

To: Richard Whittington, Oxford University  
Chair, Strategizing Activities and Practice Interest Group

From: Mark Gavin, West Virginia University  
Chair, Division and Interest Group Relations (DIGR) Committee

CC: DIGR Committee Members  
Ann Buchholtz, Rutgers University, Chair-elect  
Trish Reay, University of Alberta  
Kenneth Thompson, DePaul University  
Mike Wright, Imperial College London

Re: Feedback on SAP's 3-year Report

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Thank you for your 3-year report on the Strategizing Activities and Practice (SAP) Interest Group. We truly appreciate your own and your team's contribution to the division and to the review process. After reviewing the SAP Interest Group's report and supporting material, the Division and Interest Group Relations (DIGR) Committee of the Academy of Management recommended the renewal of the SAP Interest Group for another five years and on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013, the Academy of Management (AOM) Board voted in support of that renewal. **Thus, I am happy to report that the SAP Interest Group has been renewed for five years.**

In reviewing each of the AOM Division and Interest Group reports, the DIGR committee members were asked to identify what they see as strengths, challenges or concerns in going forward as well as efforts underway that lessen these concerns. Taking these into consideration, we offer recommendations for the division. Below, I detail these comments in the hope that our feedback will enable you to build on the strengths of the SAP Interest Group and continue to provide valuable services to your members. We hope that you will be able to use this feedback to further advance the Interest Group and to accomplish our shared goal of strengthening and invigorating the Academy of Management.

Your leadership team has done a lot of work over the last year to produce this report. Please recall that an important element of the review process is for interest group leaders to share the report and review results in an open letter to their membership, via the website or e-mail. In addition, a representative from the DIGR Committee and/or the Board of Governors would appreciate the opportunity to meet with your leadership team at the August meeting to recognize this accomplishment, as well as to discuss how this report can be used to guide future interest group activities. I will be in touch again shortly to arrange this meeting.

Thank you again for your very well-done report. The DIGR Committee feedback follows.

### **Strengths**

The 3-year report shows a new interest group that is vibrant and growing. Membership has rapidly expanded over the 3-year window, from 221 members at its inception in 2010 to 512 in 2012, a growth rate of 132%, with the biggest jump (of 110%) coming in the first to second year and slower growth (10%) coming in the second to third year. Comparatively, AOM's growth was

slight or negative over those two spans. Membership numbers, both in absolute terms and in growth rates, favors international members. In 2012, 63% of members were international. Over the 3-year review period, domestic membership experienced a decrease of 7.5% while international membership demonstrated a growth rate of 18.5%. Academics and students represent the largest percentages in terms of types of members.

The response to the survey was strong, at 29.5%, compared to an AOM average of 18%. And quite impressive for a 3-year-old interest group, 70% of respondents view SAP as their primary AOM home. The primary reason for joining involves the gaining and sharing of research-related information. Respondents are very satisfied with their interest group membership, with 85% indicating that they were satisfied, very satisfied, or extremely satisfied. Respondents are also satisfied with the program, as well as specific components of it, most notably the PDWs and the paper sessions. Submission rates increased substantially for papers (20%), symposia (100%), and PDWs (75%) over the two-year period (2011 and 2012) that SAP has had program space, compared to AOM numbers of 17%, 21.7%, and 25.7%, respectively. Finally, participation in the elections is on par with that of the AOM.

In addition, we observed:

- A strong sense of community.
- A strong effort to engage early career scholars and students.
- The name change is well supported and the logic behind it is sound, demonstrating that the leadership team is attentive to the strategic positioning of the interest group.
- The interest group is already working with outside entities, including EGOS, and is looking to collaborate with others, including SMS and BAM.
- The newsletter is informative and welcoming.
- The securing of outside funding is commendable.
- The report shows that very good progress has already been made in terms of meeting the goals that were set in the bylaws.

## **Challenges**

A few challenges and/or concerns were noted by members of the DIGR Committee, all of which were also identified in the SAP report. They are:

- Member involvement at meetings is low (75% have not volunteered in any capacity).
- Domestic membership is low (37% in 2012).
- Opportunities to network/collaborate outside the meeting is a weak spot, in the context of a generally satisfied response on the survey.
- Despite general satisfaction with communication, the report suggests the need for improvements to the listserv.
- There is a need to reach out and collaborate with other divisions. Only one third of survey respondents are very or extremely satisfied with the current state of collaboration.
- Despite a strong sense of community, there is a feeling that SAP is cliquish.
- The founding executive members will be transitioning out of position soon, creating a concern about succession.

