



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

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Activation

The research newsletter of the
Department of Management at
the University of Melbourne

Management Research >

Welcome to 'Activation', our new research newsletter.

And who are we?

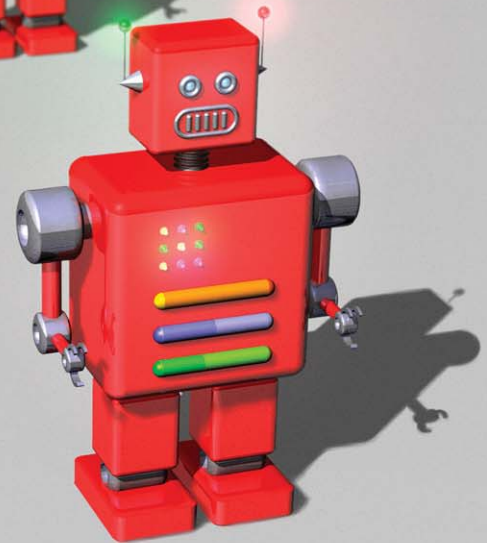
We are the Department of Management at the University of Melbourne: forty-eight full-time academic staff and 60 PhD students. We spend a lot of our time researching the management issues that affect today's organisations. When we are not researching, we are teaching – passing the enduring principles and the latest in research on to the next generations of managers.

So why are you hearing from us?

We are keen to reach out and build connections with businesses and organisations. We want you to know about us and what we do, both in research and teaching. We want to showcase our research, especially its real-world applications. We want you to get in touch with us if you are interested in any research collaboration to investigate the issues and challenges your organization is facing.



Professor David Merrett



Why all the robots?

Robots represent the best and worst of management: they are devices that free people from thankless toil, but they can deny people employment; they are the apex of sophistication in terms of technology management and implementation, but they represent the unthinking, unreflective aspects of managers and workers who are not responding to challenges creatively. Robots offer a metaphor that captures what can be achieved and what should be avoided in our fields of research. So, for this reason, and not because we had the picture of cute robots lying around, did we choose to make them the visual theme of our first newsletter.

Please read on, I hope you find this an enjoyable and informative bulletin.

Professor David Merrett
Head, Department of Management

Innovating IT – Australian Style

With a focus on innovation, marketing researcher Associate Professor Bryan Lukas and his colleagues A/Prof Greg Whitwell and Prof Rob Widing have been awarded an ARC Linkage Grant to investigate "Idea Sources for Product Innovation in Australian Frontier Technology: The Case of the Australian IT Industry".

Talking about the motivation for the project, A/Prof Lukas says, "Nobody really knows how Australian IT firms get their ideas. It's a blank in the literature." With the differences between innovation cultures globally, it is likely that Australians innovate in their own ways. He continues, "If Australian firms learn about their own innovation culture, they can develop more effective creative methodologies, instead of relying on US or European models."

The study will identify and compare the most useful idea sources for Australian ICT firms to generate breakthrough product innovations.

Research funding is our lifeblood, and success in obtaining competitive funding is the major KPI within the university sector. When we have won funding, it is because the project will deliver findings of real value to Australian businesses and organizations.

The researchers are looking to see whether new product ideas are influenced by a firm's customer and competitor orientations and if environmental conditions have an additional effect. They will also investigate what idea sources yield the most successful product innovations, when measured for their contribution to long-term profit.

Professor Lukas concludes, "We believe this research will allow Australian IT companies to back their innovations with confidence because they will know their innovation process is sound."

02

Innovation Research >

Centre Wins \$1.65m to Fast-track Innovation in Creative Sector SMEs

Will Australia's creative industry benefit from a collaboration between the University of Melbourne and partners in conjunction with some of the world's biggest players in interactive media? "Absolutely," says Associate Professor Milé Terziovski, leader of Melbourne's partnership with ACID, the Australasian Cooperative Research Center for Interaction Design.

