

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter One: Introduction to Research

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What is Research?

- Research is the process of finding solutions to a problem after a thorough study and analysis of the situational factors.
- Managers in organizations constantly engage themselves in studying and analyzing issues and hence are involved in some form of research activity as they make decisions at the workplace.



What is Research?

- Sometimes managers make good decisions and the problem gets solved.
- Sometimes managers make poor decisions and the problem persists.
- The difference between making good decisions and poor decisions, lies in how managers go about the decision-making process.



The Excitement of Research

- Modern technology has made research an exciting and a relatively smooth process.
- Personal computer with any means to an Internet connection places one within easy reach of knowledge of what is happening in the global markets and how the world economy is impacting on business.



The Excitement of Research

- Decision making is merely a process of choosing from among *alternative solutions* to resolve a problem and **research** helps to generate viable *alternatives* for effective decision making.
- You can differentiate between good and bad studies published in *professional journals* – after all it's about choosing between different alternatives



Business Research

- Business research can be described as a **systematic and organized effort to investigate a specific problem** encountered in the work setting, that needs a solution.
- Business research comprises a **series of steps** designed and executed, with the goal of finding answers to the issues that are of concern to the manager in the work environment.



Business Research

- Steps of business research:
 - ✓ To know where the problem areas exist in the organization.
 - ✓ To identify as clearly and specifically as possible the problems that need to be studied and resolved.
 - ✓ Gather information, analyze the data, and determine the factors that are associated with the problem and solve it by taking the necessary corrective measures.



Business Research

- We can now define business research as an organized, systematic, data-based, critical, objective, scientific inquiry or investigation into a specific problem, undertaken with the purpose of finding answers or solutions to it.



Types of Business Research

Research can be undertaken for **two** different purposes:

- To solve a current problem faced by the manager in the work setting, demanding a timely solution. Such research is called **applied research**.
- For example, a particular product may not be selling well and the manager might want to find the reasons for this in order to take corrective action.



Types of Business Research

- To generate a body of knowledge by trying to comprehend how certain problems that occur in organizations can be solved. This is called **basic research** or **fundamental research**. It is also known as **pure research**.
- It is quite possible that some organizations may later on apply the knowledge gained by the findings of such basic research to solve their own problems.



Types of Business Research

- For instance, a university professor may be interested in investigating the factors that contribute to absenteeism as a matter of mere academic interest.
- After gathering information on this topic from several institutions and analyzing the data, the professor may identify factors such as inflexible work hours, inadequate training of employees, and low morale as primarily influencing absenteeism.



Types of Business Research

- Later on, a manager who encounters absenteeism of employees in his organization may use this information to determine if these factors are relevant to that particular work setting.



Applied Research – Example 1

- Oxford Health Plans Inc. saw trouble brewing. It was a company in distress experiencing computer problems.
- Turnover among Oxford's programmers was unusually high and processing of claims became a big nightmare.
- Clients started canceling their policies and claims for bypass surgery and such were way up.



Applied Research – Example 2

- Apple's iPod sales increased from \$5 billion in 2001 to \$32 billion in the fiscal year 2008 (September 30).
- Growth for the music player averaged more than 200% in 2006 and 2007, but the sales **decreased** by 6% in the fourth quarter of 2008.
- One reason for this decrease in sales is that iPod owners see little or no reason to upgrade, especially with the crumbling economy.



Basic Research – Example 1

- Right from her days as a clerical employee in a bank, Sandra had observed that her colleagues, though extremely knowledgeable, were exerting very little effort to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the bank in the area of customer relations and service.
- She realized that her colleagues took on the minimum amount of work load, availed of long tea and lunch breaks, and seemed not motivated in their dealings with the customers or the management.



Basic Research – Example 1

- When she left the bank and did her dissertation for her Ph.D., her topic of investigation was Job Involvement, or the ego investment of people in their jobs.
- The conclusion of her investigation was that the single most important contributing factor to job involvement is the fit or match between the nature of the job and the skills of the people engaged in performing it.



