

Editorial

Publishing in a Practice-Oriented Journal: Why and How You Should Do It

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ACADEMICS publish in academic outlets. So far, this is nothing new. However, publishing in such journals leaves a big gap. Traditional academic peer-reviewed journals have a limited readership. First, academic articles are usually written in a technical language, using specialized jargon that makes it difficult for a nonexpert to follow. Second, such journal articles are usually very narrow on a specific topic. So, if you want to get an understanding of a bigger topic, you must collect different articles from various journals. Third, papers focus on describing how the research contributes to theoretical advancement, not on how the research can be used by managers in companies or policymakers. Even though there is usually such a section, this is a rather minor focus. Fourth, peer-review processes can take a very long time, sometimes even years. So, whatever you read, especially in high-ranked outlets, is research that was mostly completed several years ago. Last, more easily accessible formats, such as books or printed magazines, are less and less available, in general. Earlier, it was a common practice to publish books that managers and policymakers purchased regularly. The same is true for openly accessible (conference) proceedings, with some notably exemptions, such as information systems or computer science.

Reaching the nonacademic audience has become more and more detached from regular academic work.

WHY PUBLISH IN JOURNALS OF PRACTICE?

One can like or dislike these developments. So, what is the problem? Beyond academics, there is a big target group outside universities, who are also very much interested in research, not because of the research itself but to apply it to improve in their daily work. There is also a match of interest. Practitioners are interested in insights into how to manage a company better. Researchers want to impact corporate management and beyond. And finally, the general public expects returns from financing academic research (third mission).

Traditional academic journals have been trying to address this gap. Some publishers have introduced special versions of their journal focused on the dissemination of broader insights, e.g., in the case of IEEE, with *IEEE Spectrum*. Other publishers rely on (virtual) curated collections on special topics, or promote their published articles in social media, or introduce special article types for practitioners.

There is, however, a different pathway. A dedicated category of outlets addresses specifically this gap: practitioner-oriented journals or journals-of-practice. They have following characteristics in common:

- edited articles written for a broad audience;
- adjusted and usually shorter peer-review processes;
- shorter than traditional research articles;
- printed issues with subscriptions.

Some well-known journals in this field are *California Management Review*, *Business Horizons*, *Harvard Business Review*, *Research-Technology Management*, and *MIT Sloan Management Review*. From IEEE, there is the IEEE ENGINEERING MANAGEMENT REVIEW (EMR), the IEEE Technology and Engineering Management Society (TEMS) journal-of-practice. EMR is a sister journal of IEEE TRANSACTIONS ON ENGINEERING MANAGEMENT (TEM)¹ and LeadershipBriefs,² where TEM focuses only on academic research, and LeadershipBriefs is the sole online outlet with very short inputs for managers. EMR is read online and offline, and thousands of subscribers worldwide read it.

So, what kind of publications does EMR publish? First and foremost, EMR focuses on rigor and relevance, as all other outlets do. Rigor is shown through evidence-based articles, whereby evidence can be based on academic research or individual experience. Relevance is shown through the choice of the topic. Here, EMR publishes articles in several topical areas within the “TEMS ... people enabling product success ...” vision. Each of these topical areas incorporates one or more “departments” of the journal.

¹[Online]. Available: <https://www.ieee-tems.org/ieee-transactions-on-engineering-management/>

²[Online]. Available: <https://www.ieee-tems.org/ieee-tems-leadership-briefs/>

- *Moving Product/Services from Idea to Market*: Here, there is a focus on technology, innovation management, and entrepreneurship questions.
- Identifying and implementing successful projects and systems using models and methodologies, as well as researching supply chain and project management.
- Integrating technology for capability and productivity with information technologies.
- Developing from engineer to leader and focusing on people and organizations as well as leadership and strategy.
- Balancing the norms of society, government, and regulators in the context of sustainability.

EMR’s main target group is engineers who have moved into management functions. EMR serves those who manage technology, engineering, and innovation. The intended audience includes those that:

- have an interest in management as a profession;
- manage the activities of engineers and related technology professionals;
- hold managerial or strategic leadership responsibilities;
- are upward-bound technology professionals preparing for leadership responsibilities in managing engineering, technology, and innovation.

