



# CALL FOR PROPOSALS

## “OUT OF THE SPOTLIGHT” STRATEGIES

PROGRAM CHAIRS

**Gregory R. Page**  
*Former CEO and Chairman, Cargill*

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*University of Minnesota*

If we were to ask you to list five exceptionally performing companies or to highlight five key industries of tomorrow, our expectation is that your answers would significantly overlap with the answers from other members of the Strategic Management Society. Similarly, the business media focuses on the strategies and actions of a set of high-profile companies, and our scholarship focuses on certain contexts and industries.

Although there are compelling reasons why some companies and industries take the spotlight with respect to media coverage, business discourse, and academic scholarship, the reality is that these companies and industries comprise only a fraction of global economic activity. Companies and industries that operate out of the spotlight – in net – have greater economic and social impact on their communities.

At the SMS 39th Annual Conference, we wish to explicitly recognize that some companies, industries, and questions grab the spotlight for our attention. By recognizing this, we wish to redirect the spotlight and rigorously assess the generalizability of our theories, findings, and business discourse. For example, food is a necessity for us all, the agriculture sector is the largest employer in the world, and the ‘food system’ accounts for between one quarter and one-fifth of GDP. However, few studies in strategic management focus on the food system. Can we confidently import our knowledge into this sector of the economy? Or does it deserve more explicit focus? And although the business press actively covers elements of the food system, other important elements go largely unnoticed.

Minneapolis is a fitting location to house a conference with this theme. Located in the north-central United States, it is out of the spotlight of the economic agglomerations of the coastal United States and generally not considered a major world economic center. However, Minneapolis-St. Paul is one of the most headquartered metropolitan areas in the United States – both in raw counts of large company headquarters and especially in headquarters per capita. Moreover, the businesses headquartered in the region are more than the often-discussed publicly traded companies (e.g., 3M, United Healthcare, and Target). The region is also home to large privately held companies – many with family ownership (e.g., Cargill, Carlson, and Andersen), and other companies with communal ownership such as cooperatives (e.g., CHS and Land O’Lakes). Many of the companies in the region operate in industries that are out of the spotlight, yet impact the lives of millions of people daily (e.g., filtration and residential construction materials).

Our goal in setting the conference theme and establishing the theme tracks is for the Society to explicitly address if we are missing economically and socially important phenomena. This will enhance our awareness of potential biases in our scholarship and biases within the general discourse of business practice. Most importantly, carefully considering these issues should help direct us in establishing a robust and reliable cumulative body of strategic management research.

## CONFERENCE THEME TRACKS

### **Track A: Strategic Management in “Out of the Spotlight” Contexts**

Track Chair: Brian Wu, *University of Michigan*

We invite submissions that focus on industries, settings, or questions where there is little strategic management scholarship. Are there novel firm strategies in these settings that create economic value as well as social value? Are there fundamental factors that have transformed these settings by reducing social and market frictions? For example, while e-commerce has primarily been conducted in urban areas, it has made enormous progress in rural areas in China, thanks to mobile technologies that have significantly lowered the informational, logistical, and transactional barriers. Such fundamental transformations have begun to occur in other sectors and countries and deserve more strategic management research.

### **Track B: Secrecy and Strategy**

Track Chair: Giada Di Stefano, *HEC Paris*

We invite submissions that help us address a broad range of questions related to the use of secrecy as a strategic tool. Some companies cherish the spotlight – some shun it. Some make openness a strategy – some would never give secrecy away. Some share their knowledge – some keep it well hidden. What makes companies opt for one approach instead of another? Under which conditions may the same firm resort to different strategies? And given the nature of secrecy, how can we study it, and what generalizations can we make?

### **Track C: Fostering Robust and Reliable Research in Strategic Management**

Track Chair: Gwendolyn Lee, *University of Florida*

We invite submissions that will aid understanding the robustness and reliability of strategic management research. For example, to what extent does our research generalize and under what conditions? To what extent are we subject to fads and fashions in management research and management discourse? How do we balance issues of novelty, recency, and rigor in building a cumulative body of strategy research?

