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**CHAPTER 32**


**PUBLISHING AT THE INTERFACES OF PSYCHOLOGY AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT**


Gerard P. Hodgkinson


**INTRODUCTION**


Every leading journal has a clear mission and attendant set of foci.  Manuscripts falling across

the desks of busy editors and reviewers are evaluated first and foremost in terms of the extent to

which they fall within the thematic purview of the target journal.  The craft of addressing

messages to appropriately targeted audiences is thus an essential skill cultivated by all successful

academic writers.  Drawing on a range of examples, in this short chapter I offer my personal

reflections on how in practice I have implemented this advice in positioning of my own work and

in so doing, anticipated the likely reactions of potentially critical reviewers.

In a highly insightful book, Huff (1999) introduced the metaphor of 'conversation' as a means of

analysing the all-important question of how to position scholarly journal articles to particular

audiences.  It is a metaphor that I have found to be rather helpful when reflecting on the relative

successes and failures of my own work. Over the course of an academic career now entering its

fourth decade, for the past thirty years the bulk of my scholarly research activity has centred on

three major inter-related themes:

1. The construction and psychometric evaluation of instruments for the assessment of work-related individual differences (e.g. Gill and Hodgkinson, 2007; Hodgkinson and Sadler-Smith, 2003; Hodgkinson, Sadler-Smith, Sinclair, and Ashkanasy, 2009);

2. Cognition in the workplace (e.g. Healey, Vuori, and Hodgkinson, 2015; Hodgkinson and Healey, 2008a), encompassing the psychological analysis of strategic management processes (e.g. Hodgkinson, 1997a, 1997b; Hodgkinson and Johnson, 1994) and the development and evaluation of tools and wider practices for intervening in such processes (e.g. Hodgkinson et al., 1999, 2002, 2004; Hodgkinson and Healey, 2008b; Healey, Hodgkinson, Whittington, and Johnson, 2015);

3. The significance of scholarly management and organizational research for academia and wider publics (e.g. Anderson, Herriot, and Hodgkinson, 2001; Hodgkinson, Herriot, and Anderson, 2001; Hodgkinson, 2006; Hodgkinson and Rousseau, 2009; Hodgkinson and Starkey, 2011; Romme et al., 2015).

Given the diversity of my interests, not surprisingly, my work has appeared in a wide array of scholarly outlets, spanning both general and subject specific journals, both in the management and organization sciences, and indeed the wider social and behavioural sciences. Without exception, the journals in which my work has appeared have been chosen because the messages I wanted to convey had the potential either to: (a) start a conversation of likely significance among a recognized community of scholars within the relevant focal body of literature whose work I was looking to influence in some way; or (b) to contribute in significant ways to an ongoing conversation among a recognized community of scholars, again with a view to influencing the future direction of their work and hence the focal body of literature at hand.

Adopting Huff's (1999) conversation metaphor, in order to initiate successfully a fresh conversation, or to contribute meaningfully to an ongoing one, it is essential that writers first clarify with whom (i.e. the audience) and on what subject matter (i.e., the content) they wish to converse. The breadth of the target audience and the content of the conversation will, of course, each vary enormously, from one context to another. In this chapter, therefore, I compare and contrast several of the strategies I have adopted variously across a range of disciplinary and inter-disciplinary contexts, demonstrating how in each case the respective process adopted resulted in one or more 'successful' publications; that is, publications that were acceptable to editors and/or reviewers and that have attracted subsequently the attention of scholars within the focal body of literature thus targeted, and in some cases extending well beyond it.

The chapter is structured in five sections. Following this introduction, the second, third, and fourth sections offer my reflections on each of three strategies I have adopted over the years in relation to the framing of my work depending on the nature of the target audience and content. The final section offers my reflections on more generally on the significance of these strategies as a means of ensuring a more suitably focused and coherent contribution to the body of literature thus targeted.

