

Editorial

Making PIQ the Human Performance Technologist's Journal of Choice

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It is an honor to be selected to serve as the editor of *Performance Improvement Quarterly (PIQ)*. It is humbling, too. How do I maintain and build on the high standards set by the previous editors, Michael Cassidy and Karen Medsker, in more than 7 years of exemplary service?

While pondering this question, I remembered a good friend and early key influence in both my personal and professional life. Russell B. Johnson was a mid-career graduate student at the University of Virginia when I was an undergraduate there. He earned his PhD and eventually became an associate professor of psychology at Western Illinois University. A person of great integrity, he was a devoted teacher, had many publications early in his academic career, and was very active in community service. A few years before he passed away, I asked him why he had not been appointed a full professor. His reply was something like this:

Well, Richard, I keep up with journals in psychology. It takes a lot of time to read them, and most of it is junk. After a while, I realized I didn't want to add to the mountain of garbage, so I stopped publishing.

What I take from Dr. Johnson's lesson is a desire to help *PIQ* focus on what is most useful. Of course, this is easier said than done. As most of us know, some of the most groundbreaking discoveries in science have taken years to come to fruition in ways that are helpful to the world. We usually do not know in advance where research will lead.

PIQ's Future as a Research Journal for Practitioners

Research is the lifeblood of academia, and *PIQ's* value should be evident there. But, the human performance technology (HPT) community is domi-

nated by practitioners. So I see part of *PIQ*'s responsibility as helping research *findings* become useful to practitioners. In other words, *PIQ* should strive to show how research findings can apply in the world of practitioners, what can be generalized and what cannot, what is currently practical, and what may be possible.

PIQ can also help research *methods* become accessible to practitioners. Research is a part of any HPT paradigm: In a sense, all HPT practice is an experiment. The practitioner's work is not over until the experiment has produced the intended outcomes. *PIQ* can help practitioners choose research strategies and tools appropriate for their HPT work. *PIQ* can help academics, too: Reports of practitioners' challenges, approaches, and results can provide valuable real-world feedback to researchers. *PIQ* is well situated to promote collaboration among academics and practitioners.

Research Comes in Many Forms

From our HPT point of view, everything is part of a system, but there are different ways of viewing systems, as Alfred North Whitehead and Bertrand Russell famously argued. To Whitehead, systems were like a bowl of jelly, while to Russell, they were like a container of pellets. Depending on how we "slice and dice" our systems, many types of research may be acceptable for *PIQ*. I think research in *PIQ* should run the gamut from jumping into the jelly to counting pellets, from what Whitehead called his "muddle-headed" approach, appropriate for delving into complex issues, to what Russell referred to as his "simple-minded" approach, suitable for more sharply defined issues.

I would like *PIQ* to publish many types of research, ranging from naturalistic observation, to case studies, to quasi-experimental field studies, to controlled laboratory studies. *PIQ* can also be open to a wide variety of formats, including research notes, research reports, reviews of multiple studies, case studies, and even opinion pieces supported by rigorous arguments and relevant evidence.

PIQ's Challenges

PIQ faces difficult challenges if it is to become the journal of choice for professionals seeking to apply replicable, research-based findings and methods in their organizational improvement work. First, *PIQ* must address topics of wider interest and applicability in the field.

Here are a few examples: "Why and when organizations should call in HPT practitioners," "What research says about achieving useful change in large organizations," and "Do different types of rewards have different results in different types of organizations?" Further, *PIQ* should not dodge articles that present data to support controversial conclusions such as "Evidence that addressing learning styles is a dead end" and "How use of personality constructs impedes good performance management."

PIQ is also challenged by a world where instantly available social interaction on any topic one can dream of is just a mouse click away. To compete with the instant gratification of the Web, I want to capitalize on *PIQ*'s strengths as a print medium—an outstanding pool of experienced contributors, both academics and practitioners, a peer review process, careful editing, and an editorial policy geared toward the needs of HPT professionals. I would also like to create a Web-based adjunct to *PIQ*, where readers and authors can interact.

These are some of my ideas at the beginning of my role as *PIQ* editor, before I have had to struggle with deadlines and other realities of journal life. However, you, the knowledgeable reader, are *PIQ*'s primary stakeholder. What are your ideas? Please let me know by e-mailing me at publications@ispi.org.