He says, "ACID has brought together a who's who of the world's highest profile corporations and media organisations whose expertise is turning innovation into profit" these include Nike, Procter and Gamble, BSKyB, Nickelodeon, and Turner Broadcasting. "Their input will enhance the methodologies we are going to develop for the project." It will deliver some powerful commercialisation tools for smaller creative organisations, which normally take tremendous risks and use scarce resources to get their innovative products to the market."

Even though the emphasis is on smaller enterprises he says, "This is not a small sector, it's worth 21 billion dollars to the Australian Economy and employs more than 76,000 people."



Associate Professor
Mile Terziovski

"Our background is innovation for manufacturing SMEs, and now our contribution will be to develop an innovation process specifically for the creative industries. It will help businesses generate more innovative ideas as well as get them to market proof stage faster, cheaper and with higher success rates."

An existing CRC based at the Queensland University of Technology, ACID was granted supplementary funding of \$1.65 million. Its brief for this project is to develop innovation implementation pathways for interactive media companies based on advanced audience research techniques. Interaction design is about understanding how people learn, work and play so that technologies are designed to complement rather than confound peoples' natural behaviours in these activities and this is one of a range of ACID projects.

Along with the University of Melbourne's input, ACID will use its network to develop a rapid prototyping platform (RPP) and Murdoch University will develop new audience research tools and technologies. Together these contributions will provide a comprehensive toolkit with which ACID and its industry partners can commercialise their innovations. Beyond this, the toolkit will be available to all Australian creative SME's and their success will boost Australia's global presence in this dynamic sector.

Babel In Business

Associate Professor Anne-Wil Harzing has recently been awarded \$185,000 for a research project investigating how language differences influence management in multinational firms.

In a globalised economy, much is rightly made of the importance of cross-cultural communication and the different business and management cultures from region to the next. But one of the first barriers that companies face in global expansion is differences in natural languages. These differences have a major impact within firms as well as in the conduct of business across cultures.

Firms that manage multiple international operations have many control and co-ordination mechanisms available to them that maximise logistical and financial efficiency. Channels and technologies are also available to enable international communication within an organisation.

The management of language is very important in international firms, whose supply chains may span multiple countries and languages. Without language management confusion, suspicion and friction that will inevitably arise, regardless of the availability of email, video-conferencing or other communication channels within the organisation.

Management of cultural and language differences is crucial to successful international expansion. And, for countries with small domestic markets, such as Australia, such expansion is imperative for businesses to prosper or even survive.

Ultimately, this project will lead to recommendations that can deliver further competitive advantage to Australian multinationals and companies planning to internationalise.

People at Work >

03

Repatriating Right - Making the most of your returned expats

"Welcome back. Who are you again?" It's a depressingly common scenario, the former expatriate, now back home as a "repat", turns up at the office and finds she doesn't recognize anybody, her manager has moved on and no one remembers her, either.

The demoralizing return home is so widely experienced that Australian repats have established their own support group – the Melbourne International Social Group (MISG) – because the career and personal implications of a failed repatriation can be devastating.

For the home country organizations (HCOs), an overseas assignment is a costly investment, but expatriates do develop a broad international knowledge of their organisation, increasing their value to the HCO. So, with 22 percent of repats leaving the HCO within a year of return, a high price is paid for repatriation failure.

The situation seems bad but, according to Dr Ying Zhu and Sanae Furuhashi, international HRM specialists at the Department of Management, some fairly simple steps can lead to dramatic improvements.

In the literature, the repatriation problem has not been widely researched and the solutions proposed so far have been top-down organisational implementations. But, as a result of involvement in the repat support group MISG, Zhu and Furuhashi researched the experience from the perspective of the expat/repat and have taken the lead in investigating this phenomenon.

Interviewing repats from a range of industry sectors, the researchers sought information on behaviours that are usually displayed when commencing a new job. These include 'information seeking', 'job shaping', and 'relationship building and maintaining'. The timing and intensity of these behaviours would indicate how proactive the repats were in managing their own repatriation process.