## FOSTERING CONVERSATIONS WITH MORE SPECIALIST AUDIENCES AND RESTRICTIVE CONTENT

This particular strategy is perhaps best illustrated by the work I have published that falls within my first stream of work. The audiences to whom I have addressed my various articles on the development and validation of instruments for the assessment of personality and related individual differences (e.g. Gill and Hodgkinson, 2007; Hodgkinson and Sadler-Smith, 2003;

Hodgkinson, Sadler-Smith, Sinclair, and Ashkanasy, 2009) have been relatively narrow, in comparison with the more generalist audiences I have targeted either directly or indirectly within the second and third streams of my work. Furthermore, the articles I have published within this first stream have set out to achieve relatively modest scientific objectives. Although they were each targeted predominantly at scholars working in the field of psychology, these pieces, which reported the application of well-established concepts and statistical procedures pertaining to psychometric theory, with a view to ascertaining the reliability and validity of the instruments concerned, were aimed primarily at a group of researchers with a focus on applied psychological measurement, .

Given this comparatively restrictive focus, each of these papers was framed at a level of granularity that would appeal to researchers and practitioners looking to use instruments for the purposes of assessing work-related individual differences. Illustrating this more general approach, consider the paper reporting the 'development and validation of the five-factor model questionnaire (FFMQ)' (Gill and Hodgkinson, 2007). In this article, the primary focus was on establishing to a predominantly technical audience why (yet another) personality assessment instrument for the assessment of the 'big-five' personality traits (i.e. neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, openness, and conscientiousness) in the workplace was required at this critical juncture. The article then set about reporting the development and validation of the new instrument in question, which entailed a total of five methodological studies.

The front-end framing of this paper first establishes the ubiquity of the big-five and the related five-factor model of personality underpinning this particular collection of traits. The introductory section then problematizes the wide range of extant big-five instruments, noting that they have been devised primarily for general usage or more particularly clinical usage, as

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opposed to being work-related assessment tools. It then highlights the fact that the bulk of instruments presently available are targeted predominantly at well-educated, North American respondents. One further issue of note raised as an important motivation for the work reported in this paper is the fact that the individual questions used to assess the big-five are typically composed of statement-based items, whereas simpler, adjectival-based items, of the sort adopted in the FFMQ, are often more desirable.

The fact that this paper was published in *Personnel Psychology*, one of the world's leading technical journals devoted to personnel selection and assessment issues, illustrates how through such careful conversational targeting it is possible to "sell" the importance of establishing the psychometric efficacy of an instrument devised primarily for use outside the U.S. context to an audience composed largely, although by no means exclusively, of U.S. readers:

> "The development process for the FFMQ had the clear objective of producing a valid and reliable set of adjective-based measures of the Big Five for use in work-related settings. The resulting instrument is simple to administer, rapidly completed, and easily interpreted." (Gill and Hodgkinson, 2007, p. 736)

Highlighting the limitations of the dominant U.S. instruments and demonstrating the broader applicability of the newly constructed alternative resulted in a publication in one of the world's leading (U.S.-based) field journals. Although this article went through several rounds of revisions, the overall journey from initial submission until final acceptance was a relatively smooth one. I believe the high degree of careful framing and preparatory work in designing and then reporting the constituent studies, so as to ensure that they contributed cumulatively, in a logical and coherent fashion to the overall goal of the paper, as encapsulated in the above quotation, was the most crucial factor that led to this relatively pain-free and successful outcome.

**FOSTERING CONVERSATIONS WITH BROADER AUDIENCES AND LESS RESTRICTIVE CONTENT**

The relatively narrower approach to framing the various personality and individual differences pieces outlined in the previous section stands in marked contrast to the approaches to framing I have adopted in the framing of the various articles I have published under my second stream of work, falling under the broader theme of cognition in the workplace. Several of the latter pieces have targeted much broader/less restrictive content at much broader audiences. Illustrating this alternative approach more generally, two of my relatively recent pieces - 'intuition: a fundamental bridging concept in the behavioural sciences' (Hodgkinson, Langan-Fox, and Sadler-Smith, 2008) and 'cognition in organizations' (Hodgkinson and Healey, 2008a) - were targeted very broadly, with the intention in each case of initiating a series of conversations that would cut across specialist subfields, with a view to fostering more highly innovative theory and research.