## INTEREST GROUP TRACKS

### **Track E: Competitive Strategy**

Track Chair: PuayKhoon Toh, *University of Texas at Austin*

The Competitive Strategy Interest Group studies issues surrounding competition, a construct that is central to the strategy field. It focuses on firms’ interactions within product and factor markets and tackles a broad set of questions regarding competitive strategy across heterogeneous firms and environments. What is competitive advantage? How can a firm build and maintain a competitive advantage in a changing world? What roles do resources and capabilities play in shaping firms and industries over time and in different markets? While “out of the spotlight” firms may face different issues than the typical firms we examine, competition nonetheless remains a pervasive threat to them. Competitive Strategy Interest Group is aptly positioned to study how these “out of the spotlight” firms’ competitive strategies and interactions with others may differ from those prescribed in conventional theories. We call for contributions aimed at exploring the roles of firms in developing and implementing competitive strategies that are both responsive to and proactive in dealing with changing challenges across different types of products, markets, and environments. With the rapidly changing technological landscape that is radicalizing modern economies, new forms of interactions between firms are being introduced. We welcome studies that further our understanding of competitive strategies in this changing world.

### **Track F: Corporate Strategy**

Track Chair: Mario Schijven, *University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

Research in the Corporate Strategy Interest Group addresses firm scope and boundary decisions. Scholars draw on a range of theories and methods to examine how firms manage their business portfolios and organizational structures, as well as how they decide on and implement changes to those portfolios through diversification, vertical integration, acquisitions, divestitures, and other strategic activities. Corporate strategy research is particularly pertinent to this year’s conference theme since it addresses the firm as a whole and thus, can shed important light on how “out of the spotlight” firms differ, strategically and structurally, from those that have traditionally grabbed the spotlight. Along with proposals related to the general domain of the Corporate Strategy Interest Group, we encourage submissions that offer theory and evidence regarding how “out of the spotlight” firms grow, how firms enter and exit “out of the spotlight” contexts, and how insights from such work inform our understanding of the field of strategic management. Are existing theories generalizable beyond firms and contexts that have been our traditional focus? Do we need to broaden our theories or develop new ones altogether? How can scholars help managers better understand these issues and vice versa?

**Track G: Global Strategy**

Track Chair: Felipe Monteiro, *INSEAD*

The Global Strategy Interest Group welcomes submissions on issues relevant to firms operating in an international or global context. Relevant topics for the Global Strategy Track include, but are not limited to, cross-border corporate or business strategy, headquarter-subsidiary relationships, foreign entry and location strategies, and impact of political and institutional environments on firm-level strategies. This year's conference theme is particularly relevant to global strategy scholars, as there are a number of geographies and global strategies which still today go largely unnoticed. To date, most of the attention from scholars has been devoted to firms from/in highly visible locations (e.g. Silicon Valley, Paris, or Shanghai). However, studying global strategies in less visible geographies both developing (e.g. frontier) and developed (e.g. Minneapolis-St Paul) markets could offer novel insights. We also welcome submissions that offer creative but rigorous approaches to address the challenges of doing global strategy research in areas of the world where data access and quality are often problematic. Finally, the conference theme inspires us to rethink global strategy beyond the domain of well-established firms. Who are the out of the spotlight players in the global arena and what can we learn from their global strategies?