- Some workload issues for executive positions are seen as problematic.
- Financial resources are sufficient for basic purposes and initial fundraising is commendable, but more resources are needed for student awards and networking events.
- The H&G Checklist had a number of empty boxes. Those that weren't empty were not terribly well developed. This is not a concern for the interest group itself, but pertains to the DIGRs inability to fully review the interest group. There is an impression among the DIGR Committee that this portion of the task was not taken seriously. In the absence of any response, or a limited response, to some items, here are some specific questions/concerns that arose:
  - H & G item 8 – Who is likely to sponsor? What models in other Division are available?
  - H & G item 15 – For a new interest group, the absence of examples of new programs here is striking.
  - H & G items 19 & 20 – Each of these items was identified as needing improvement. The newsletter, website, and listserv, identified as potential services in your response to item 19, could also serve as communication devices with the division membership, thus having relevance for item 20. In any event, while these (member services beyond the meeting and communication with division membership) are addressed in other parts of the report, a more developed response, and some response in one case, would have been appropriate here.

Lessening these concerns are the following:

- A new executive position, “membership secretary”, is being planned to improve understanding and management of membership composition. Among other things, this can help accomplish objectives like increasing the number of domestic members.
- Specific plans, including a PDW session, to further develop initiatives that cater to early scholars and students.
- There is a proposal to redistribute responsibilities and change election terms to deal with unbalanced workloads across executive positions.
- SAP already has a liaison to BPS, and will be looking to do the same with OMT and MOC. A showcase symposium is being developed which draws all these entities together with SAP.
- The listserv and newsletter (though the latter is already strong) is being examined to enhance its functionality.
- The name change will help solidify the scholarly identity of SAP.

## **Recommendations**

We appreciate the interest group's observations for improvement as well as the list of goals/actions. The latter included 15 items. This is quite ambitious. Some of the items tie together and hit on a specific theme, and others lacked a degree of specificity. We would encourage you to tighten your focus in terms of selecting a set of goals and specific strategies to achieve them. Of course, the choice of which ones to pursue and how to get there are up to the

interest group. Beyond what you have offered, we suggest some recommendations for moving forward:

### *Membership focus*

- In addition to introducing a Membership Secretary, consider forming a small membership committee to give some more resources to be proactive in helping sustain momentum. Maybe include some new members or at least involve some diversity of members. This also creates an opportunity for more members to contribute to the leadership of the interest group, potentially combating the perception of a clique and widening the pool of experienced volunteers who may be qualified for future leadership positions.
- Consider a new members' reception/meeting at the August meeting.

### *Leadership transition/succession*

This will be a crucial issue to continue the momentum of the interest group. To help facilitate this:

- Consider creating an SAP advisory board comprised of the leaders that cycle off the board. Though this could perpetuate the perceptions of a clique, the tradeoff might be worth the potential to help the interest group move toward becoming more established.
- Comb through the interest group membership ranks to identify those who have leadership in other divisions. They may be able to help the interest group navigate the AOM environment as it seeks to become more established.

### *Governance*

- Reconsider the 2 + 3 sequence. It is possible we misunderstood the intent. If not, creating a separate election cycle for the PDW/Program Chair (as a 2-year sequence) and the Interest Group Chair (as a 3-year sequence) would allow someone to take on the position of Interest Group Chair without being fully immersed in (and having done) the work of the Interest Group with respect to running the conference program and PDWs. It could be quite important for someone in the Chair sequence to have a keen understanding of the work that goes into that and the various issues that are faced in doing so, given its centrality to the life of any interest group/division. Also, it would be somewhat inconsistent with the sequence implemented by a majority of the other interest groups and divisions and with the AOM's orientation sequence/sessions for division and interest group officers. That said, we appreciate that SAP is most likely in the best position to determine the officer sequence that works best for it, given its operational environment and membership profile. The DIGR Committee is aware of the email exchange with Kerry Ignatz on this matter as well as the advice/guidance that she has offered. If you do decide to go down this road, we would strongly encourage you to take her specific advice into account.
- Reconsider the renaming of the PDW Chair to Assistant Program Chair. The PDW Chair already has quite a bit of work to do, and the renaming creates an inconsistency with the names and functions used by other divisions and the larger AOM, including in the orientation sequence/sessions. If the Program Chair needs help in a given year, it may be better to recruit assistants/volunteers, which would have the benefit of increasing participation, reducing perceptions that SAP is cliquish, and facilitate the development of future leaders.

- Implement a broader committee structure for the various tasks/issues the interest group faces. As the interest group becomes more established, this may help distribute the workload, increase participation, reduce perceptions that SAP is cliquish, and facilitate the development of future leaders.

### *Funding*

Look to what some other divisions, such as ENT, do by way of outside funding opportunities.

### *Mid-year meeting*

Consider instituting a mid-year meeting (physical or virtual) among the leadership team to carry the momentum forward beyond start-up. This will facilitate the planning that needs to occur and may also serve to assimilate new officers and board members, which is especially important as the founding leaders cycle off the board.

Clearly, SAP has accomplished quite a bit in a short period of time. The report reflected that well, and the DIGR Committee commends the interest group and the leadership team.