The Hodgkinson, Langan-Fox and Sadler-Smith (2008) article was intended to provoke scholars working within the various specialist areas of academic psychology (e.g. cognitive psychology, social cognitive neuroscience, personality psychology) and its main applied areas (e.g. educational psychology, occupational/industrial-organizational psychology) to recognize the many parallel and complimentary developments occurring across their respective scholarly domains that pointed toward the possibility that intuition (and more precisely dual-processing accounts of cognitive processes) might serve as a scientific foundation for greater cooperation across the psychology field as a whole. The *British Journal of Psychology*, which publishes research on all aspects of the discipline, was thus a natural home for this piece, in which we

evaluated critically work published in several of the main journals in the various subfields and domains of application encompassed by our review.

The Hodgkinson and Healey (2008a) *Annual Review of Psychology* article was predicated on a similar logic of seeking to initiate a series of cross-cutting conversations among scholars who would not otherwise typically engage with one another. In this case, however, the focus was centred more narrowly on the subfield of occupational and organizational/industrial-organizational psychology. Intentionally wider-ranging in its reach, this article commences by outlining the history of theory and research on cognition in organizations, from its inception in World War II up to the early 2000s, and then offers an integrative review across ten major areas of industrial-organizational psychology, with a view to identifying points of convergence and divergence in theory advancement, empirical endeavour, and the development of new methods. The article seeks to deepen a conversation between scholarly researchers falling variously in 'the human factors tradition' and 'the organizations tradition' and highlights opportunities for greater collaboration across these traditions. In so doing, it advances a cross-cutting agenda across the 10 substantive domain areas surveyed, covering the period 2000-2007.

Although highly ambitious and wide-ranging in scope, again I believe the key factor that led to the acceptance of these particular pieces was the careful groundwork undertaken beforehand, thus ensuring that in each case the constituent subfields/topic areas addressed were covered in just sufficient depth to enable my co-authors and I to lay suitable foundations for subsequent engagement on the part of scholarly communities thus targeted, avoiding the twin pitfalls of superficiality and unnecessary detail. Relative to my other publications, these two particular pieces have amassed high citation counts over a short space of time and they have done so across a wide range of disciplinary subfields and topic areas, suggesting that our fundamental goal of

seeking to attain significant cross-disciplinary and cross-topic reach across our targeted areas has at least succeed in part.  It is still too early, however, to discern whether the cross-fertilization of ideas, through interdisciplinary and cross-functional team working, has occurred on the scale we were ultimately hoping to achieve.

**FOSTERING BROADER CONVERSATIONS WITH MORE SPECIALIST AUDIENCES**

This third framing strategy is perhaps best illustrated with a couple of papers I have published that fall respectively within the second and third of my research streams.  The first example, 'The practitioner-researcher divide in industrial, work and organizational (IWO) psychology: Where are we now and where do we go from here?' appeared in a special issue of the *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* that celebrated 100 years of the field's achievements at the turn of the 21st century (Patterson, 2001).  Unlike the other contributors to this particular volume — whose papers offered state-of-the-art reviews of the literature pertaining to some of the field's central topics such as personnel selection and assessment (Robertson and Smith, 2001), Performance and appraisal and management (Fletcher, 2001), and wellbeing and occupational health (Sparks, Faragher, and Cooper, 2001) — our paper was intentionally framed more broadly, in an attempt to stimulate a wider-ranging conversation across the IWO psychology community as a whole regarding what we argued was a growing divide between research and practice, with a view to encouraging a re-strengthening of the scientist-practitioner model, arguably the bedrock of the field (Anderson, Herriot, and Hodgkinson, 2001). Deliberately provocative, our goal was to engender feelings of discomfort among our readers, with a view countering what we saw as some unfortunate consequences of

