
Socio-Economic Approach to Management Treatise

Theory and Practices

edited by

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PREFACE TO ENGLISH EDITION

Using the Socio-Economic Approach to Management to Tackle Societal Grand Challenges

Herman Aguinis

I am delighted to write a preface for this definitive tome on socio-economic theory and the socio-economic approach to management (SEAM) co-edited by Henri Savall and Véronique Zardet. Since 1973, when he earned his PhD in economics, Professor Henri Savall has been an indefatigable researcher, educator, leader, and change-maker on a global scale. His journey regarding the creation and development of SEAM began with the publication of his 1975 book *Enriching Work, Economic Evaluation*. Since then, he founded the Institute of Socio-Economics of Enterprises and Organizations (ISEOR) in Lyon, which I had the privilege to visit on several occasions, disseminated SEAM through more than 40 trips to North America and 80 to Latin America, and developed numerous partnerships with universities, non-for-profit, and for-profit organizations. The success of his ISEOR team is no doubt also related to the fact that he has adopted a trilingual approach (i.e., French, English, and Spanish) in his publications as well in his educational and organizational applications and interventions.

I first learned about SEAM in the early 2000s. In a nutshell, SEAM has a dual and simultaneous focus on people *and* financial results. In addition, SEAM highlights the critical role of employee engagement and the need to develop the potential of all employees. This dual approach results in increased efficiency and profitability, sustainable organizational development, and higher levels of employee engagement.

The SEAM approach taught us, long ago, that we must focus on both people and profits. But, when it was first proposed, it was ahead of its time. Today, we see how needed and useful the SEAM approach can be for addressing many of today's societal grand challenges (Kunisch et al., 2023). Although I could refer to several, I will describe just three such grand

challenges and an admittedly selected set of chapters in this book illustrating the usefulness of the SEAM approach to tackle each of them.

SEAM AND ENCOURAGING CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Arguably, the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) was launched by Howard Bowen in his 1953 book *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman*. Bowen wrote that organizational leaders have an obligation to make decisions and implement actions that are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society. In other words, leaders have an obligation to consider both the people and profit aspects of their organizations. SEAM is entirely consistent with this approach and therefore very well positioned to address grand challenges related to CSR, as illustrated in the chapter by Eva Conraud Koellner and Martha Ríos Manríquez titled “Impact of the socio-economic model on corporate social responsibility.”

In addition to people and profit, CSR is also conceptualized to include a third “planet” dimension and hence CSR is usually referred to as addressing the “three ps:” People, profit, and planet (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). The SEAM approach is also ideally suited to address grand challenges related to climate change as well as environmental and business sustainability, as described in the chapter by Raymond Saner and Lichia Yiu titled “Successful sustainable development goals transformation through socio-economic co-creation,” the chapter by Christophe Combaudon and Helga Fouré-Joopen titled “The creation of sustainable enterprises: Contributions of the socio-economic approach to management,” the chapter “An original and evaluated experiment to stimulate the sustainable development of socio-economic productivity” by Philippe Lacroix, Frantz Datry and Rodolphe Bachaud, and the one titled “Environmental change and strategic management of Universities. Towards a paradigm shift?” by Claude Jameux.

SEAM AND PROMOTING EQUITY, INCLUSION, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND HEALTH

Equity, inclusion, social justice, and health are also considered societal grand challenges of the 21st-century. What is the role of organizations in promoting opportunities for all? What can and should organizations do to promote employee mental and physical wellbeing?

Because of SEAM’s emphasis on employee development and engagement, it is an ideal approach for encouraging organizations to be more equitable and inclusive in the allocation of opportunities and resources. Good examples of this point are the chapters by Henri Savall, Michel Péron, Véronique Zardet and Marc Bonnet titled “Socially responsible capitalism” and Pierre-Alain Raphan’s chapter titled “Socially responsible policy does exist.”

On a related note, the SEAM approach has been applied successfully in health organizations, whose obvious goal is to promote both mental and physical wellbeing. Examples of the successful application of the SEAM approach include the chapter titled “The socio-economic approach to management and hospital organizations” by Anne Thiébaud-Bertrand and Denis Fièrè, the chapter “Interaction between regulation and organization: The case of the hospital system” by Frédéric Kletz and Jean-Claude Moisdon, and the chapter titled “The socio-economic improvement project, a source of quality and performance in hospitals” by Chantal Thouverez.

SEAM AND ALLEVIATING POVERTY AND PROMOTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As a third example of societal grand challenges that can be tackled successfully by applying the SEAM approach, consider the issues of poverty and economic development. Small and family-owned business are the engine of the economy in most countries worldwide. For example, in Latin America, family businesses account for about 60% of the gross national product and over 80 % of total employment (Gomez-Mejia et al., 2023).

The SEAM approach is also ideally positioned to address the grand challenge of how to alleviate poverty and accelerate economic development, especially with a focus on small and medium enterprises—including family-owned businesses. Good examples of this point are the chapter by Gérard Desmaison and Thomas Rouveure titled “Survival-development of very small enterprises,” and the chapter by Victor Frontera and Victor Caumeil titled “Professionalization of a family business through human support in order to sustain value creation.”

In closing, I have been fortunate to have been exposed to the SEAM approach years ago. I certainly hope this tome will serve as a catalyst for the further dissemination of this approach worldwide.

—Herman Aguinis

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