If, prior to repatriation, subjects started to make intensive enquiries about the nature of their new role and the state of the organisation, they were more likely to have a positive repatriation experience. Enquiries would be directed to both peers and superiors and would help develop accurate expectations.

Information seeking after repatriation is often geared towards getting a feel for the culture of the organisation and asking other repatriates about handling the experience. While asking questions is sometimes perceived to have a high social cost, in most cases the interview subjects did not consider this to apply to a repatriation scenario.

Relationship building and maintaining pre-repatriation should really be an ongoing process of contact in which the HCO can provide home visits and a mentor. But, the expatriate should devote time to this as well. Holding on to a position in the organisation's networks while away was crucial to maintain connection. Successful repatriation was more likely if the repat returned to a network comparable to the one they originally left behind.

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Greening Automotive Supply-Chains

PhD Student Dayna Simpson has been collecting data on greener supply chains in collaboration with peak industry bodies, the Federation of Automotive Products Manufacturers (FAPM) and the Tooling Industry Forum of Australia (TIFA). Sponsored by the State Government's "Agenda for new manufacturing" program, her project could lead to more efficient and environmentally friendly supply chains.

Manufacturing supply chains contribute to many of the more intractable environmental problems we face today. Manufacturing in OECD economies alone accounts for up to 75 percent of non-hazardous wastes and 90 percent of hazardous wastes.

Dayna's research is looking for ways that firms can influence the sustainability of their supply chains through their relationships with suppliers. By exploring these relationships, she has identified factors that either help or hinder efforts to green product supply chains.

Customers who follow through on environmental standards in purchasing requirements are a positive influence on suppliers. But, those who emphasise cost over environmental standards lose much of this positive influence.

Interestingly, collaborations between suppliers provided strong evidence of mutual learning and environmental performance improvement, indicating the potential of supplier networks to assist with greening efforts.

These are preliminary results and data analysis is ongoing, but findings will be developed into a methodology to be released to the industry via FAPM and TIFA. The benefits of the project are not restricted to automotive manufacturing – Dayna expects the methodology will apply across industries. It will not only boost efforts to protect the environment, but also reduce costs for supply chain stakeholders – a genuine 'win-win' outcome.

04

Working with Industry >

Masters Degrees – The Benefits of a Research Enriched Program

Professor Carol Kulik discusses the ways a research active department offers payoffs for its Masters students.

"Today's manager is faced with a dizzying array of challenging, and often conflicting, choices.

Academic research can be a powerful tool in helping managers to resolve these conflicts. Academic research sorts out the critical factors driving organisational and business outcomes from the peripheral ones and suggests ways that managers can leverage those drivers to enhance performance. Graduates who can read the academic literature, translate findings into managerial action, and implement research findings in their organisations have a leg up on the competition.

The University of Melbourne is one of Australia's premier research and teaching institutions, and its academic staff is known for its top-tier research and its high-quality teaching performance. As a result, its graduates enter the marketplace knowing how to use academic research findings to make sure their professional practices add real value."

Getting In Touch

www.management.unimelb.edu.au

Our website is the best way to get in touch with us. It features detailed staff profiles and contact information, so you can get in direct touch with academics whose research is of interest to you. You'll also find comprehensive information about our postgraduate and research programs and our research centres.



Repatriating Right - Continued

Job shaping behaviours were displayed by those repats who negotiated a new role, reflecting their new capabilities, in the pre-repatriation stage. They repatriated more successfully. Success was enhanced if they took the initiative in informing their managers about the skills acquired during the assignment.

Not every organisation can accommodate the repat's dream new role, but a negotiation process is beneficial. Further, job shaping behaviour creates new role ideas,

such as "country specialist." These may be "add-ons" rather than full roles, but they provide a bridge for an individual's knowledge to pass through to the organisation.

Clearly, these findings suggest there is much that individuals can do to influence the success of their repatriation. Understanding this can lead to productive partnerships in which the organisation provides the framework for the individual to drive his or her own repatriation to a successful outcome.