Basic Research – Example 1

- Subsequently, when Sandra joined the Internal Research Team of a Fortune 500 Company, she applied this knowledge to solve problems of motivation, job satisfaction, job involvement, and the like, in the organization.



Basic Research – Example 2

- Research into the causes and consequences of global warming will offer many solutions to minimize the phenomenon, and lead to further research concerning if and how global warming can be averted.
- The findings will ultimately be applied and useful to, among others, the agricultural and building industries.



Distinction Between Applied and Basic Research

- The main **distinction** between applied and basic business research is:
 - **Applied research** is specifically aimed at solving a currently experienced problem.
 - **Basic research** has a broader objective of generating knowledge and understanding of phenomena and problems that occur in various organizational settings.
 - Both types of research follow the same steps of systematic inquiry to arrive at solutions to problems.



Managers and Research

- Managers with knowledge of research have an advantage over those without.
- Knowledge of research and problem-solving processes helps managers to identify problem situations before they get out of control.
- The manager who is knowledgeable about research can interact effectively with researchers or consultants.



Why managers should know about research?

Being knowledgeable about research and research methods helps managers to:

- Identify and effectively solve minor problems in the work setting.
- Know how to discriminate good from bad research.
- Appreciate and be constantly aware of the multiple influences and multiple effects of factors affecting a situation.



Why managers should know about research?

- Take calculated risks in decision making, knowing the probabilities associated with the different possible outcomes.
- Prevent possible vested interests from exercising their influence in a situation.
- Relate to hired researchers and consultants more effectively.
- Combine experience with scientific knowledge while making decisions.



The Manager and the Consultant–Researcher

- As a manager, you will often need to engage a consultant to study some of the more complex, time-consuming problems that you might encounter.
- The manager has to inform the researchers what types of information could be provided to them, and more important, which of their records would not be made available to them.



The Manager and the Consultant–Researcher

The manager should make sure while hiring researchers or consultants that:

- The roles and expectations of both parties are made explicit.
- Relevant philosophies and value systems of the organization are clearly stated, and constraints, if any, communicated.
- A good rapport is established with the researchers, and between the researchers and the employees in the organization, enabling the full cooperation of the latter.



Internal Versus External Consultants/Researchers

- **Internal Consultants or Researchers:**

Some organizations have their own research department, which might be called:

- The management services department
- The organization and methods department
- R & D (research and development department)



Advantages of Internal Researchers

- The internal researchers have better chance of being readily accepted by the employees.
- The team would require much less time to understand the structure, the philosophy and climate and work system of the organization.



Advantages of Internal Researchers

- They would be available for implementing their recommendations after the research findings are accepted.
- The internal team might cost considerable less than the external team.



Disadvantages of Internal Researchers

- They might have less fresh ideas and perspectives that might be needed to correct the problems.
- There is scope for certain powerful groups in the organization to influence or misrepresent certain facts.



Disadvantages of Internal Researchers

- There is a possibility that the internal researchers are not perceived as “experts” by the management, and hence their recommendations do not get the consideration and attention they deserve.
- Certain organizational biases of the internal research team might make the findings less objective and less scientific.



Advantages of External Consultants

- They have a wealth of experience from having worked with different types of organizations that have had the same or similar types of problems.
- They might have more knowledge of current sophisticated problem-solving models through their periodic training programs.



Disadvantages of External Consultants

- The cost of hiring an external research team is usually high.
- They need a considerable time to understand the organization to be researched.
- They seldom get a warm welcome, nor are accepted by employees.
- They charges additional fees for their assistance in the implementation and evaluation phases.



Ethics and Business Research

- **Ethics** in business research refers to a code of conduct of behavior while conducting research.
- The observance of **ethics** begins with the person instituting the research, who should do it in good faith, pay attention to what the results indicate, and pursue organizational rather than self-interest.



Ethics and Business Research

- Ethical conduct should be reflected in the behavior of the researchers, participants, analysts, and the entire research team.
- Thus, ethical behavior pervades each step of the research process—data collection, data analysis, reporting, and dissemination of information on the Internet, if such an activity is undertaken.
- How the subjects are treated and how confidential information is safeguarded are all guided by business ethics.