

Where Does Useful Knowledge Come From?

ELMAR Contribution by J. Scott Armstrong

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We recently completed a study on the sources of useful knowledge about forecasting. It was published with commentaries (e.g., by Mark Uncles) and a reply in the latest issue of *Interfaces* (Nov/Dec 2003, pp. 89-111). To be useful, knowledge must help a forecaster determine what actions to take in a given situation. The study presented a usefulness index based on (a) the number of citations by other researchers, and (b) whether the findings contributed to principles. We concluded the following, which likely also applies to many areas of marketing:

1. Virtually all useful knowledge comes from academic research. 89% of the findings were presented in academic journals. Trade journals made negligible contributions.
2. Special treatment (e.g., invited) papers had an average usefulness index that was 20 times that for papers accepted through traditional reviewing channels. In addition, invited papers are less expensive to process.
3. Dissemination and utilization of knowledge are poor. To address this, we propose the development of web sites devoted to principles (condition/action statements). These sites would summarize knowledge in various areas so that practitioners and researchers can use it.

Full-text versions of my paper and reply are provided at

<http://www-marketing.wharton.upenn.edu/people/faculty/armstrong2.html#scientific>

or at <http://jscottarmstrong.com> (last item under "Assessing academic research.")