

GUIDELINES TO CONTRIBUTORS

Oxford Handbook of Professional Service Firms

*Edited by Laura Empson, Daniel Muzio, Joe Broschak, and Bob Hinings
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According to Oxford University Press:

“The Oxford Handbooks are one of the most successful and cited series within scholarly publishing, containing in-depth, high-level articles by scholars at the top of their field.”

Overview of Oxford Handbook of Professional Service Firms

A professional service firm applies specialist technical knowledge to the creation of customized solutions to clients’ problems (Empson, 2007a). The term has traditionally been used to describe firms working within the formally regulated professions, such as law, accountancy, engineering, architecture and actuarial science, but is often used more broadly to encompass firms such as management consultancies, advertising agencies, and investment banks (Von Nordenflycht, 2010).

In the past two decades professional service firms have emerged as some of the most rapidly growing, profitable, and powerful organizations in the global economy. The sector generates more than US\$ 3 trillion in revenues globally (Suddaby, Greenwood, & Wilderom, 2008). In the UK the sector employs almost 12% of the workforce and represents 8% of UK output (Professional Services Global Competitiveness Group Report, 2009). However, the significance of professional service firms to the global economy extends far beyond their scale. They play an important role in developing human capital, creating innovative business services, and setting legal and accounting standards. They have helped to reshape government institutions and privatised industries throughout the world, define and promulgated management “best practice”, and establish and interpret the rules of the financial markets. As Sharma states (1997: 758), without professional service firms “business as we know it would come to a grinding halt”. Yet traditional management models offer only limited insight into the complex interpersonal and interorganizational dynamics that operate within this sector.

Reflecting the distinctive characteristics of professionals and the organizations and institutions which they help to create, a number of significant edited volumes focused on this field have been published in recent years (e.g. Brock, Powell, and Hinings, 1999; Empson, 2007b; Muzio, Ackroyd, and Chanalat, 2007; Reihlen and Werr, forthcoming) as well as special issues of journals such as *Organization Studies* (2003), *Journal of Management Studies* (Forthcoming), *Journal of Organizational Behaviour* (2008), and *Research in the Sociology of Organizations* (2006). As the professional service firm literature matures there is a pressing need for *consolidation*, *differentiation* and *integration*. This Oxford University Press Handbook provides an important opportunity to address these three challenges.

Underlying themes

Consolidation

The proliferation of studies on professional service firms in recent years has created a substantial but somewhat fragmented body of literature. The volume will critique, review and consolidate the relevant literature and examine relevant studies from a range of disciplines. The Editors encourage contributors to consider how “classic” studies in this area are being challenged by contemporary developments in the field and to look beyond studies of professional service firms to examine more broadly-based theoretical and empirical work which can be applied to this sector to generate new insights. The Handbook aims to synthesize and critique what has been learnt to date and define future research directions. The Editors’ Introductory and Concluding chapters in particular will seek to fulfil this role.

Differentiation

Studies of firms in specific professional sectors suffer from a tendency to claim generalisability across professional service firms as a whole, without sufficient regard to the sector-specific organizational practices and knowledge bases, the geographic and institutional context in which these firms are operating, and the impact of size and scale. The Handbook chapters will identify significant differences and similarities across professional sectors and markets with a view to identifying research which has more generalisable applicability, as well as that which is highly sector-specific, thus helping scholars to avoid crude generalizations. In other words, the Editors encourage contributors to examine the themes of homogeneity and heterogeneity across the field of professional service firms as a whole.

Integration

Finally an explicit focus on the integration of multiple levels of analysis will make it possible to capture the complex interactions of individuals, organizations, and institutions which are characteristic of the professional service firm sector. The individual professional is fundamental to the functioning of the firm. At the same time the changing context plays a vital role in shaping and constraining the strategic choices available to professional service firms and the behaviours and beliefs of the professionals within them. By neglecting to integrate the individual, organizational, and institutional level of analysis, researchers in this field are too often left with a partial or even distorted perspective of the phenomenon which they are investigating.

As shown overleaf, the Handbook is broadly organised around three sections (“Changing Context”, “Professional Firms”, and “Professionals”) but the Editors encourage contributors to incorporate an explicitly multi-level focus which encompasses the individual, organization, and institution.

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Chapter	Title	Contributor(s)	Affiliation
1	Introduction and Future Research Directions	<i>Editors</i>	
Changing context			
2	Theoretical perspectives	Roy Suddaby	Alberta
		Daniel Muzio	Manchester
3	Regulation	Sigrid Quack	Max Planck
		Elke Schussler	Freie U of Berlin
4	Client relationships	Joe Broschak	Arizona
5	Internationalisation	Mehdi Boussebaa	Bath
		Glenn Morgan	Cardiff
6	Organisations and occupations	Ian Kirkpatrick	Leeds
		Mirko Noordeegraaf	Utrecht
7	Homogeneity and heterogeneity	Andrew Von Nordenflycht	Simon Fraser
		Namrata Malhotra	Imperial
		Tim Morris	Oxford
Professional firm			
8	Governance	Huseyin Leblebici	Illinois
		Peter Sherer	Calgary
9	Leadership	Laura Empson	Cass
		Ann Langley	HEC
10	Strategy and strategic alignment	John Mawdsley	Illinois.
		Deepak Somaya	Illinois.
11	Knowledge and learning	James Faulconbridge	Lancaster
12	Marketing and reputation management	Vince Mitchell	Cass
		William Harvey	Sydney
13	Outsourcing and offshoring	Mari Sako	Oxford
14	Service innovation	Michael Barrett	Cambridge
		Bob Hinings	Alberta
15	Entrepreneurship	Markus Reihlen	Lüneburg
		Andreas Werr	Stockholm
Professionals			
16	Identity	Mats Alvesson	Lund
		Dan Karreman	Copenhagen
		Kate Sullivan	Lund
17	HRM	Juani Swart	Bath
		Nick Kinnie	Bath
18	Teamwork	Heidi Gardner	HBS
19	Diversity	Hilary Sommerlad	Birmingham
		Louise Ashley	Kent
20	Ethics	Hugh Gunz	U of Toronto
		Sally Gunz	Waterloo
		Ronit Dinovitzer	U of Toronto
21	Careers	Laurie Cohen	Nottingham U
		Duluni Fernando	Warwick

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Editors

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