**Track H: Strategy Process**

Track Chair: Frances Fabian, *University of Memphis*

The Strategy Process Interest Group focuses on how strategies are formed, implemented, and changed across group, functional, business, corporate, and network levels of analysis. Our world's complex challenges accentuate the importance of social processes underlying strategic efforts within and across organizations in different sectors. We welcome contributions that examine the theoretical underpinnings of existing strategy process research. Equally, we look forward to receiving work that either questions or unifies current paradigms, theories, and frameworks. We also encourage submissions that contribute methodologically and/or theoretically to increasing our understanding of the formulation-implementation-outcome linkages of strategic processes. Given this year's conference theme, we welcome studies that focus on the strategy formulation and implementation processes of companies and industries operating outside the usual academic research and business media spotlight—such as the agricultural sector, ethnic communities, family-owned firms, cooperatives, and not-for-profit organizations—and thereby examine the generalizability of our strategy process frameworks.

**Track I: Knowledge and Innovation**

Track Chair: Elena Novelli, *City, University of London*

Today, much of the management of knowledge and innovation happens under the spotlight. Many products or services launched in the market receive real-time attention across the world; the development of knowledge and innovation itself happens in open collaborative platforms. In this context, we encourage submissions that explore dimensions of the management of knowledge and innovation that might remain out of the spotlight. For example, the spotlight is often captured by successful innovation outcomes (e.g. successful patent applications, launched products): how do organizations navigate the process of idea development and selection? To what extent, and how, has digital technology changed the way in which these processes are conducted? In a globally connected (and exposed) world, what knowledge management mechanisms are the most effective in keeping strategic knowledge protected within the boundaries of the organization, while still reaping the benefits of collaboration? How is knowledge transferred, while keeping it out of the spotlight? Larger firms tend to get most of the media attention: what roles do smaller innovative companies have in emerging innovation ecosystems? Is it possible for them to pursue long-term success without necessarily being acquired? These are just some of the questions we would like to see addressed.

**Track J: Strategy Practice**

Track Chair: Shenghui Ma, *University of Zurich*

The Strategy Practice Interest Group focuses on the doing of strategy. It is interested in opening the 'black box' of strategy work by examining the actors, activities, and practices that are involved in formulating, implementing, and changing strategies. It also aims at linking the strategy work to important outcomes across different levels and various contexts in which strategy actors operate. The focus on strategy as a social practice enables researchers to engage in a direct dialogue with practitioners, as they often examine issues that are directly relevant to those who are dealing with strategy. Our interest in opening the 'black box' of strategy-making resonates particularly well with the conference theme. While welcoming all contributions that are aligned with our general interest, we particularly seek those that reveal what strategy making looks like in the industries, countries, or other contexts that have received little public and scholarly attention, and that focus on the strategy actors, activities, and practices that have largely been neglected by existing research.

**Track K: Entrepreneurship and Strategy**

Track Chair: Aseem Kaul, *University of Minnesota*

Visibility is a mixed blessing for practitioners and scholars of entrepreneurship. For practitioners, being out of the spotlight may limit resource access, but secrecy may protect new ideas, and help avoid attention from established rivals. For entrepreneurship scholars, the existing literature offers a rich understanding of how for-profit ventures in mature economies mobilize and govern resources, but we know relatively little about how entrepreneurs (especially in emerging economies) mobilize resources through non-market means and govern their use through non-formal mechanisms, despite the prevalence of such entrepreneurial activity. The Entrepreneurship and Strategy Interest Group welcomes submissions that engage with this year's conference theme, addressing questions that include (but are not limited to): How do entrepreneurs balance the inevitable visibility that comes with market creation against the need to obscure the nature of their activities during this entrepreneurial phase? How do entrepreneurs identify promising yet unconsidered opportunities and mobilize resources to pursue them? What are some contexts—industries, geographies, or stages of business—that prior research has largely overlooked, and what can these contexts teach us about entrepreneurship?

