Chapter 1

Introduction To Research

Instructional Goals

1. To *generate interest* in research for the students by driving home the point that successful managerial problem solving is nothing other than understanding and analyzing the situation at hand, which is what research is all about.

2. To help students *differentiate* between research-based problem solving and “going by gut-feeling”, the latter of which might sometimes help to solve problems in the short run, but might lead to systemic long-term adverse consequences.

3. To *create an appreciation* in students that research is useful for solving problems in ALL areas of business.

4. To help students *develop an appreciation* of the role of the manager in facilitating the researcher or the consultant’s work.

5. To stress the *importance of skill development* in research, as opposed to mere gathering of knowledge about research.

6. To emphasize that research and knowledge about research enhance managerial effectiveness.

7. To sensitize students to ethical conduct in business research.

Discussion Questions

**1.**   **Describe a situation where you used research in order to inform thinking, decisions, and/or actions in relation to a personal issue of interest such as buying a new mobile phone or going to the movies. Provide information about the purpose of your research, the problem, the information you collected, how you collected this information, the role of theory, and the solution to the problem.**

Answers will vary. Example: going to the movies.

The problem: I wanted to go the movies last weekend with a friend. I did have enough information on which movies were playing.

Purpose: I wanted to have a good time with my friend.

Information: I collected information via my iPhone. I collected information about current movies playing, and other relevant info via the websites of two different cinemas. I watched trailers of three movies via the website of these cinemas. I also looked up information about the movies via the IMDB site. Finally, my brother provided me with a few suggestions.

Theory: I usually don’t like the movies my brother suggests. He has a completely different taste. He usually prefers movies that contain violence. He also has a completely different sense of humor. That’s is why we didn’t go to the movie he suggested.

Solution: based on the trailers and the information via IMDB we decided to go to Spy.

**2. Why should a manager know about research when the job entails managing people, products, events, environments and the like?**

The manager, while managing people, products, events, and environments will invariably face problems, big and small, and will have to seek ways to find long lasting effective solutions. This can be achieved only through knowledge of research even if consultants are engaged to solve problems.

**3. For what specific purpose is Basic Research important?**

Basic research is important for generating and building upon the existing knowledge in the areas of interest. It offers the foundation for applied research by which one can circumvent reinventing the wheel.

**4. When is applied research, as distinct from basic research, useful?**

Applied research is useful in solving specific problems in particular situations where early action might be needed to solve problems in organizations.

**5. Why is it important to be adept in handling the manager-researcher relationship?**

The manager who knows how to relate to researchers facilitates the problem solving process and benefits the research team as well as the organization. The one who is not adept at this will frustrate and be frustrated during the research process and thereafter.

Being capable of handling the manager-researcher relationship is thus a big advantage and some of the nuances of handling research teams are:

(i) knowing how much and what information to give to the team;

(ii) meaningful and purposeful interactions with the team members;

(iii) stating up front what records of the company will and will not be accessible to the team members and expressing the core values of the system.

**6. Explain giving reasons which is more important – applied or basic research.**

Both are equally important. Without basic research, applied research cannot work as well, and if the results of basic research are not applied, such research would be futile. Whereas basic research is the foundation of knowledge, applied research is its practical application and helps to provide the additional information base for theory building and further generation of knowledge.

**7. Give two specific instances where an external research team would be useful and two other scenarios where an internal research team will be deployed, with adequate explanations as to why each scenario is justified for an external or internal team.**

The answers will vary.

For the ***external team,*** the suggestions could be:

a. to help non-tech companies to build up sophisticated technology in their environment; (only those with specialized knowledge of technology can help non-tech companies)

b. to evaluate the successful and deficient operations of the company (to avoid bias of internal team members).

For the ***internal team,*** it could be:

a. to figure out how the companies affected by the September 11th disaster can rebuild themselves; (internal team would be more knowledgeable about the company and could rebuild faster);

b. to solve the problem of consistent losses of a small division of a large company (only a small pocket of a large company is involved and the situation can be rectified by the internal team).

**8. Describe a situation where research will help you as a manager to make a good decision.**

Again, the answers will vary. One scenario is that a work team fails to deliver results time and again.

**9. Given the situations below, (a) discuss with reasons, whether they will fall into the category of Applied or Basic research, and (b) for scenario 1 explain with reasons, who will conduct the research.**

Scenario 1

Companies are very interested in acquiring other firms even when the latter operate in totally unrelated realms of business. For example, Coca-Cola has announced that it wants to buy China Huiyuan Juice Group in an effort to expand its activities in one of the world’s fastest-growing beverage markets. Such acquisitions are claimed to “work miracles.” However, given the volatility of the stock market and the slowing down of business, many companies are not sure whether such acquisitions involve too much risk. At the same time, they also wonder if they are missing out on a great business opportunity if they fail to take such risk. Some research is needed here!

This is a general issue that relates to all or most companies contemplating acquisitions. Of course, the results of the study are likely to be useful to, and applied by all the concerned companies. This could fall into the realm of basic or applied research, depending on who sponsors the study. If one company or a consortium of companies investigates the issue to find an answer for immediate application, then it will be applied research On the other hand, if a Finance professor in a university undertakes the study as a matter of academic interest, it will be basic research. Either an individual such as a professor or a finance expert can do this basic research, or a company or consortium of companies can undertake the applied research.

*Scenario 2*

**Reasons for Absenteeism**

A university professor wanted to analyze in depth the reasons for absenteeism of employees in organizations. Fortunately, a company within 20 miles of the campus employed her as a consultant to study that very issue.

The basic research aspiration of the professor has taken the form of applied research in this particular system, where they would apply the findings of her research to solve the problem. No doubt, the professor would continue her research in a variety of organizations to add to the existing base of knowledge on absenteeism and continue the topic as a basic research project.

*Scenario 3*

**Effects of Service Recovery on Customer Satisfaction**

A research scientist wants to investigate the question: What is the most effective way for an organization to recover from a service failure? Her objective is to provide guidelines for establishing the proper "fit" between service failure and service recovery that will generalize across a variety of service industries.

This will be a case of basic research, the purpose of which was to study the efficacy of different service recovery strategies and add to the body of existing marketing knowledge.