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# PANEL 14 RESEARCH FOR PRACTICE: EXPERIENCE WITH THE RESEARCH PROGRAM OF SIM'S ADVANCED PRACTICES COUNCIL

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## PANEL 14

### RESEARCH FOR PRACTICE: EXPERIENCE WITH THE RESEARCH PROGRAM OF SIM'S ADVANCED PRACTICES COUNCIL

**Panel Chair:** Madeline Weiss, Weiss Associates, Inc.

**Panelists:** Cynthia M. Beath, Southern Methodist University  
M. Lynne Markus, Claremont Graduate School  
Robert M. Rubin, Elf Atochem North America, Inc.

What is good research? This is a question about which considerable diversity of opinion exists. University-based researchers tend to define good research in terms of academic rigor; business people define it in terms of relevance. What business people find to be useful, many academicians deride as "mere consulting." Is there a middle ground, and, if so, where?

Recently, academic management research has come under heavy fire from the business community: *Business Week*, *Fortune*, and *Harvard Business Review* all claim that academic management research needs to become more relevant, more timely, more attuned to the needs of the business community. In prior ICIS panels, industry members have expressed considerable frustration with the irrelevance of academic research proposals, surveys, and results. One plausible way to increase the business relevance of academic Information Systems research is by creating research partnerships with senior information executives, for instance, by participating in industry-sponsored research programs such as that of SIM (Society for Information Management) International's Advanced Practices Council.

In 1992, SIM International created its Advanced Practices Council (APC) to provide a value-added learning experience for a small group of senior information executives. APC Member firms include: BellSouth Services, Elf Atochem, The New York Times, Xerox Corporation, Carrier Corporation, General Mills, Sara Lee Corporation, The Coca-Cola Company, Medtronic, and Whirlpool. APC members, in collaboration with the APC's Program Director (Madeline Weiss, President, Weiss Associates, Inc.) and Research Director (Robert Zmud, Florida State University), develop a research agenda about which proposals are solicited from university-based research teams.

As of July 1993, the APC had awarded two research contracts. The first award was made to the team of Cynthia Beath (Southern Methodist University), Dale Goodhue (University of Minnesota), and Jeanne Ross (Worcester Polytechnic Institute) for a project entitled "Reinventing the IS Organization: New Practices for Managing Information Technology." Since then, a second award was made to the team of Barbara Bashein (The Claremont Graduate School), M. Lynne Markus (The Claremont Graduate School), and Patricia Riley (University of Southern California) for research on "Accelerating the Transformation of Work Processes Associated with the Introduction of New IT Solutions." Additional awards by APC's Research Program are anticipated in the near future.

The purpose of the panel is to acquaint members of the academic Information Systems community with the aims, operation, and results of the Research Program of the APC in terms of one of the Program's key objectives: to create a "strong linkage between corporate and academic communities by engaging in areas of challenge and mutual interest together." The panel will be of interest to researchers who are seeking to obtain research funding from industrial sources, several of which (in addition to the APC) have become available in the last several years. (Among the other "industrial" sources that have recently funded IS researchers are Texas Instruments, The Financial Executives Institute, AT&T, Ernst and Young, The Marketing Science Institute, and the AACSB.)

This panel continues in the tradition of several prior ICIS panels that have brought together research funders (such as NSF) with potential applicants. In addition, the panel provides the ICIS community with the opportunity to explore divergent views about the nature of good research for practice. Among the questions that the panelists will address are the following:

- What is good research for practice? What are the characteristics of good research-for-practice questions?

- How does industry-funded, university-based research differ from consulting, if at all?
- How does industry-funded, university-based research differ from traditional academic management research, if at all?
- What are the tensions in industry-university research collaborations, and how can they be managed?
- How can university-based research teams increase their chances of success in obtaining industry funding and in producing research results that business people find relevant?

Panel Chair and APC Program Director Madeline Weiss will introduce the session, describe the purpose and history of the APC and its Research Program, and moderate the remaining presentations and discussion.

Cynthia Beath and M. Lynne Markus will represent the two academic research teams that have received contracts from the APC to date. They will briefly describe (1) the process of competing for the award (e.g., putting together the research team, writing the proposal, presenting the proposal), (2) their reactions to the experience of working with APC members (and with each other in these cross-university teams) while doing the funded research, and (3) their advice to other prospective research applicants.

Robert M. Rubin (Vice President, Information Systems, Elf Atochem North America, Inc., President-elect of SIM International, and APC steering committee member) will next describe APC member reactions to the experience of working with the academic research teams: what they've learned, what frustrations they've experienced, and what advice they would give to other business people embarking on academy/industry research collaborations.

Finally, the panel chair will moderate an open discussion among the panelists and the audience.