**Track L: Strategic Human Capital**

Track Chair: David Kryscynski, *Brigham Young University*

The Strategic Human Capital Interest Group welcomes submissions on the influence of human capital on firm performance. Human capital represents the knowledge, skills, abilities and other attributes of individuals and has been studied at both the individual and unit level. Thus, the area of strategic human capital is concerned with how firms leverage human capital resources to achieve competitive advantage. In concert with the conference theme, we are particularly interested in research that addresses the following types of questions: How does the coordination and management of strategic human capital differ across contexts and industries? Or does it? Are there “out of the spotlight” strategies for managing human capital, and are they sources of competitive advantage? What role does human capital mobility play in “out of the spotlight” companies and their relative competitiveness? How does employment in an “out of the spotlight” sector, company, or industry affect visibility and rent appropriation for individuals? Does the degree of public awareness to a firm or industry impact how human capital resources are acquired and leveraged? How do our theories of human capital value, rent appropriation, mobility, etc. manifest in less-studied sectors (e.g., non-profit and government)?

**Track M: Stakeholder Strategy**

Track Chair: Olga Hawn, *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

In the Stakeholder Strategy Interest Group we seek to understand how and when firms engage with various stakeholders, directly or indirectly affecting and/or affected by the firm. For a while, these strategies have been “out of the spotlight” of many companies but given the ever-changing normative environment and the growing demands for greater stakeholder engagement, they are quickly catching on and becoming “the spotlight” of many companies around the world. We invite you to consider the different drivers behind the adoption of stakeholder strategies, the challenges and opportunities in their implementation, as well as the various outcomes, whether it is helping companies attract and retain the best talent, improve innovation or reputation, influence analyst or investor assessments, or survive and prosper in the long term. We believe it is time for stakeholder strategies to come “out of the spotlight” and help us advance our collective understanding of how managers—including those at private, public, and nonprofit institutions—contribute to creating value for stakeholders, the firm, and society at large.

**Track N: Cooperative Strategies**

Track Chair: Isin Guler, *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

Research in the Cooperative Strategies Interest Group addresses how individuals, groups, and organizations come together toward common goals and the impact of these collaborative efforts on outcomes at multiple levels. We welcome proposal submissions related to the general domain of the Cooperative Strategies Interest Group. We also encourage submissions that focus on organizations, industries, processes, or structures out of the spotlight of current research attention. Are existing theories we use to explain cooperative arrangements equally valid for organizations out of the spotlight? What can we learn about incentives, structures, and processes enabling cooperative strategies from studies of collaborations among less conventional firms and organizations? How can managers negotiate the contradictions of collaboration under secrecy? How can advancements in data access and research methods help expand our understanding of collaborative arrangements in less-studied contexts? Are there typical and understudied cooperative strategies that characterize these contexts, including the food system? What is the economic and social impact of cooperative strategies of companies and industries operating out of the spotlight on their communities?

**Track O: Strategic Leadership & Governance**

Track Chair: Christine Shropshire, *Arizona State University*

On the one hand, some organizations and executives attract media attention and become celebrities. Corporate governance research suggests that unique benefits and burdens accompany this renown. On the other hand, other organizations and executives, very often with similar levels of performance, attract little attention. While these more anonymous actors do not enjoy the benefits of celebrity, they may avoid the pressures and hazards that may accompany celebrity. Accordingly, a wide variety of important strategic leadership and governance research questions arise as a result of this divide. For example, how are corporate governance processes influenced by media attention on a firm and/or its CEO? What benefits might firms or executives enjoy by flying under the media radar? How actively do firms court attention and, conversely, might there be firms that actively work to avoid attention? Is CEO celebrity portable? That is, will it follow an executive or is it idiosyncratic to the firm at which a CEO is employed?

**Track P: Behavioral Strategy**

Track Chair: Nicolai Foss, *Bocconi University*

Research in the Behavioral Strategy Interest Group addresses how psychology insights can inform the theory and practice of strategic management. Scholars in the Interest Group draw on insights on decision heuristics and biases, risk-taking, cognitive schema, advances in motivational psychology, learning anomalies, and studies of executive narcissism and hubris. Behavioral strategy is highly pertinent to this year's conference theme, as the theme directs attention to courses of strategic action that may be overlooked or neglected, for example, because of such phenomena as confirmation biases and escalating commitment (to existing strategies), and the need to stimulate cognitive variety, such as, within the top management team. Along with proposals related to the general domain of the Behavioral Strategy Interest Group, we encourage submissions that offer theory and evidence regarding the factors that make strategies more or less cognitively salient, and how companies may establish the cognitive and motivational conditions that minimize the risk the potentially profitable "out of the spotlight" strategies are neglected. Do we need to broaden our theories or develop new ones altogether? What relevant research can help us here? How can scholars help managers better understand these issues and vice versa?

