

Publishing in Harvard Business Review (and other applied journals)

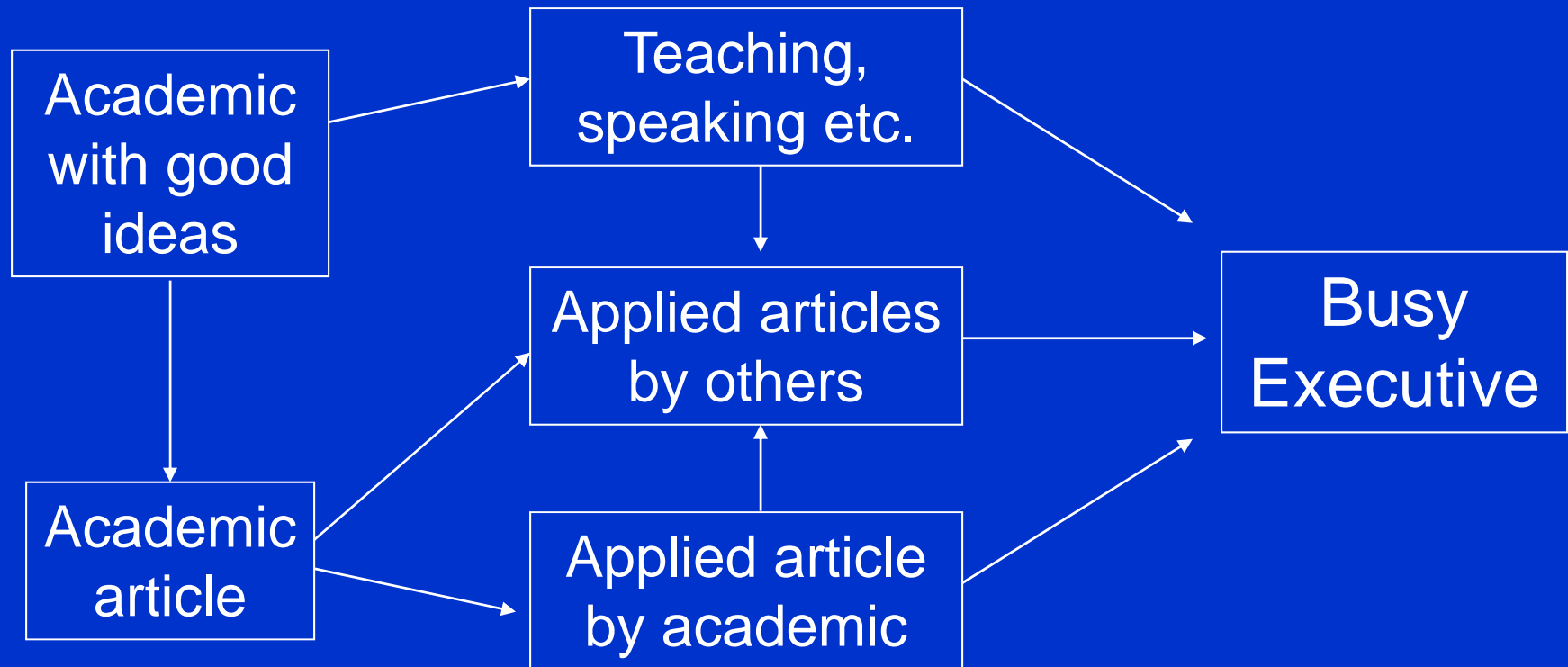
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*Why do you want to
publish in Harvard
Business Review?*

The market for management ideas

- What do busy executives *really* read?
 - Frequently: FT, WSJ
 - Occasionally: Economist, Fortune
 - Rarely: Airport books, HBR

Indirect pathways often work best



Some applied journals that academics value

- Harvard Business Review (~300,000 printed)
- Sloan Management Review (~35,000 printed)
- California Management Review
- LRP, Organization Dynamics, Business Strategy Review, Business Horizons, Academy of Management Perspectives

Who reads these journals?

Why do some of us value publishing here?

Some key questions about HBR

- Submission process
 - *Who* do you send the paper to?
 - What do you send them?
- Review process
 - How long does it take?
 - What sort of feedback do you get?
 - How do you know when your paper is in?
- Writing process
 - How much editing do they do?

From the HBR website

The *Harvard Business Review* has one goal: to be the source of the best new ideas for people creating, leading, and transforming business.

HBR's articles are written for senior managers by experts whose authority comes from careful analysis, study, and experience.

The ideas presented in these articles can be translated into action and have been tested in the real world of business.

Proposals for articles demonstrating fresh thinking that advances previous knowledge—whose practical application has been thought through in clear, jargon-free language—are those most likely to meet our readers' needs.

When evaluating an idea, our editors often look for two things first—what they call the “aha!”—How compelling is the insight?—and the “so what?”—How much does this idea benefit managers in practice?

The best way to inquire about HBR's potential interest in a topic is to prepare a proposal. It can be submitted by mail or electronically and should answer the following questions:

1. What is the central message of the article you propose to write (the "aha")?
2. How can your idea be applied in business today (the "so what")?
3. For which kinds of companies would the idea work well?
4. What research have you conducted to support the argument in your article?
5. On what previous work (either of your own or of others) does this idea build?
6. What is the source of your authority?

Then please write a two-to-three page (500–750 word) narrative outline laying out the structure of your article and describing each important point in a separate paragraph. Give us a sense not just of the ground you will cover but of how the logic will flow. Please illustrate your points with real-world examples or provide one extended, detailed example.

Example: Submission on Managing Complexity

- See separate sheet: Introduction to a draft article I submitted to HBR in November 2008.
- What do you think of this? Does it have potential?

Complexity paper: Response from HBR

“Frankly, I don’t think this can work as an HBR article in its current form for two main reasons.

Many of the points seemed obvious. The article does not squarely focus on the insights that will be a surprise to readers (i.e., what smart managers typically overlook or misunderstand) and instead explores what is largely known and unknown.

It isn’t clear how managers could apply your ideas. You seem to have a process for analyzing complexity in an organization (which had me wondering whether you could refashion the piece into a “how to” tool kit piece on how to apply the process, but the article only mentions the process in passing.

Anyway, I don’t know how wedded you are to the current draft, but if your intent was to gauge our interest in the topic, please respond to the issues above and let’s keep talking.

Best Regards,

Comparing the AMJ and SMR papers

- These two papers were based on the same piece of research. What are the key differences between the two articles, in terms of:
 - Introductory framing,
 - Actual content, and
 - Style of writing?

Key points about the SMR paper (compared to the AMJ piece written a year earlier)

- Framing is entirely around a real business phenomenon – no mention of “the literature” or “research gaps”
- No literature review at all – some endnotes
- After the intro, we get straight into the substantive content, the “big idea” about contextual ambidexterity
- We use detailed examples, and we provide practical advice – a matrix to fill in, some thoughts on “what should I do next”
- Style is informal, chatty, but authoritative