottom line economic, environmental and social outcomes (Collier & Evans, 2020). Economic sustainability considers the ongoing financial viability and solvency of the firm, environmental sustainability the firm's commitment to environmental quality, social sustainability the health and well-being of organization stakeholders and the community (Collier & Evans, 2020). These sustainable organization outcomes are wide-ranging and can include as examples job creation, indigenous employment outcomes, firm profit, quality of financial institution loan portfolios, better community healthcare, air quality, water quality and protecting the environment (O'Shannassy, 2015). This is why better understanding of strategic leadership in organizations is important to business, society and the planet.

Strategic leadership work itself includes goal and objective setting, resourcing and development of capabilities, market-orientation and commercialization choices, fostering innovation, setting the cultural and values climate for the organization, and workforce engagement (Fitzroy, Hulbert and O'Shannassy, 2016). The collection of 10 articles in this issue here discuss these matters and overall add insight into how organizations can be managed better to be more sustainable. The empirical research in this issue takes place in a variety of settings including small and medium size enterprises (SMEs), including a family enterprise SME, and in big business with a wide range of qualitative and quantitative sources of data put to use. A common theme that emerges across the articles is the importance of the selection, nurturing and retention of firm resources and capabilities - especially 'soft', intangible human resources and capabilities (Fitzroy et al., 2016).

We begin with a teaching case study of strategic leadership in an entrepreneurial setting 'Walk tall: The story of Rex Bionics' by Woods, Callagher & Jaffray (2021), explaining the development of Rex Bionics and the roles played by founders Richard Little and Robert (Robbie) Irving. Rex Bionics has had to navigate a tough and at times difficult commercialization pathway for their technology-based product, the walking robotic exoskeleton. The evolution of the role of the founders in this entrepreneurial start-up, the challenge of public listing on the London AIM Stock Exchange, and difficult moments with the board of directors, the advisory board and the investment community on this journey are discussed.

Next Bensemann, Warren and Anderson (2021) in 'Entrepreneurial engagement in a depleted small town: Legitimacy and embeddedness' study the impact of an entrepreneur's practice in the

small North Island New Zealand town Stanton, with special focus on social perception and social impact. Method is a single case study with the data obtained from semi-structured interviews with 20 respondents, observation and historical research. Media reports business and government internet sites provide useful background data that helped to inform development of the semi-structured interview design. Legitimacy of the local 'hero' entrepreneur Sue varies on perspective in the results, with some in the community embracing the positive economic impact while others perceived Sue as a rival and change agent. The paper challenges the view that the legitimacy of the entrepreneur should be grounded in economic success.

In the third article titled 'Supplementing Q-method with narratives: Contextualizing CEOs' values for family firms', Pötschke (2021) studies CEO value orientation in the entrepreneurial context of family business. Qualitative methods used include the Q-sorts technique and narrative interviews with data from 16 CEOs. There is an interaction that takes place in the analysis with the Q-sorts technique applying statistical analysis to qualitative data to gain understanding of value patterns; next the narrative interviews are analysed to understand the contextualization and interpretation of values. Family business settings are characterized by the distinct blend of need for business objectivity with the intimacy of family relationships and the family social system. This 'soft', family, people-oriented style of managing family business and the uniqueness of this to each family makes CEO values in this setting interesting and important.

Our next paper from Tian, Lo and Zhai (2021) titled 'Combining efficiency and innovation to enhance performance: Evidence from firms in emerging economies' uses a World Bank dataset with a sample of 20,000 plus firms from 36 emerging economies to investigate the influence of resource efficiency and innovation on firm performance. The focus of the study is extending understanding of resource capabilities required for a firm to compete effectively in an emerging economy setting. Typically in this setting firms suffer with a lack of efficiency management practices due to emerging economy isolation, and at the bottom end of the market there can a number of very badly managed organizations. The results find that efficiency capabilities and innovation capabilities are positively related to productivity which is in turn related to financial performance. A combined approach to synthesis capabilities positively correlates to productivity which predicts financial performance. Productivity plays a strong mediation role in the study.

The next article is a theory paper from Bridge (2021) titled 'Facing uncertainty: An entrepreneurial view of the future?' who suggests there are two main options for the strategic leader when confronted by uncertainty. First 'left brain' planning and forecasting using a rational analytic approach. Second is exploration and 'trial and error'. The merits and challenges of each approach are discussed, touching on the space in which Henry Mintzberg made his contribution three decades previously in his classic work (Mintzberg, 1994; Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel, 1998). So what is unique, new and different here about Bridge (2021)? Bridge (2021) reflects on the philosophy that informs choice of the options that managers have for coping with uncertainty, including the 'right-brain' versus 'left-brain' trade-off in strategy-making discussed at length by Mintzberg (1998). Bridge (2021) draws on a wide academic literature including anecdotes and stories from economic, business and political history to inform his arguments.