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the effort-reward mechanisms in play among the academic and practitioner wings of the profession. Contrasting research that is highly rigorous but largely irrelevant to practice (Pedantic Science) from research that is seemingly highly relevant but of poor scientific quality (Popularist Science), and research that is both irrelevant to practice and of poor scientific quality (Puerile Science), we argued that researchers should be encouraged to advance the cause of research that sought to achieve the highest possible standards of scientific excellence, but with a focus on the more difficult and enduring problems of concern to the practitioner wing of the profession (Pragmatic Science). Needless to say, our thesis, as intended, stimulated a rich and highly diverse debate that rapidly spilled over into many other fields and subfields, well beyond the confines of the specialist IWO psychology audience to which it was initially directed!

Once again, I believe it was the judgment calls we made in respect of the front-end framing of this particular piece for the constituent audience of the target journal that led to its ultimate success. In this particular case, the call for papers accompanying the special issue reflecting on a century's achievements provided us with a suitable platform on which we were able to build on a series of conversations with we had held informally with journal editors, and fellow researchers and practitioners, through attendance at the main professional and academic conferences over many years. I believe that the enduring success of this article is in no small part due to the fact the basic framework and embryonic concepts we articulated captured the growing sense throughout the IWO psychology community that all was not well among its academic and practitioner wings, an analysis that seems to have resonated with several other branches of the psychology field and the wider social and behavioural sciences, evidenced by the breadth of citations it has attracted.

Further illustrating the efficacy of this third framing strategy of fostering broader conversations with more specialist audiences, I turn now to consider finally one of my relatively recent papers on the psychological foundations of strategic management (Hodgkinson and Healey, 2011). From the outset of my career, the bulk of my work on this topic (see, e.g. Hodgkinson, 1997a, 1997b; Hodgkinson and Johnson, 1994; Hodgkinson et al., 1999), like much of the behavioural strategy literature in general has centred on the analysis of cognitive processes in strategy formulation and implementation (for a recent overview, see Powell, Lovallo, and Fox, 2011). Drawing on the insights of state-of-the-art-advances that have taken place in the affective sciences over the past two decades, our goal in the Hodgkinson and Healey (2011) paper, which appeared in a special issue of *Strategic Management Journal* devoted to 'the psychological foundations of strategic management' (Fox, Lovallo, and Powell, 2011) was to move along the conversation on cognition and strategy away from an affect-free conception of strategists as cognitive misers (and sensemakers), toward a 'hot' cognition alternative, one that recognizes that strategists are ultimately, "governed by thoughts and feelings: always boundedly rational, but manifestly driven by emotion" (Hodgkinson and Healey, 2011, P. 1512). Using the much-cited dynamic capabilities paper of Teece (2007) as an overarching framework, our analysis demonstrated systematically how each of the psychological foundations underpinning Teece's (2007) framework are predicated on psychological conceptions that are outmoded when viewed in the light of more recent advances in social cognitive neuroscience (e.g. Lieberman, 2007) and neuroeconomics (e.g. Loewenstein, Rick, and Cohen, 2008), in turn rendering his prescriptions for fostering dynamic capabilities (through increased efforts to engage in systematic and disciplined reasoning and analysis) highly problematic. Our analysis highlights instead the central role of meta-cognitive awareness and emotion regulation as essential psychological

