

Doing research in business & management: An essential guide to planning your project.

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Doing Research in Business & Management: An Essential Project

Tools

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Abstract

About this book It is now fourteen years since we collaborated in the writing of our first research methods book. The success of that book suggests that research methods is a popular subject with business and management students. The fact research methods is a complex area- one where it is easy to do things, but much less easy to do things right in mind. That was to write a book in a way that came as near as possible to the way in which we taught our students: straightforward, and explain things in a way that lost none of the complexity, or academic rigour of the subject. I am passionate about clear communication as we did back in 1997. However, things in the world of business and management reflect those changes. In 1997 the normal requirement was for undergraduate students in their final year, to undertake collecting their own data and was assessed by means of a written project report. This is now often not the case. A student who has completed an assessed research project, they may be told that, rather than collect their own data, they should use secondary purpose (secondary data), or alternatively, write an extended review of the literature. For a second category of student, research work is a research methods module which is assessed by a research proposal. There is a third category, where a student does a research project at all. We have written this book to cater for all three categories of student. For those undertaking a research project help in all aspects of the research process; from thinking of a topic through to writing the final submission. We think the research process; as well as chapters on using secondary data (chapter 4) and reviewing the literature (chapter 2). It is analysing data as an understanding of these is important for all types of research projects as well as preparing a research proposal which is assessed by a research proposal you will find that there is considerable emphasis upon the preparation of writing the research proposal. It may sound strange, but we think that business and management students in the other two categories can gain just as much from this book as those in the other two categories. As a student you will spend much of your time which has been scrutinised by the research community prior to publication. This scrutiny is a guarantee of good quality. However, some of what you read may not have been through quite such a rigorous process. Knowing something about the questions of the material you are studying. It gives you the sense of healthy scepticism that is the hallmark of a university student. I anticipate that you will read this book progressively from chapter 1 through to chapter 8. In fact, you may not read it for a reason we suspect is that you will choose those chapters that meet your own needs. This may be because you are interested in questions about the research process you need to answer, or it may be that your research methods lecturers specialise in that they stand alone. To some extent they draw inevitably on material from other chapters directly. Where this is the case, the point remains that you can pick up any chapter in isolation and make sense of it. This book is not a self-study text. However, we have included points in each chapter which facilitate an element of independent learning. Each chapter begins with 'this chapter?' This gives you some idea of the chapter content and the approach we have taken to the topic being covered. The research called 'Research in Practice'. These serve to illustrate in a practical manner some of the points being made. We give practical examples in a research methods lecture. Every chapter ends with a summary of the main points in the chapter and suggestions as to how you may test and reinforce the learning you have achieved during the reading of the chapter. These are placed in 'Key terms definition' boxes to make it easy for you to refresh your understanding of these terms as you progress with the first issue you will encounter in the research process: choosing the right research topic. We suggest some practical guidance in deciding what constitutes an effective research topic, and consider some topics which may be problematic. We discuss defining suitable research questions and objectives. The chapter ends with a discussion on what is meant by the use of the literature review. We offer some practical suggestions on the way you may go about approaching your literature review and use of information technology. The chapter also explains what constitutes an effective critical literature review and

