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Article

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Editorial: Exploring the progressive facets of modern management: virtual reality, universal design, and inclusive workplace practices

Welcome to Volume 20 Issue 3 of the *Organization Management Journal*. This issue presents a striking blend of forward-looking research, shaping our understanding of the modern management landscape. Our featured articles revolve around three key themes: virtual reality (VR) in management training, the interplay of personality and universal design in management education and the exploration of disability-assistance animal stereotype bias in workplace practices.

The world of management is constantly evolving, and with modern technologies, it has become more critical than ever to explore the progressive facets of contemporary management. VR, universal design and inclusive workplace practices are three such facets that have the potential to revolutionize the way we work and manage our organizations.

VR technology has been gaining popularity in recent years. It has been used in various fields including education, medicine and entertainment. In the field of management, VR can transform the way we train our employees. VR in training can help employees learn new skills in a safe and controlled environment without the risk of real-world consequences. Universal design (UD) is design philosophy that creates products and environments accessible to everyone, regardless of their abilities. In the workplace, UD can help create a more inclusive environment for employees with disabilities. Inclusive workplace practices create a welcoming and supportive workplace for all employees, regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation or other characteristics (Simmons & Yawson, 2022). An inclusive workplace improves employee morale, increases productivity and reduces turnover.

The first article in this issue, “Harnessing Virtual Reality for Management Training: A Longitudinal Study” by Haber, Xu, and Priya ((2023), forges a new frontier in management training methods. It explores the burgeoning field of VR and its potential to create more dynamic, engaging and effective management training programs. This longitudinal study provides empirical evidence supporting the deployment of VR in real-world training scenarios. VR’s immersive qualities bridge the gap between theoretical learning and practical application, facilitating a more profound understanding of management principles and practices. The study finds that VR platforms generate significantly more enjoyment, which carries over to two weeks later and is partially associated with higher knowledge retention. The study shows that immediate gains in cognitive outcomes are similar across video and VR platforms, but subsequent knowledge retention is significantly higher for VR platforms. Therefore, VR technologies can be used for management training to improve knowledge retention and generate more enjoyment in the training experience.

Sanford and Tabak (2023) in their piece, “Personality and Universal Design for Learning in Management Education,” challenge the one-size-fits-all approach to management education. Sanford and Tabak’s (2023) work underscores the value of individual personality differences and the need for more flexible, inclusive learning designs. The universal design



for learning (UDL) model serves as a framework that could enhance the efficacy of management education. By accommodating diverse learning styles and personalities, UDL can nurture more adaptive, resilient and innovative future leaders. This paper provides insight into the student characteristics that enable them to gain empowerment and motivation from the UDL approach. The implementation of UDL in management education may require learning management strategies that accommodate student readiness for UDL. This study makes progress in identifying student characteristics that explain this readiness. UDL can improve management education by making it more accessible to students with different personalities and learning styles.

Finally, “Inclusive Workplace Practices: Understanding Disability-Assistance Animal Stereotype-Bias Signals” by [McPherson and Loafman \(2023\)](#) explores a less-examined area of workplace inclusivity: disability-assistance animals. In shedding light on the stereotype bias associated with such animals in the workplace, [McPherson and Loafman \(2023\)](#) encourage organizations to foster a more comprehensive understanding and acceptance of this aspect of diversity. HR practitioners and hiring managers must be aware of the potential for implicit stereotype bias when accommodating requests for disability-assistance animals (disability-AAAs) in the workplace. The study found a potential for positive stereotype bias, where all genuine assistance animals are presumed to be high functioning, and employees’ assistance animal requests for invisible disabilities without previous disclosure are presumed fraudulent until proven valid. This can lead to discrimination in the workplace. The study suggests the need to improve education about disability-AAAs and the potential for unconscious bias for HR practitioners and hiring managers when accommodating requests, particularly when those assistance animals are not described as high functioning. The study also found that almost half of the HR practitioners were unprepared for a disability-AA encounter, indicating the need to improve inclusive policies and practices to mitigate the potential risk of implicit bias-based discrimination from positive stereotype bias when the individual with a disability-AA is not a high-functioning team.

The idea of unconscious bias presented by [McPherson and Loafman \(2023\)](#) brings forward a cautionary element to the excitement surrounding the possibilities offered within the studies of this issue. As experienced by one of us, technological advancements do not always result in a more inclusive and productive environment. As one who experienced a traumatic brain injury (TBI) and the effects therefrom, discrimination, lack of understanding and accusations of fraudulence are all quite real, quite present and quite damaging. While technology offers some opportunities for increased inclusivity, think for a moment about one with TBI who encounters issues with Akinopsia (motion vision), Nystagmus (rapid eye movement) and/or Stereopsis (depth perception); the otherwise simplistic use of an excel spreadsheet or multi-colored track changes feature can be a torturous task, let alone the participation in VR simulation. Coupling these internal challenges with external issues of having an invisible disability can render technological advancement not just void but inherently damaging to the individual. With 96% of those with a disability (or the more inclusive term “alternate ability”) being one that is unseen ([Morgan, 2020](#)), it is imperative that we heed the call of [Sanford and Tabak \(2023\)](#) that one-size does not fit all and that as we strive for increased inclusivity and we do not either unintentionally through lack of understanding or intentionally through purposely discriminative actions create less inclusive environments for many within the organization.

Each of these articles collectively heralds a shift in the management landscape, where technology, personalized education and inclusivity have become the pillars of modern organizational practices. They call upon leaders, educators and professionals to adapt,

innovate and embrace these changes, thus fostering environments that value diversity, encourage learning and harness the power of emerging technologies.

As you delve into this issue, we hope the discussions and insights will spark innovative ideas, challenge your perspectives and inspire action toward developing more progressive management practices. Let us embark on this journey together and shape a management future that truly reflects our diverse and dynamic world. We look forward to your manuscripts.

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