

FROM THE EDITORS

Reflections on the First 18 Months

The Volume and Scope of Manuscripts

Although the current editorial team officially assumed the management of *AMJ* on January 1, 2002, we actually began receiving manuscripts on July 1, 2001. Often, *AMJ* readers are curious about the volume of manuscripts submitted to *AMJ*. So here is some relevant information: In the 16 months between July 1, 2001, and November 1, 2002, we received 889 new submissions. (Subsequent revisions do not get recounted; they simply add to the already substantial workload.) To provide peer reviews, members of our Editorial Board typically read one manuscript a month and sometimes more. In addition, over 500 ad hoc reviewers provide advice and feedback to authors, and many of our ad hoc reviewers generously provide reviews for multiple manuscripts. These reviewers are listed in this issue of the *Journal*, immediately following this editorial. Approximately 12 percent of these reviewers have affiliations with non-U.S. institutions.

In the review process, authors are asked to list which three AOM divisions best describe the topic domains for their submissions. On the basis of the authors' self-reported "first listings," the submitted manuscripts can be roughly classified as follows: organizational behavior (33%), business policy and strategy (28%), human resources (6%), organization theory (6%), international management (6%), gender and diversity (3%), entrepreneurship (3%), technology and innovation (2%), and careers (2%). Each of the other AOM divisions accounts for 1 percent or less of the total number of new submissions. It should be noted that the authors of many (if not most) submissions identify more than one category (for instance, organizational behavior/human resources/careers; business policy and strategy/organization theory/entrepreneurship).

Without doubt, managing this sizable number and broad scope of submissions (which include micro, macro and cross-level topics) suggests the substantial complexity and challenge involved in editing the *Journal*. Indeed, the job feels staggering at times. Fortunately, editing *AMJ* entails interacting with many diverse, interesting, and talented

people from all over the world. Beyond the opportunity to read some truly interesting papers, these interactions may be the most professionally satisfying and personally fun aspect of our role as editors.

During these past 18 months, we have experienced a whirlwind of learning new roles, incorporating editorial responsibilities with ongoing teaching, research, and service obligations, and rebalancing of work and family lives. My personal sense of these 18 months is that they have both sped by at a supersonic pace, and paradoxically seemed to slow down to a snail's crawl. The speed-up derives from the day-to-day demands of receiving, processing, and deciding on manuscripts. Most often, the feeling is that these demands can't wait and must be met now. In contrast, the slowdown derives from postponing research projects, delaying or shortening family trips, and having *AMJ* rarely away from one's mind. These competing attributes can become quite consuming.

The Passion

Over the past year, the "From the Editors" statements have addressed a variety of important and interesting topics involving our collective research mission. Our guiding principle in choosing these topics was to write about something that evoked personal passion. In February 2002, I offered thoughts on our gate-keeping role, on helping colleagues to improve their research, and on other functions that accompany board membership at *AMJ*. In April, Sara Rynes provided perspective on the nature, meaning, and process of "making a contribution" through our research. In June, Marshall Schminke identified inherent tensions in the art of reviewing and in the publication process. In August, Don Bergh suggested ways in which authors and reviewers might better benefit from the peer review process. In October, Dov Eden clarified the role and nature of the interplay among replication, meta-analysis, and scientific progress. In December, