

FROM THE EDITORS

REVISITING *AMJ*'S REVISE-AND-RESUBMIT PROCESS

As former *AMJ* editor Tom Lee noted, the peer review process is at the heart of scholarly research (Lee, 2002). A number of excellent articles have been published to help scholars/authors interpret and navigate this process, and Rynes (2006a) identified some of these publications. (Rynes [2006b, 2006c] also speaks eloquently and effectively about different aspects of peer review.)

Without doubt, the “revise-and-resubmit” (R&R) part of the review process—revising a paper and preparing a response document for the action editor and the reviewers who have invited these actions—has great importance. As one commentator noted, an R&R opportunity is “crucial for the development of the strongest research and the best possible manuscript” (Morse, 1996: 149). And any scholar can attest to the excitement she/he feels when reading an invitation to revise and resubmit.

Key Elements of a Revise-and-Resubmit Opportunity

Several elements are important to the R&R process. Harrison (2002) suggested the centrality of a frame of reference. A *positive frame of reference* is one in which the two parties (the author[s] and the viewers/action editor team) approach their work professionally and with the belief that the other party seeks to be helpful and constructive. Viewing an R&R as the two parties' *forum for sharing and exploring ideas* is a second important aspect of the process (Bergh, 2002). In the most successful cases, both parties recognize that sharing and exploring ideas finds them engaging in conversations (Harrison, 2002) requiring significant effort (Seibert, 2006).

Experience shows that how authors address the concerns and recommendations they have received from their editorial team influences a revised manuscript's future (Bergh, 2002). Traditional wisdom about the R&R process holds that authors should respond quickly and fully (Williams, 2004). A full response has historically meant that authors deal in the paper and in a separate response document with each concern/recommendation surfaced by the editorial team. Concerns about this widely accepted wisdom contributed to the previous editorial team's decision to streamline the revise-and-resubmit process at *AMJ* (Rynes, 2006c).

A Recent Policy Change

Largely concerned that authors were spending as much, if not more, time to prepare their response documents as they were to revise their manuscripts, Rynes (2006c) and her editorial team decided to streamline *AMJ*'s R&R process. In essence, the new policy called for authors to “spend the bulk of their time improving the manuscript itself rather than summarizing all the point-by-point changes they have made in response to each and every reviewer comment” (Rynes, 2006c: 873). There is some reason to believe that this policy change did address an issue of concern; discussing the R&R process he and his coauthors completed prior to their work being accepted for publication in *AMJ*, Seibert noted that he and his coauthors “invested as much work in the replies to reviewers as we did in writing the original manuscript” (2006: 203).

The extremely well intentioned and highly understandable change to *AMJ*'s R&R process asked authors to carefully respond to the major issues in their action editors' letters in lieu of responding to each individual point. In parallel, the new policy called for action editors to highlight and concentrate on their own and reviewers' major points when writing decision letters. It was hoped that concentrating on the major points in an action editor's letter when revising a paper and preparing responses would allow authors to “focus more on improving their papers and less on reporting the details of the revision process itself” (Rynes, 2006c: 873).

This R&R policy change launched in 2006 was an excellent experiment. Yet although some reviewers and authors found the change helpful, others expressed concerns. For reviewers, the articulated concerns revolved around their stated inability to precisely determine if and how the author(s) had responded fully to the points included in their reviews. Similarly, some authors worried that not directly dealing with all of each reviewer's comments might harm their effort to fully satisfy reviewers' expectations.

For several reasons, these concerns have merit. Rynes (2006b) indicated that each reviewer has a unique perspective regarding a manuscript's ability to satisfy *AMJ*'s publishing expectations. Because of this, advice on the approach to use to revise a

paper as well as to develop the response document may vary among reviewers. In their description of how to derive maximum benefits from reviewers' comments, Agarwal, Echambadi, Franco, and Sarkar (2006) noted that although exhausting, the comprehensive process they used to respond to reviewers' comments added value to the revision. Other examples could be given to illuminate the issue. A summary position finds the current editorial team concluding that effective revisions and response documents are user friendly. In this context, "user friendly" means that the author seeks to address each reviewer's and the action editor's concerns and recommendations when revising the paper and when preparing the response document (Seibert, 2006).

We recognize and respect the fact that legitimate debates could continue regarding the most effective R&R process for *AMJ* to use. However, given that the majority of the inputs the current editorial team is receiving suggest a preference for authors to respond fully (both when revising papers and when preparing response documents) to each reviewer and to the action editor, we are again revising *AMJ*'s R&R process. The current policy (which is now being included in revise-and-resubmit decision letters) is as follows:

PROCEDURES FOR REVISING YOUR MANUSCRIPT

In revising your manuscript, please carefully consider each reviewer comment as well as the points included in this decision letter. For the past two years, *AMJ*'s policy has requested that revision efforts and "responses to reviewers and the action editor" documents concentrate on points covered in the decision letter. While this approach has merits, we (the current *AMJ* editorial team) are modifying it to ask that you deal with all issues raised by the reviewers and the action editor while revising your manuscript and that you provide point-by-point responses to explain how you have done so. We believe that having you explicitly respond to all the issues raised by the reviewers and action editor puts you in the best possible position to achieve a favorable outcome. Moreover, we believe that providing point-by-point responses allows you to precisely explain each action you have taken to deal with issues the reviewers and action editor brought to your attention. However, *concisely* explaining the actions you have taken is desirable in that such explanations save reviewers' time while ensuring that your responses highlight the actions you have taken to deal with their concerns. The type of responses we are requesting from you means that extended discussions of tangential issues should be avoided as should reproductions of large blocks of text from the

paper within the responses document. While not imposing a page limit for the responses document, we ask that you be as concise as possible as you develop your point-by-point responses. To this end, if the same point is raised by the action editor and/or one or more reviewers, you should provide a detailed response only once and then refer the other readers (i.e., the action editor and/or the reviewers) to the initial response you provided regarding a particular (and commonly-shared) issue or concern. The responses document should appear at the end of the revised manuscript, beginning on a separate page.

We hope that this revised policy will serve your needs as authors and reviewers. We understand that policies are imperfect and that legitimate debates about the "best policy" could continue. Nonetheless, on the basis of inputs we are receiving and our evaluation of the matter, believe that the R&R policy presented above can further *AMJ*'s desire to continue receiving and publishing outstanding empirical management scholarship.

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