



Editorial: Introducing industry and practice notes - strengthening the bridge between research and practice in operations management

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1 Looking back: the origins and mission of OMR

When Operations Management Research (OMR) was launched in 2008, it was based on a straightforward but crucial insight: many valuable studies in our field had limited suitable publication outlets. Research that was rigorous yet modest in scope often went unnoticed. Meanwhile, the few journals with “operations management” titles tended to publish a limited range of work (Meredith and McMullen 2008), and were distant from practice. The founding editors of OMR aimed to create a platform for focused papers that maintained high methodological standards and, importantly, practical relevance. They emphasized that Operations Management (OM) is an applied discipline and research should assist in designing, operating, and improving processes and systems vital to organizations. This focus on combining theory with practice remains central to the journal today.

2 Why Practice-Focused research matters

At its core, the field of OM is concerned with making life better: Reducing waste, enhancing productivity, designing systems that respond to existing needs, and accounting for human factors and diversity. It addresses fundamental

questions about how the business and service systems we have built operate. Due to this application-oriented focus of the field, the demand and need for practice-focused research have been growing since OMR’s launch in 2008. Although the proposed advanced tools and techniques in the cited scripts of OMR are valuable, their application and effectiveness depend on the insights they offer to those managing operations in real-world settings. Stakeholders, including researchers and practitioners, demand a closer connection to implementation and are deliberate about receiving value from their operation’s practices.

Practitioners might struggle to incorporate scientific insights into their decision-making because academic research results are either too general or too specific. This challenge stems largely from the two main research strategies in OM: Some OM researchers attain results through the use of mathematical models, which offer the benefit of generalizability. One potential drawback of this strategy is that the results may be too abstract for practitioners, as the studies do not include the idiosyncrasies of practitioners’ business and service systems. In the second research strategy, researchers directly address existing problems in industry and society through empirical research, with the advantage of being closely aligned with the relevant settings. Unfortunately, research following this strategy may focus on idiosyncrasies that do not align with those in the business and service systems for which practitioners are responsible, as they are too specific. Practice-focused research captures the strengths of both research strategies and OMR, in alignment with its mission statement, aims to further contribute to this endeavor.

For example, consider a production planner deliberating whether to maintain additional inventory or to redesign the distribution network. Similarly, a warehouse manager might contemplate investments in digital technologies to enhance manual operations. Additionally, a supply chain manager assesses the advantages of strengthening supplier and buyer relationships. Furthermore, a hospital administrator endeavors to reduce patient waiting times. Each of

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these professionals encounters tangible challenges, and each would benefit from research that provides innovative, explicit, and practical insights.

The best work in OM balances rigor with practical application. It creates knowledge that stakeholders such as managers, institutions, engineers, and policy makers can use to solve real-world problems today. Such outputs are imperative currently, especially as organizations face pressure from technological change, environmental issues, social expectations, fluctuating demand, and geopolitical instability. Research that provides actionable insights to inform practice is becoming more important in today's operating environment.

3 A new initiative in OMR: industry and practice notes

Building on this vision, OMR is pleased to announce the commencement of a new submission category: Industry and Practice Notes: Practitioner Perspectives on Contemporary Challenges and Responses in Operations Management¹.

This initiative explicitly welcomes contributions from practitioners. It provides a platform for managers, engineers, and consultants to share insights drawn from real-world challenges and responses to the OMR readership. While academic co-authors are encouraged, they are not required. The emphasis is on reflective, experience-based contributions intended to benefit the broader OM community, including both scholars and practitioners.

Why is this important?

First, practitioners might miss the current challenges, idiosyncrasies, and solution approaches relevant to their business and service systems in OM research. OMR Industry and Practice Notes are intended to strengthen the exchange among practitioners on relevant idiosyncrasies by addressing recent challenges without requiring the disclosure of confidential details. At the same time, solution approaches that link current challenges with underlying idiosyncrasies can be discussed, offering practitioners inspiration to adapt and transfer these approaches to the idiosyncrasies of their own settings. Furthermore, Industry and Practice Notes serve as a platform for practitioners to highlight current challenges, idiosyncrasies, and solution approaches that have received limited attention in OM research. These calls can, in turn, serve as a starting point for practice-focused research that builds on the issues raised.

