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Dare to Care: Passion & Compassion in Management Practice and Research

The economic crisis that erupted in mid-2007 made evident the ways in which many corporations and their managers have paid inadequate attention to many stakeholders, including not only employees, customers, suppliers, the communities, and the environment, but also their shareholders. The crisis also challenges management researchers to consider whether our research and the knowledge we produce contributes to the well being of the larger society in which we live and work. The theme of the 2010 Academy of Management Meeting in Montreal, Canada, is to dare managers and management scholars to care more deeply about our roles – to have passion about what we do and compassion for the people for whom we do our work.

“Dare to Care” orients managers to a focus on enabling others to create, produce, and deliver goods and services that enhance the wellbeing of, and generate value for, all the stakeholders involved (notably customers, employees, investors, and the public). Daring to care encourages management scholars to expand their focus toward and understanding of how solving organizational problems might ensure a sustainable future. Daring to care is a call to return to our roots and to remember that the role of management is one of integration in all senses of the word – integrating the interests of all parties and integrating passion for one’s work with compassion for others impacted by one’s work.

With the above backdrop, many research questions for meaningful scholarly inquiries come to mind. What new organizational theories might be created around the idea of passion and compassion in organizational design, structure, and management? How might the concept and theory of organizational performance or effectiveness change when passion and compassion are included in the criterion set? What are the implications for human resource policies and practices of encouraging passion and compassion among a firm’s managers and employees? How should work be designed, organized and evaluated to elicit the passion of the performer?

How would work and organizations look and feel when passion and compassion are present in balanced measures? How might the focus of management scholarship change – and what would be the experience of our scholarly pursuits – when passion and compassion define the scholarly journey?

We encourage papers, symposia and professional development workshops that explore the topics of passion and compassion in management practices and management research. Papers might explore how the world of business could be different when leaders have compassion for their followers, when managers have compassion for their customers, when employees have compassion for their fellow workers and their leaders, or when firms have compassion for the communities that support them. Symposia might consider how the nature of competition and cooperation between and within industries may change when compassion becomes a factor in inter-firm relationships. Professional development workshops might address how the world of scholarship could be different if researchers have passion for their studies and routinely incorporated compassion for managers and students in their choice of research topics. Teaching is an area ripe for this consideration. How do passion and compassion commingle in the classroom? We encourage and welcome submissions that explore the antecedents and consequences of decisions or actions that integrate passion and compassion by employees, managers, or scholars. And for those who dare not to care, we welcome meditations on the limits, unintended consequences, and even harm that may follow acts of passion or compassion.

This theme challenges management scholars to care broadly and deeply about what they study and consider whether what they study will make a difference in the world of practice. This theme challenges managers to care broadly and deeply about how they manage and how their decisions will make the world a better place for all. We invite Academy members to imagine the possibilities when passion and compassion are expressed in management research and management practices. I look forward to our gathering in Montreal, a city whose citizens are passionate about its physical beauty and proud of humanistic values. Montreal provides us an ideal setting to reflect upon these unusual questions in this unusual time.

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