

Pracademic Outsider/Insider Theory of Change Management

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The author will be speaking as part of the IAEM 72nd Annual Conference on
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I am in the middle of a long-term national emergency management project, which started when a disaster researcher came to the IAEM-USA Children and Disaster Caucus and gave her doctoral dissertation pitch. The project is to fix the way we (emergency managers) support families in disasters—during the Response phase—with their choice for feeding their infants and toddlers. This is a major change, needed across the nation, through professional collaboration, coordination, communication, and cooperation.

Meanwhile, I am also in the middle of—well at the time, I was approved for—[FEMA's Planning Practitioner Program](#) (PPP), a multi-course offering a lot like the Master Exercise Practitioner series. That program has a capstone of a deliberative planning project to complete—one where you gather folks together who do not work for you—and maybe not even normally with you, and you solve a problem through a deliberative planning process, using the 4 C's.

I combined both. I am using my pro bono advocacy work on solving this problem, as my capstone project for the PPP series. And even more shocking (well it was shocking to me), is the way I am going about it is all wrong. Well, maybe not wrong, but certainly novel. The PPP courseware is aligned with existing change management theories, and I could not specifically reconcile the work needed to be done on this project/problem statement to only one or two theories. So, I am inventing a new change management theory.

If any of you folks are academics or practitioners/academics – “pracademics,” like me who specialize in change management theory, I would love to co-author a journal article to make this ‘official.’

Let me break my novel concept for change management down by its title. **Pracademic**, as I noted before, means someone who is both a practitioner and an academic. This is not limited to emergency management as a profession and as a field of study. For example, archeology professors who are also archeologists themselves are pracademics. From the movies, it's *Indiana Jones*, as well as Alan Grant and Ellie Sattler from *Jurassic Park*. I call myself a pracademic emergency manager, because I still practice emergency management, and I still write academically (as well as professionally) about emergency management. **Outsider/Insider** is the duality of being either a single individual who is both outside of the organization that needs to change and inside that same organization. Or it can be a team approach: one or more on the outside and others on the inside. An example of someone who is singularly an outsider, and an insider is a leadership volunteer with an organization. They may be able to influence and sway the real decision-makers (most likely paid executives who will enact the changes), through [meta-leadership](#). Another example of an outsider/insider is a trusted partner. This was the case for me when in 2013, I helped influence FEMA to change its Donated Resources Policy ([RP9525.2](#)) to eliminate

the clause that excluded donations “through activities which are part of the organization's mission”. This change now allows states, territories, and Tribal Nations to claim credit for donated time and material from the American Red Cross and other NGOs, credited against any public assistance project on declared emergencies or disasters. Back then, I was representing a trusted partner, the American Red Cross, to FEMA when I did my advocacy efforts for change management. I could talk to the federal coordinating officer on this, same for the state coordinating officer. I was able to meet with public assistance folks at FEMA headquarters, to champion this idea at a national VOAD conference (the home of the 4 C's, by the way).

The key part to the Outsider/Insider concept is that you have to know the right players in the game to call upon. In some cases, you will need to network from person A to person B to person C, to find the right one who is the decision-maker. Hey, it's just a theory, right?

You can see the combination of both the PPP series academic aspects and the actual problem statement project backstory and timeline in a free online book, which came out in late August, 2024. The irony of having FEMA sponsor a book where at least one chapter is focused on fixing a problem at FEMA did not surprise me in the least. Please check

[continued on page 23](#)

Technology and Concepts for the Future

[continued from page 22](#)

Assessing AI for EM

Powerful AI tools have proliferated the industry and are transforming the workplace. It can feel like a scramble to understand how to leverage these tools to support the rapidly changing concerns of EM, like attacks on infrastructure and extreme climate events. While EMOTR is exploring a wide range of R&D and emerging technological capabilities, a focus on AI has allowed researchers to take a deep dive into what these tools are (and aren't), how EM practitioners can use them, and what the future might hold for AI tools and EM. Now a year into its research, EMOTR has:

- Scoured the EM R&D and AI research landscape. Researchers sorted from 36,000 peer-reviewed publications to just 300+ in a user-friendly annotated bibliography and curated a list of 13 technologies and AI concepts that have a high probability of enhancing EM in the next decade.

- Connected with the EM stakeholder community through interviews, community roundtables, focus groups, and a survey to identify recurring research gaps and capability needs. End-user feedback, from both EM practitioners and researchers alike, is informing every step of the way.

- Conducted university hackathon-style events and tabletop exercises across the nation to evaluate EM functions and identify synergies, opportunities, and implications for AI. The leading technologies of potential interest were diverse, ranging from text-based tools that may improve the everyday life of emergency managers and other stakeholders to tools that may minimize cost and

life loss in disasters, to technologies that may be foundational to the next stage of AI in EM toward the end of the next decade.



The EMOTR Program combines combined several inputs—landscape assessments, stakeholder feedback, task analyses, and validation exercises—to curate a comprehensive set of recommendations to inform future EM R&D and technology investments.

Whole-Community Approach to Adoption

As with any technological transformation, overcoming barriers to implementation requires a whole-community approach. Just like every novel technology before it, AI and advancements like wearable sensors and data analytics present EM-specific policy, privacy, and jurisdictional barriers to adoption. Through participation in conferences like the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM), as well as roundtables and other outreach opportunities, EMOTR is inviting feedback from EM practitioners, researchers, and others in the community to underpin findings with input from those in the field and on the front lines. The full potential of these advancements rests in their seamless integration with existing systems and capabilities, often bound by policy, procedure, privacy, and funding barriers. By aligning R&D and technology solutions with the specific needs of the EM community, collaboratively developed solutions can better address critical gaps and fortify operational resilience. ◆

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[continued from page 21](#)

out [Chapter 11](#): Issues for Infant and Toddler Feeding at Disaster Mass Care Sites: Paradigm Shifts for Strategic and Operational Planning, in Part 3 of [Current and Emerging Trends in the Management of International Disasters](#). Yes, it's like 40 pages long, but there are pictures of PowerPoint slides and a lot of footnotes. At least read the timeline table at the end—that's where all the magic tricks are revealed. ◆



Hurricane Relief Resources

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