Second, researchers may overlook the current challenges, idiosyncrasies, and solution approaches that are most relevant to practitioners. OMR Industry and Practice Notes

are a unique format to learn about them. For the research strategy based on mathematical modeling, such insights can help motivate a more practice-focused orientation and support the incorporation of relevant idiosyncrasies, making the research more specific and thus more applicable to practice. Moreover, for OM researchers following an empirical research strategy, this can assist in identifying which idiosyncrasies to address and in selecting the appropriate level of detail, thereby avoiding results that are too context-specific.

Third, both practitioners and researchers may wish to see timely topics addressed when they occur in the real world. However, academic journals often take considerable time to publish them. As a result, solution approaches may be published only after the underlying problem has lost much of its practical relevance compared to the time of submission. OMR Industry and Practice Notes aims to accelerate the exchange between practitioners as well as between practitioners and researchers on highly timely and emerging topics.

Fourth, academic journals often prioritize theoretical novelty, which may limit opportunities for practice-based contributions. However, practitioners possess invaluable knowledge, such as how companies have overcome supply disruptions, adopted new technologies, managed workforce and demographic changes, or implemented sustainability initiatives. OMR Industry and Practice Notes aims to inspire new research questions for academics and serve as immediate resources, guidance, and best practices for industry peers.

Note that the submission system of OMR offers two categories: “*Original Research*” and “*Brief Report*”. Standard manuscripts are to be submitted as “*Original Research*.” Submissions categorized as *Original Research* must conform to the aims and scope of OMR and situate themselves within the broader field of OM. Applicants are expected to include a comprehensive comparison with the current state of the art, explicitly elucidating how the findings extend and augment the existing knowledge base. It is crucial that the manuscript offers actionable managerial insights derived from the results, which industry decision-makers can utilize to effectively address strategic and operational challenges. Additionally, a forward-looking perspective that identifies opportunities for future research and demonstrates how the study contributes to the broader field of OM while reinforcing its theoretical foundations is vital.

Practice Notes, conversely, should be submitted as “*Brief Report*” under the article type category. They are more adaptable and should be concise and concentrated (approximately 1,500–3,000 words). Practice Notes must be well-structured, with a clear problem definition, solution approach, results, and implications. It is essential to emphasize the practical context, the problem faced, the approach undertaken, outcomes, reflections, lessons learned, and key insights for peer operations managers and academics.

¹ See Call for Papers: <https://link.springer.com/collections/ceagefca.db>.

In particular, we invite practitioner contributions that:

- Present novel operational challenges not yet addressed in academic literature;
- Share practical solutions and best practices tested in real environments;
- Reflect on what works, and what does not, with honest, experience-based insights;
- Highlight disconnects between theory and practice, and propose opportunities for academic engagement;
- Showcase innovative tools and approaches (e.g., digital transformation, sustainability, resilience, lean/agile methods);
- Offer case studies of successful or failed implementations, with actionable takeaways;
- Discuss industry-academia collaborations that solve pressing operational issues;
- Provide perspectives on emerging trends (e.g., AI/ML in OM, circular economy, Industry 5.0).

By creating a home for Industry and Practice Notes, OMR reaffirms its founding commitment: to ensure that OM remains a discipline grounded in practice. This collection offers high visibility among industry leaders and researchers and provides insights with practical impact with actionable takeaways focusing on real issues that need academic attention.

