

ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT JOURNAL EDITORS' FORUM ON THE REVIEW PROCESS

MAKING THE MOST OF THE REVIEW PROCESS: LESSONS FROM AWARD-WINNING AUTHORS

Many fine articles have been written about how to interpret and navigate the review process (e.g., Cummings & Frost, 1985, 1995). However, most such articles are based on the cumulative experiences of authors, reviewers, or editors across many review cycles. As such, they tend to contain rather generalized advice.

Contraindicating this generic way of seeing the review process, my earliest experiences as an associate editor for *AMJ* impressed upon me that despite some common features, each review cycle is also somewhat unique: an interaction of multiple parties, each with his or her own competencies, skills, personality traits, and taken-for-granted assumptions and beliefs. Thus, I began to think it would be useful to supplement the more generic types of advice available to authors with more detailed descriptions of *specific* review processes, from start to finish. As a researcher, I have always been impressed by the power of critical incident techniques to surface the emotion, detail, and core elements of abstract processes.

So when I discovered that one particularly memorable paper for which I had served as action editor had won the Organizational Behavior Division's Best Paper Award (Seibert, Silver, and Randolph's "Taking Empowerment to the Next Level: A Multiple-Level Model of Empowerment, Performance, and Satisfaction," 2004), I asked the lead author, Scott Seibert, if he would be willing to write an essay about that particular review process from his perspective. His essay, "Anatomy of an R&R (or Reviewers Are an Author's Best Friend)," describes his team's reactions to a challenging review process fraught with two distinct dangers: (a) the possibility that some of the additional analyses requested by reviewer 2 might reveal a "fatal flaw" in the team's conceptualization and operationalization of a key construct, and (b) reviewer 3's feeling that the manuscript did not make an important enough contribution to the literature.

Around the same time, I learned that the *AMJ* Advisory Board, consisting of Jean Bartunek (chair), Angelo DeNisi, Barbara Gray, Karen Locke, Wenpin Tsai, Anne Tsui, and Freek Vermeulen had selected "Knowledge Transfer through Inheritance:

Spin-out Generation, Development, and Survival" as the winner of *AMJ*'s Best Article Award for 2004. This was a paper that one of our premier reviewers described as "one the best I've reviewed in years." Yet I knew that the revise-and-resubmission process had been anything but trivial. Accordingly, I asked this author team, consisting of Rajshree Agarwal, Raj Echambadi, April Franco, and MB Sarkar, to join Scott in describing their actions—and reactions—as they proceeded from first submission to final acceptance. Happily, they agreed. Their essay in this editors' forum, "REAP REWARDS: Maximizing Benefits from Reviewer Comments," discusses their emotional reactions to the reviews, as well as how they managed the complex process of organizing themselves, four authors in three geographical locations, to deal with the multiple issues the reviewers raised.

Adding to this first-person author account, I also asked the action editor for the Agarwal et al. manuscript, Donald Bergh, to provide his perspective on that review process. Through Don's essay in this forum, we get to see the reviewers' (and Don's) reactions to the initial manuscript, as well as subsequent revisions. One of the most interesting aspects of this particular review process was that although two of the reviewers felt the paper was improving with each round, the third reviewer believed that the paper was moving in the wrong direction. Don's essay provides a nice "insider's view" of how he resolved these conflicting opinions after the second revision.

Finally, I provide my own (i.e., action editor's) perspective on the review process for the paper by Siebert and coauthors mentioned above. As with the Agarwal et al. paper, two of the reviewers believed the paper had gotten better with the first revision, while reviewer 3 thought it was deteriorating. In the next revision, however, Scott Seibert and his colleagues were able to win over all three reviewers through their serious effort to address all issues that were capable of being resolved with their data set.

Training research has shown that although people can learn a lot from observing cases of poor performance, they tend to learn even more from seeing at

least one example of exemplary behavior (Sorcher & Spence, 1982) or a mixture of effective and ineffective behaviors (Taylor, Russ-Eft & Chan, 2005). Because much previous advice about the review process has focused on trying to avoid things that can go wrong, we hope that these four reflections on extensive review processes in which most things went right will provide additional insights to those committed to improving their skill in responding to reviews.

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