SPECIAL ISSUE: *Processes, Challenges and Strategies for Scaling and Persistent High Growth*

Guest editors:

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Introduction Background and Focus of the Special Issue:

Over the past two decades, scaling and persistent high growth have become central in entrepreneurship and management research, particularly for understanding businesses' roles in economic growth, innovation, and job creation. Scaling is a complex process of rapid expansion and competitive positioning, distinct from early-stage growth, requiring significant output increases without equivalent input rises. This often involves digitalization, operational efficiencies, and internal transformation, while facing challenges like resource constraints, restructuring, and shifting markets. Balancing profitability and adaptability across different phases is critical (Bohan et al., 2024; Felzensztein & Bagheri, 2024).

Research has identified key enablers of scaling, including financial capital, resource acquisition, innovation, leadership teams, functional role development, and capability-building strategies. Yet, much of this work focuses on high-tech, VC-backed firms, leaving gaps in understanding how family-owned, non-tech, and service-oriented SMEs scale. These firms face greater uncertainty and strategic complexity compared to larger, established businesses (Branzei & Vertinsky, 2006).

Despite increased attention, several research gaps remain. First, while high growth is known to be episodic, how firms sustain growth over time, especially under resource constraints, requires deeper study. Second, scaling challenges vary: family firms navigate generational transitions, while service SMEs manage labour and customer dependencies, highlighting the need for more nuanced frameworks. Third, leadership and talent are recognized as critical, but more research is needed on how leadership styles and cultures shape long-term scaling outcomes. Finally, external factors like entrepreneurial ecosystems, networks, and regulations significantly impact scaling but remain underexplored. Understanding how firm-level and ecosystem-level factors interact is crucial for advancing scaling research.

Themes and Research Questions:

This special issue welcomes research from diverse perspectives, addressing (but not limited to) the following themes and questions:

Scaling as a Non-linear, Transformative Process

- Why do some businesses sustain growth while others plateau or decline?
- How do firms balance stability and change during scaling?
- What mechanisms help reignite growth after stagnation?

Leadership, Human Capital, and Organizational Design

- How do leadership styles and capabilities evolve during scaling?
- What role do talent acquisition, adaptability, and retention play?
- How do firms maintain entrepreneurial culture while formalizing structures?

Business Model Innovation, Strategic Adaptation, and Digital Transformation

- How are business models adapted for sustained high growth?
- How is digital transformation, including AI, integrated into scaling strategies?
- How do firms maintain customer engagement during rapid expansion?

Scaling within Ecosystems: Networks, Institutions, and External Enablers

- How do firms access resources through ecosystems, accelerators, and funding networks?
- What is the role of government policies and regulatory frameworks?
- How do firms avoid ecosystem dependency while leveraging external support?

Beyond High Growth: Sustainable Scaling and Long-Term Resilience

- How can firms align scaling strategies with ESG principles?
- What models support sustainable scaling and financial resilience?
- How do businesses balance rapid growth with risk mitigation amid external pressures?

Key dates:

The deadline for submission of papers is **November 3, 2026.** The submission window will open two weeks prior to this date. The Special Issue is scheduled to be published in May, 2028. Papers must be original and comply with ISBJ submission guidelines. Please refer http://isb.sagepub.com/ for submission guidelines and a link to the on-line submission system. In the online system please ensure you submit your paper within Manuscript Type: “Special Issue: Processes, Challenges and Strategies for Scaling and Persistent High Growth ”.

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