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foundations of strategic adaptation. Once more, in framing this particular paper, the occasion of a special issue provided a useful enabling context to raise questions that ran against the grain of the mainstream alternatives dominating the literature, in ways that have begun to move the conversation on the role of cognition in strategy formulation and implementation in new and highly innovative directions: the primary goal of the special issue guest editors.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Over the course of an academic career now entering its fourth decade, I have been privileged to work with some of the world's brightest and most distinguished scholars in the business and management research community. Their generous friendship and mentoring has nurtured my ability and given me the confidence to submit and ultimately publish my work in some of the best North American (e.g. Gill & Hodgkinson, 2007; Healey, Vuori, and Hodgkinson, 2015; Hodgkinson et al., 1999; Hodgkinson and Healey, 2008a, 2011) and European (e.g. Hodgkinson, 1997a, 1997b; Hodgkinson and Healey, 2008b; Hodgkinson and Johnson, 1994) journals and other distinguished outlets (e.g. Hodgkinson and Starbuck, 2008). In this chapter I have offered my reflections, albeit all-too briefly, on the important question of how, as an interdisciplinary researcher situated primarily at the interfaces of psychology and strategic management, I have positioned variously my journal articles to particular audiences.

Returning to Huff's (1999) conversation metaphor, I have identified three distinctive types of audience-content combination across a range of disciplinary and inter-disciplinary contexts, demonstrating how in each case the essential messages were anchored to current debates in the focal literature I was seeking to influence. My paper reporting the development and validation of

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the FFMQ (Gill and Hodgkinson, 2007), for instance, was positioned within a stream of literature that has debated how to enhance the validity of the big-five assessment practices in the workplace (e.g. Salgado, 2003). Similarly, my more recent piece arguing the case for re-theorizing strategic adaptation as a 'hot' cognitive process (Hodgkinson and Healey, 2011) used Teece's (2007) well-known dynamic capabilities framework as the entry point and key foundation for organizing the contribution as a whole, thus ensuring that our arguments would appeal to a wide-ranging audience of strategy scholars.

Arguably, the single most valuable lesson I have learned, both as an editor and a writer in my own right, is that almost invariably, the authors of successful journal articles render abundantly clear their intended contribution within the first three-four sentences. Known as the 'hook,' it is these early passages that explain the significance of an article to its intended audience, thus addressing the so what question at the outset.

Irrespective of the (inter-)disciplinary field or subject matter, the abstract/summary and opening paragraphs of the main body of text and concluding discussion sections of any academic paper are arguably its three most important elements. Confronted by a myriad of manuscripts to consider for potential publication, when new submissions arrive electronically in their inboxes or land physically on their desks, hard-pressed editors-in-chief and their teams of action editors and reviewers typically first scan the abstract and then read the first few sentences of the main body of text to gain an overall sense of what the author(s) are claiming to have contributed to the literature pertaining to the focal topic at hand. Next, they typically move to the concluding discussion and similarly read the first few sentences, to ascertain the extent to which the promise of the manuscript's opening claims are revisited systematically as the author(s) bring(s) their contribution to a close. In an empirical contribution, they then typically jump finally to skim

read the methods and results sections to ascertain the extent to which the research design and results are appropriate for the conclusions thus presented.

The actions I have just described in the preceding paragraph constitute the essential features of what is commonly known in scholarly editorial circles as 'the coherence test'. A manuscript is coherent to the extent that the fundamental contribution stated at the outset is supported, consistently, throughout. All seasoned editors and reviewers adopt this test as standard practice. Any manuscript failing the coherence test, which takes only a matter of 2-3 minutes to complete, is in serious trouble. The majority of such manuscripts are desk rejected routinely by the world's leading journals. If, however, an editor or action editor in receipt of such a manuscript decides to err on the side of generosity, the odds of it surviving the next stage, the first-round double-blind peer review process are, at best, extremely low.

The three strategies I have enumerated in the previous sections of this chapter illustrate some of the ways in which I striven to ensure that my work passes this essential test. Devising a hook that is compelling for the target audience and ensuring it used intelligently to anchor the remainder of the manuscript content is, I believe, the essence of my success, both in stimulating new conversations and contributing to on-going ones. Although taking the time and trouble to reflect on how best to align the content of an article with the needs of its target audience may seem like a rather obvious piece of advice, surprisingly, based on my many years of experience as a journal editor and reviewer, it is a piece of advice that all-too often I have found even the most seasoned of authors neglect to their cost.

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