Ogbeiw (2021) then moves this issue forward in his article 'General concepts of goals and goal-setting in healthcare: A narrative review' undertaking a literature review on goal-setting and the principles of goal-setting with focus on work planning and assessment in the healthcare sector. Ogbeiw (2021) observes that there is a massive literature here from the past 40 years providing an opportunity to undertake review and synthesis to inform future research and practice. Key findings include the insight that goal-setting has a change orientation, is problem-based, and has the potential to be motivating if the statement of goals developed uses the SMART (i.e. specific and challenging) framework, however there is varied understanding of the definition for SMART in health program practice.

Next Bäcklander, Rosengren and Kaulio (2021) discuss self-leadership practices among knowledge workers in Denmark in the paper titled 'Managing intensity in knowledge work:

Self-leadership practice among Danish management consultants.’ Management consulting is a knowledge-intensive business practiced by highly educated workers whose major skill is handling and producing information. Knowledge intensity is reliant on the creativity of the worker, the professional judgement of the worker, and close interaction with clients. Work intensity results from a blend of a results focus, poor control of quantitative load, vagueness of task, and no work boundaries. In this study two in-depth semi-structured focus group interviews were undertaken with management consultants from a firm with 16 employees. The study results indicate that management consultants communicated a confidence in internal self-discipline approaches that were more reactive, however external and proactive approaches were more effective.

The final three articles here take an applied psychology approach to the challenges of the strategic leader. This applied psychology focus brings attention to this social sustainability of organizational life perspective - the health and well-being of the worker, the work team and the workplace in the three articles that follow.

Ng, Zhang and Chen (2021) add to the stress literature in their study of the antecedents of abusive supervision in the workplace titled ‘A stress perspective on antecedents of abusive supervision: Blaming the organisation when exhausted supervisors abuse’. A convenience sample of workplace supervisors studying in a part-time Master of Business Administration program in South China were asked to choose subordinates in their workplace to participate in the study. The survey yielded responses from 95 supervisors and 358 workplace subordinates. Path analysis is used to test a moderated mediation model. In the results perceived workplace competitiveness caused supervisor stress and psychological strain, which gave rise to abusive supervision. An atmosphere of error aversion strengthened this positive relationship between perceived workplace competitiveness and supervisor stress. Strong perceived organizational sanctions to aggression mitigated the positive correlation between supervisor psychological strain and abusive supervision. The results show the importance of workplace constraints on the atmosphere of the workplace to encourage a more harmonious work environment.

Next De Clercq, Sun & Belausteguigoitia (2021) in ‘When is job control most useful for idea championing? Role conflict and psychological contract violation effects’ use conservation of resources theory to underpin theory development on job control, idea championing, role conflict and psychological contract violation. The sample is from a Mexican-based firm operating in the chemical sector yielding a total of 157 responses from a random sample of 200 employees at different levels of the organization, giving a response rate of 79%. Descriptive statistics, bivariate correlations and moderated multiple regression is used for the analysis. In the results job control is found to encourage idea championing when role conflict and idea championing are strong, however this relationship is weaker when idea championing and role conflict are low. Idea championing should be encouraged when employees confront difficult work conditions including unfulfilled employer obligations or incompatible job role expectations.

Finally Dawkins, Marin, Scott, Sanderson and Schüz (2021) in ‘A cross-level model of team psychological capital (PsyCap) and individual- and team-level outcomes’ conduct a multi-level study of team-level psychological capital (PsyCap) and a range of team-level and individual-level outcomes including job satisfaction and turnover intent. Hierarchical two-level modelling is used to test cross-level and individual-level hypotheses. In the results there are significant relationships between team-level PsyCap and team-level outcomes including satisfaction and performance. There are also significant relationships between team-level PsyCap and individual-level outcomes including job satisfaction and turnover intent. The overall conclusion is that team-level positiveness can assist better team-level and individual-level outcomes in the workplace.

In sum, the articles further advance knowledge on how to resolve the challenges of strategic leadership (Simsek et al., 2015), and deliver sustainable organization outcomes (Collier & Evans, 2020). This is done from a range of theoretical perspectives including entrepreneurship theory, strategic leadership and applied psychology. There is an interesting blend of theory paper, literature review, qualitative interview-based research, qualitative single case study, and

quantitative research that reflect the broad and diverse range of interests of *Journal of Management & Organization* and the Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management community. Echoing Galvin (2014) there remains room for more context-specific research in indigenous environments in all international contexts in this journal to contribute to global management and organization knowledge; as a community of scholars it is desirable that we inform the work of indigenous managers, accommodating a broad and diverse range of theory development and research methods.

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