

EXTRA STEP: Managerial Recommendations Developed by Prof. Dr. Francisco Tigre Moura

Imagine the following scene: You go to a doctor because you have a weird pain in what you think might be a human organ, that you are not sure why you have it in your body. After arriving at the hospital, you describe to the doctor your condition:

You are not sure if the pain was caused because you have been eating too many slices of four cheese pizza (my favorite flavor) or simply because you have been drinking 5 cappuccinos per day for the last 5.913 consecutive days (which I probably also have).

The doctor asks you to follow the nurse and go through a few check-up tests: MRIs, X-rays, blood tests, 5km sprints, gardening techniques, singing “Bohemian Rhapsody” a Capella and much more. Once all check-ups are over, the doctor examines all results and tells you:

“Son, I think you have rare form of claustrophobic pancreas. This is affecting the inner pride of your lungs and making your expansive heart feel both lonely and susceptible to storms of tears”.

After describing quite poetically your condition, the doctor simply leaves the room and goes away.

Would you think this is a good doctor? ABSOLUTELY NOT! Why? Well, apart from having bizarre methods of investigation and post-modern terms to describe one’s condition, the doctor HAS NOT TOLD YOU WHAT TO DO BASED ON RESULTS OF YOUR CHECK-UP!

EXACTLY! The development and interpretation of results from a patients’ diagnosis represents only 50% of a doctors’ job. The other 50% represents TELLING ACCURATELY WHAT THE PATIENT MUST DO BASED ON RESULTS to heal the negative condition.

IMPORTANT: In your thesis, we call it “managerial recommendations” or “managerial Implications”. It represents the moment where you tell the reader what should or must be done based on the findings of your thesis.

Ps: Does it also represent 50% of the work in my thesis? NO, NO, NO!!! Usually it represents the LAST section of your thesis, before listing your references and it is a fairly brief section.

Nonetheless, it is a very important section of your thesis. Students should show both creativity and expertise to interpret results and propose solutions.

Here are some personal recommendations “From me to you” (This has to be a title of a cheesy song) of what you should keep in mind when working on this section:

HERE WE GO!

1. Breath and rest before starting

Very often, this is the last section students will work on before finishing their thesis. At this point they are tired, exhausted of working on the same topic and just want to get it done with. Tiredness will come across very easily in your work. How? The reader might clearly identify that the section is:

- *Too short and without depth*
- *The wording is not as careful and detailed*
- *The ideas are superficial*

And probably why? You were simply “too tired and out of breath”.

So if you think by this stage you have gone out of breath, I suggest the following:

- *Take a day off and watch Netflix to unwind* (Have you seen “Narcos” or “Black Mirror”? They are great!).
- *Next day, make yourself a nice drink*
- *Put some nice music on* (Don’t even get me started on suggesting music...), and;
- **Start writing some amazing managerial recommendations!**

2. Recommendations ONLY based on your findings

This is perhaps the most common mistake I see from students. To explain this, let us go back to a medical example (Not sure why I am continuing in this topic, but hang in there will be a logic to it 😊).

Imagine you go a doctor and he asks you to take an X-ray of your right foot. After you have done it, he prescribes you to have surgery on your left elbow. **Would that make sense? NO!** He

examined your right foot, so why would he suggest something on your elbow without checking it?

EXACTLY! Only propose managerial recommendations based on results of your study and that YOU HAVE DISCUSSED ON THE PREVIOUSLY!

3. Feasibility (Implementation, financial and non-financial)

Ps: Pay strong attention to this point. It is very important.

The recommendations that you are suggesting can be extraordinary, but you have to question yourself: **Would it be possible for an organization to implement it and would it bring sufficient return to justify the investment?** If the answer is **NO**, please reconsider including it (At least for now or provide good explanation as to why you will keep it).

Thus, you must consider also the tradeoff between investment and return!

How would you do it?

1. Consider first the INVESTMENTS

- Consider the **time** needed to implement
- Consider the **financial investment** to implement it (How much it would cost)
- Consider the **non-financial investment** to implement it (e.g. Human resources, time, efforts)

2. Consider the EXPECTED RETURN to the business

- Consider the **financial return** (e.g. Revenue generated by the implementation)
- Consider the **non-financial return** from the investment (e.g. Brand image, publicity)

After contrasting **investment** versus **return**, the question is: **Is your recommendation feasible or not? And be prepared to defend your idea!**

Example: One time a student developed a managerial recommendation that included developing a complex autonomous system to track consumer behavior in physical stores. However, the focus was on small businesses. The idea of the student was very interesting, but would it be feasible for small businesses to invest in such complex systems and would it bring enough financial return to justify the investment? Probably not... Do you get the point now?

4. Implementation process

Very often students have great ideas for recommendations, but actually little knowledge as it would be implemented. If you were a consultant for a company, would you suggest a solution if you did not know how it could be implemented? No, right? So do not suggest it here, ok?

Also consider if it can even be implemented at all! For example:

- Are there technologies available to implement it?
- Is there time enough to implement your solution?
- Are there any limitations (e.g. governmental, societal, legal) to implement your solution?

If so, do not include the solution because it simply will not happen.

Remember: If an interesting solution cannot solve a problem because it cannot be implemented, it is not a solution.

Do you need to describe in your thesis how it would be implemented? Discuss this with your supervisors, because it will depend. Many times, at this stage students are already struggling with page number and word counts. Personally, I usually do not ask the students to include, but often we discuss it in their presentations.

Finally, also remember: Implementation of a managerial recommendation you have suggested in your thesis can easily be a question from your supervisors during your colloquium.

5. Originality

Sometimes due to the lack of time and patience from the students, the managerial recommendation suggested by them is the first idea that comes to mind. And (surprise, surprise!) often they idea that have already been implemented or that are common practices in the industry!

What does it mean when this happens? You are informing the panel of reviewers of your thesis two main things:

- That you have **little knowledge** of your industry; or,
- That you **did not bother to research** to identify if your idea is original or not.

Do managerial recommendation need to be incredibly creative and original? **No**, very few things in this world actually are. However, please do not repeat common practices claiming they are your own original ideas.

Can you suggest solutions that have been used in different markets, industries or time in history to apply to your context? ABSOLUTELY! Many interesting solutions come from the observation of other industries, different contexts and even from simply observing nature!

6. Relevance of the problem it will solve

When you are developing managerial recommendations, **consider the relevance of the problem you are trying to address**. It is not because something is an issue to a company that they have the same importance.

For example, can we compare:

- *A poor website usability that is giving users poor online experience and limiting the conversions from “lookers” into “bookers” on your site; with,*
- *The desire to update the company logo.*

Not at all! Poor usability destroys conversion, reduces revenue generated online and can limit sales massively. Thus, it is crucial for any online business and must always be a top priority.

On the other hand, updating a company logo is also important. However, not as important as the consequences of having a more old fashioned logo (although a negative thing), might have lower impact for an online business.

Thus, consider the importance of the problems you are trying to solve with your managerial recommendations and focus on the most important ones. If you are only focusing on superficial problems, consider working on the section again!

Final Thoughts

I honestly hope you have enjoyed the article and that will be helpful to you. In case you want thank me for writing it by buying a ticket for a Formula 1 race, the closest ones for me to attend are the German Grand Prix and the Belgian Grand Prix.

Oh! Here are some music recommendations to work on this section:

1. Bombay Bicycle Club

2. Bob Dylan
 3. James Taylor
 4. Chris Cornell
 5. Lisa Hannigan
 6. Eddie Vedder (Ukulele Songs)
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