



What is strategic leadership?

Alternative conceptions of strategic leaders as value creators

Dear Colleagues,

We invite you to consider developing a paper for a conference on *Strategic Leadership* sponsored by the Goff Strategic Leadership Center at the University of Utah and held in cooperation with the *Strategic Management Review*. The conference will convene in Salt Lake City, January 5th-7th, 2023. Our goal is to challenge conventional conceptions of strategic leadership and develop a set of papers to be submitted to the SMR reviewing process for a special issue. Paper proposal submissions are due on September 1, 2022, and conference attendance and hotel commitments must be made by October 1, 2022.

Conference Theme

The past 20 years have seen an explosion of academic and practitioner publications on strategic leadership. While definitions of strategic leadership vary, sometimes dramatically, they often define strategic leadership as simply the “functions performed by individuals at the top levels of an organization ... that are intended to have strategic consequences for the firm” (Samimi, Cortes, Anderson, and Herrmann (2020: 101355). These functions include making strategic decisions, engaging with external stakeholders, performing human resource management activities, motivating and influencing, managing information, overseeing operations and administration, managing social and ethical issues, and managing conflicting demands.

While defining strategic leadership in this way has delivered valuable insights to the field, we question whether this heavy emphasis on top management and its specific functions illuminates the crux of what defines strategic leadership. The definition also seems out of step in an era of decentralization, employee empowerment, open boundaries, and ecosystems.

An alternative conception of strategic leadership that is at once more expansive and focused considers strategic leadership as the task of envisioning and organizing the composition of value. From this perspective, strategic leaders formulate challenges to address and problems to solve; they compose theories of value and then organize their effective pursuit. While the demonstration of such strategic leadership may correlate with hierarchical rank and may even be pervasive in top management teams, it is by no means synonymous with attributes or activities of individuals at that rank. Strategic leadership is not enabled by ascension to the top management team, which means that not all leaders might display this ability. Rather, it is often and ideally a skill or capability demonstrated by individuals across all ranks of an organization. Indeed, the most effective organizations are posited to be filled with individuals demonstrating strategic leadership.



Strategic Management Review

Publishing Ideas that Matter for Strategic Management Research

In an effort to explore this and perhaps other alternate conceptions of strategic leadership, we are hosting a conference with *Strategic Management Review* to attract new research on this topic. We seek papers or individuals interested in developing papers and essays that advance theory, introduce boundary conditions, and offer hypothesis testing and empirical analysis that connect with strategic leadership. Presenters are invited to submit a completed manuscript to a special issue of *Strategic Management Review*.

Paper Topics

Papers that connect to strategic leadership may include and are not limited to the topics of:

- Processes of inquiry for strategic leaders or top management teams
- Comparative assessments of alternative approaches to developing formulation/theories
- Decision weaving by strategic leaders
- Essential skills for strategic leadership in established firms
- Essential skills for strategic leadership in entrepreneurial firms
- Is the need for strategic leadership organization-specific or problem-specific?
- Advances in the theory-based view of strategic leadership
- Processes for mitigating decision biases in strategic decision making
- Strategic problem formulation and solving
- Top management team processes for strategic decision making

Submission Proposals

Proposals are to be no longer than 1500 words. The proposal should equate to the introduction of a paper in which the challenge is formulated, the solution summarized, the new value created described, and the proposed contents of a future paper.

Submission and Conference Details

September 1, 2022	Paper proposal submission StrategicLeadershipConference@eccles.utah.edu
September 30, 2022	Paper proposal selections announced
October 1, 2022	Deadline for conference fees and hotel reservations
January 5 th -7 th , 2023	Conference
June 1, 2023	Paper submission deadline to <i>Strategic Management Review</i>
June 2024	Target date for electronic publishing of special issue

Please contact Jackson Nickerson (nickerson@wustl.edu) with any question.

Bibliography

Samimi, Mehdi et al. "What is strategic leadership? Developing a framework for future research." *Leadership Quarterly* (2020): 101353.