HOW TO PUBLISH IN EMR

By now, I would like to have convinced you that EMR could be a good outlet for your work. So, what needs to be considered before submission?³

EMR is very open to a broad variety of submissions, as long as rigor and relevance are given, including

managerial Insights, critical analyses, case studies, practical implications of empirical studies, laboratory and field experiments, practical applications, technology forecasting, or insights from analytical modeling. However, a clear contribution to managerial practice must be made for all submissions. While EMR is ideally for managers in large companies, it also targets managers in small- and medium-sized companies, startups, and policymakers. Not all submissions have implications for all of these groups.

It is important to be very explicit to EMR readers in terms of the implications of your work. If this is missing, this is the main reason why articles have to be rejected by the desk. EMR is the wrong outlet if we receive, for example, review articles with implications for theory only or empirical studies with many pages of statistics but only a paragraph on implications. It is important to explain the methodology and to show the results, but, compared to a normal academic article, in a very concise way (some authors use the appendix for technical details). Another reason for desk rejection is articles written in poor English or where there is an indication of plagiarism. The latter is a bit special compared with other academic outlets.

EMR is also open for articles summarizing earlier research for practitioners. But here, it is not allowed to copy/paste text from earlier publications because of copyright, and it has to be indicated where the information comes from. Be transparent about any previous versions of the paper. Finally, you should always check if related articles have been published already. The purpose is not to artificially cite random articles from the target journal but to embed your work into earlier ones. This makes your contribution stronger and makes reading easier.

³Before you submit your article, it is recommended to check all current author guidelines. [Online]. Available: <https://www.ieee-tems.org/engineering-management-review/>

It is editorial policy to put only articles in the review process with a high chance of publication. Otherwise, this is a waste of time for all involved parties. In addition, it would be very difficult to recruit reviewers for such articles. This is becoming even more challenging since everybody wants to publish, but nobody wants to do reviews these days.⁴

In general, there are three different submission types, which have to be indicated in the submission system:

- Technology Managers Notebook (TMN) articles—500–2.000 words (Evidence through experience, Editorial Review);⁵
- Shorter Articles and Case Studies—2.000–4.000 words (Evidence through research, Peer Review);
- Longer Articles and Reviews—7.500–10.000 words (Evidence through research, Peer Review).

Also, authors have to suggest three potential reviewers. This requirement is because you, as an author, know best who is an expert in your topic. It should be clear that reviewers

cannot be individuals from your same institution or current coauthors. Also, it is forbidden to inform potential reviewers. Otherwise, it cannot be an anonymous peer review anymore.

Before submitting your paper, here are some general questions you should ask yourself. If you cannot answer yes to all of them, you should reconsider either the target outlet or your current article version.

- Does the paper fit within the scope as well as comply with the journal's guidelines?
- Is the level of English good enough for an international audience?
- Do you have a convincing cover letter explaining why this journal is the best outlet for your work?
- Does your article have a clear managerial insight? Ideally, it is for managers in large companies, managers in small and medium-sized companies, startups, and policymakers.
- Is your contribution and methodology clear?
 - TMN articles: evidence through own experience.
 - All other articles: evidence through research (qualitative, quantitative, other).

In case you want to learn more about publishing in peer-reviewed journals in general, you may want to read the following editorial from IEEE TEM, which gives general guidance on all parts of an article.⁶

EMR is a premier outlet for the research and practice of engineering, technology, and innovation management, with a tradition of more than 50 years of publishing. EMR has built a reputation for high-quality, evidence-based practice-oriented publications.

Now it is your turn, submit your work at <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/emr-ieee>.

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⁴Further information about peer review at IEEE is available at <https://journals.ieeeauthorcenter.ieee.org/submit-your-article-for-peer-review/about-the-peer-review-process/>.

⁵Learn more about TMN articles in this dedicated call for paper: <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/10248206>.

⁶[Online]. Available: <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/9269154>