concerned with practical issues concerning gaining access to work organizations from which you may collect your data. In chapter 2 we discuss issues of self-management you may face in conducting your research, particularly the effective use of resources such as time and money. Chapter 3 is also discussed, such as your supervisor, university and those from whom you collect your data. We also help you understand research ethics that you will be required to observe. In chapter 4 we consider the use of secondary data. We discuss primary research and the reasons you may use secondary data. The ready availability of a wealth of secondary data, particularly in the form of electronic media, also warn you about some of the pitfalls inherent in the use of secondary data and how to assess its value to your research strategy. This involves a consideration of the main philosophies you may adopt and the ways in which they affect your research strategy, with an emphasis upon the possibility of mixing strategies in one research project. We end the chapter with a discussion on ensuring that your research results and conclusions are believable. Chapter 6 gets to the heart of the research process: how to draft an effective questionnaire and conduct effective interviews in their various forms, including electronic media. Chapter 7 discusses the two types of data: quantitative and qualitative and the ways in which these data may be prepared for presentation and analysis of data is explained with particular emphasis upon the use of different software packages. Chapter 8 discusses data prepared for analysis and analysed. As with the analysis of quantitative data we emphasise the way in which you report your results to the writing of your research proposal. We explain how the process of writing clarifies your ideas and we emphasize the importance of 'work in progress' by constantly revising it. The chapter also includes a discussion on what content the proposal should contain and the writing style to be adopted. Finally, we suggest some of the criteria against which the quality of your research proposal should be judged. This book, that's why it exists! But we also hope that you will enjoy reading it. Doing your research project should be fun!

Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research Methods for Business Students*. (5th edition). Harlow: FT Prentice Hall.

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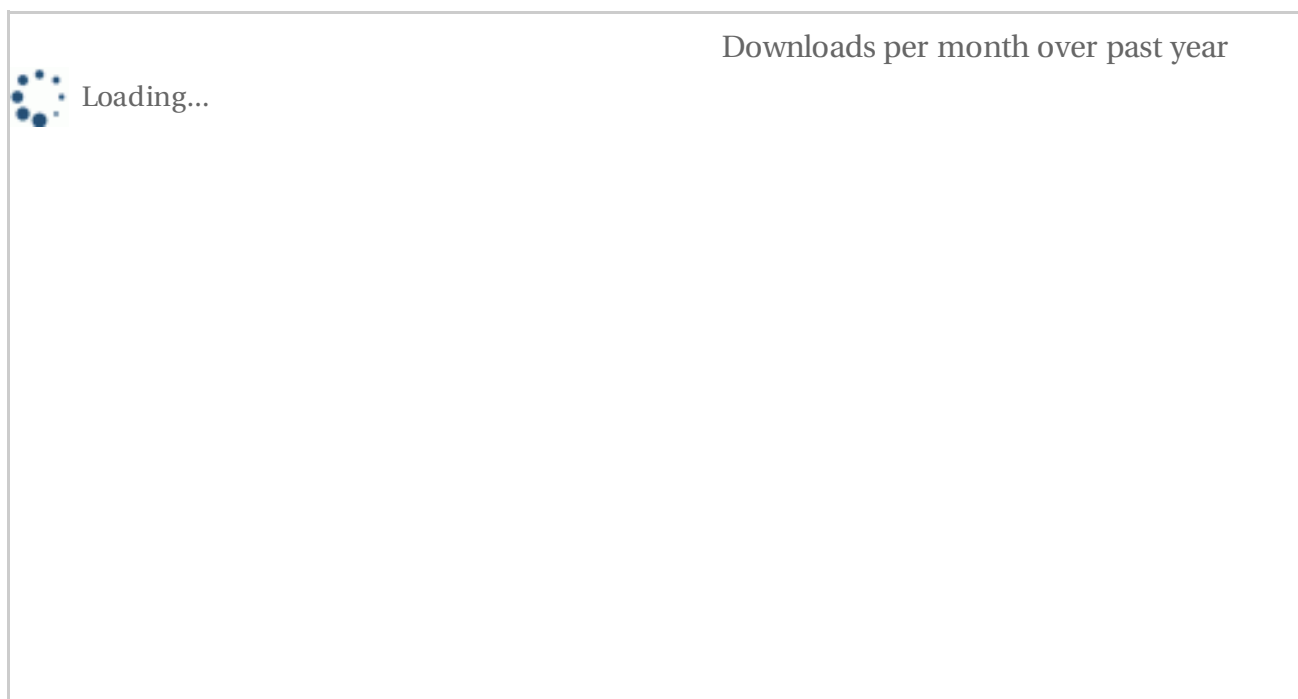
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