**COMMUNITY TRACKS**

**Track R: Research Methods**

Track Chair: Andreas Schwab, *Iowa State University*

Researchers face a variety of methodological challenges when investigating strategic behavior and its outcomes. Recent concerns about the replicability of published findings have called established methodological practices into question and have triggered efforts to improve these practices. Beyond a reassessment of existing approaches, this year's conference theme encourages us to also consider the value of methodologies and tools that, thus far, have rarely been applied in strategy research. Both advanced, traditional, and emerging methodological approaches have the potential to shift not only how we answer questions, but also what questions we can ask. The Research Methods Community seeks to introduce and engage conference participants in related discussions and debates. We are interested in proposals focused on both qualitative and quantitative methodologies applying deductive, abductive, or exploratory approaches. While we seek proposals pertaining to the conference's theme, we also welcome proposals that promise to advance strategy research practices in other ways.

**Track T: Teaching Community**

Track Chair: Ronaldo Parente, *Florida International University*

Teaching strategy is about sharing and extending received wisdom, while co-creating new insights with our students. Often the way new strategic knowledge is absorbed and applied relies heavily on 'scaffolding' – or attaching new ideas and facts to a framework of existing research and beliefs. Is our strategy 'scaffold' still robust? Can it accommodate the complexities of the changing world order? If not, where can we make changes at the classroom or university department level? How might our field develop a broader, coordinated response? While we may have our share of theoretical and pedagogical differences, we must now contend with serious dislocations due to de-globalization. How will we adjust our teaching methods and content to address uncertainties about regulatory, legal, technological, and geopolitical forces? Will we continue to treat International Strategy as a course separate from Competitive Strategy? Will we collaborate more closely with scholars in Policy and Politics? Please share your response to how you are addressing the changes that are rocking your students' worldviews in proposals for the Teaching Community.

**SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS**

**Proposals (5–7 pages)**

Seeking only original and unpublished work.

**Deadline for Submission of Proposals: February 20, 2019**

To learn more about the  
SMS 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Minneapolis  
and the submission process, please go to [minneapolis.strategicmanagement.net](http://minneapolis.strategicmanagement.net)



### Timeline:

<b>February 20, 2019</b>	Submission Deadline for Proposals
<b>February 27, 2019</b>	Co-Author Confirmation Deadline
<b>Mid-April 2019</b>	Notifications of Program Review Committee Decisions
<b>Mid-July 2019</b>	Conference Program Available Online
<b>October 19-22, 2019</b>	SMS 39 <sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Minneapolis

## a professional society for the advancement of strategic management

The Strategic Management Society (SMS) is unique in bringing together the worlds of reflective practice and thoughtful scholarship. The Society consists of over 3,000 members representing over 80 different countries. Membership, composed of academics, business practitioners, and consultants, focuses its attention on the development and dissemination of insights on the strategic management process, as well as fostering contacts and interchange around the world.

The Society is best known through the Strategic Management Journal (SMJ) published by John Wiley & Sons. This Class A journal has become the leading scholarly publication in the field of Strategic Management and is consistently rated one of the top publications in the management area. In 2007 the Society launched the Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal (SEJ) and in 2010 the Global Strategy Journal (GSJ). The intent is for these quarterly publications to promote the development and dissemination of advances in the field by maintaining the highest standards of intellectual thought combined with practical relevance, just as their sister publication SMJ has done for many years.



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