

# Balancing Rigor and Relevance in IS Research: Strategies, Tactics, and Recommendations

Track: Information Systems Challenges: Methodology, Teaching Methods and Practical Relevance

V. Sambamurthy

University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742

## DESCRIPTION

With the advent of the digital economy, firms are increasingly relying on information technologies for shaping their business strategies, organization capabilities, structures, and processes, and relationships with their business partners. Disruptions in the traditional means of competition and the use of information technologies for creating new business strategies and customer relationships imply that tremendous uncertainty exists about the best means for utilizing IT to shape effective managerial practice. Therefore, a considerable opportunity exists for IS academics to contribute to, and shape, IT management practice. Yet, the history of prior contributions by IS researchers toward being relevant to practice has been questioned by several prominent researchers (see the March, 1999 issue of *MIS Quarterly* for a variety of commentaries). While IS researchers have been acknowledged to have improved the rigor of their research, the grades for contributions to practice have been uneven.

However, several IS researchers have adopted research strategies and philosophies that balance rigor and relevance in their research programs. Such research often starts with issues that are grounded in the domain of contemporary management practice or out of an anticipation of the future IT-shaped management practice. Such research also brings rigor to bear in the form of connections with theory, application of scientific and proven research methodologies, and creative application of the scientific methodology in analysis and interpretation of the findings. Finally, such researchers collaborate with practicing managers in developing interpretations of their findings and in developing guidelines that are likely to be valued by IS managers and applied in practice.

Few researchers have succeeded in shaping their careers and research programs that balance rigor and relevance. Designing and executing such research programs is challenging. Few scholars acknowledge the challenges in balancing attention to the two, or, more importantly, share strategies and tactics for shaping such research projects. This panel brings together a group of researchers from North America and Europe who have significant experience in practice-oriented research and have made valuable contributions to both IS practice and

academic journals out of their research. The panelists will address the following questions:

1. What are the challenges in balancing rigor and relevance?
2. What is the researchers' personal philosophy and motivation for balancing rigor and relevance?
3. What strategies and tactics have they adopted?
4. What lessons have been learned through their experiences in balancing rigor and relevance?

## INTERACTION FORMAT

The session chair will introduce the topic. Next, each one of the panelists will make a short presentation. The panel members will outline their perspectives and illustrate their views through examples from a recent research project in their portfolio. The format will also allow adequate time for interactions with the audience.

## PANEL MEMBERS

### Panel Chair

V. Sambamurthy, University of Maryland, College Park, USA (E-mail: [smurthy@rhsmith.umd.edu](mailto:smurthy@rhsmith.umd.edu))

### Members

Ritu Agarwal, University of Maryland, College Park, USA (E-mail: [ragarwal@rhsmith.umd.edu](mailto:ragarwal@rhsmith.umd.edu))

Ellen Christiaanse, University of Amsterdam (E-mail: [echristiaanse@fee.uva.nl](mailto:echristiaanse@fee.uva.nl))

Sirkka Jarvenpaa, University of Texas, Austin, USA (E-mail: [sjarvenpaa@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:sjarvenpaa@mail.utexas.edu))

Claudia Loebbecke, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark (E-mail: [loebbecke@cbs.dk](mailto:loebbecke@cbs.dk))

Robert W. Zmud, University of Oklahoma, USA (E-mail: [rz mud@ou.edu](mailto:rz mud@ou.edu))