4 Pressing challenges for operations managers today

Practitioners in OM face a range of urgent challenges. Technology is becoming pervasive in operational systems, driven by accelerated technological progress. Descaling and exit of operations are gaining importance as market developments force firms to realign capacity. Sustainability is becoming more pressing in light of global warming and regulatory pressures. Workforce considerations are increasingly relevant due to demographic shifts and rising labor costs. Together, these trends are examples that necessitate reshaping of how operations must be designed and managed.

Technology introduces a distinct array of challenges. Numerous organizations are experimenting with advanced analytics, automation, and artificial intelligence tools. Pilot projects frequently appear promising; however, expanding these initiatives across the entire organization proves considerably more complex. Budget constraints, limited access to specialized expertise, and a general reluctance to fully trust new systems—whose outputs may seem unfamiliar—pose significant obstacles. Consequently, digital transformation endeavors frequently fail. Furthermore, many enterprises' production, logistics, and warehouse personnel

are equipped with innovative technologies intended to assist their work, such as augmented reality glasses, wearable sensors, or exoskeletons. Nonetheless, these investments are often executed without adequate deliberation; potential adverse effects are disregarded, and human factors are insufficiently considered, potentially leading to rejection of technology, increased absenteeism, and heightened health risks.

There are many applications of machine learning and artificial intelligence in the area of OM, including implementation issues, that would bring valuable insights to OM professionals. There are applications in the physical production of a product and in planning of production schedules and transportation. Including possible examples of how a firm's supply chain partner uses artificial intelligence and its effects on the firm's overall production and planning systems and the resulting changes in outcomes would be an interesting area of research. Possible topics would include how a competitor's use of artificial intelligence and the effect it has on an organization's competitive strategies, as well as insights into how to meet that technology challenge. In that same strategy area is the topic of using advanced technology to plan production with tariff uncertainty in the global marketplace.

Descaling and exit have emerged as a strategic response to recent market developments. Yet, the operational and organizational complexity of such efforts is substantial. Poorly executed descailing initiatives can result in stranded assets or contractual liabilities. Despite its growing relevance, right-sizing remains underexplored in OM research, particularly with respect to its performance trade-offs, execution strategies, and long-term consequences.

Sustainability represents an additional domain experiencing increasing pressure. Organizations are anticipated to lower emissions, minimize waste, and enhance recycling or remanufacturing efforts. Although these objectives are broadly endorsed, managers encounter challenges in implementing them effectively while simultaneously fulfilling daily operational and financial requirements.

The workforce imposes additional pressures. In the logistics sector, numerous companies are unable to recruit sufficient personnel. In manufacturing, there is a scarcity of new technical skills. Concurrently, employees across various sectors now anticipate different working conditions compared to those prior to the pandemic. Consequently, recruitment, training, and motivation have become critical priorities on the operational agenda. Demographic shifts and an aging workforce exert further strain on many organizations, particularly in roles requiring intensive manual labor.

Finally, the rapid expansion of e-commerce has brought the issue of last-mile delivery into focus. Consumers demand swift and dependable services; however, organizations must deliver these services at a reasonable expense while minimizing environmental impact. This combination has proven

to be challenging and continues to represent one of the most significant issues in contemporary logistics operations.

These few examples are not distant or theoretical. They describe the everyday concerns of people working in operations roles across industries. Academic research can shed light on these issues, but the experiences of practitioners are just as valuable. The Industry and Practice Notes in OMR are meant to provide a space for those experiences to be recorded and shared, so that both communities, researchers and practitioners, can benefit.

5 Looking ahead

With this new collection, OMR advances further toward the vision articulated in its inaugural issue: to publish work that enhances the connection between research and practice in OM. By incorporating the perspectives of practitioners, we seek to expand the dialogue, introduce innovative ideas, and offer guidance that is both scholarly and pragmatic useful.

We welcome submissions demonstrating the diversity of practice across OM, encompassing manufacturing, health-care, logistics, and services. These submissions should highlight pertinent issues that warrant academic exploration in future research. These submissions will collectively reinforce OMR's position as a journal where scholarship and practice converge, benefiting both parties.

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Declarations

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Reference

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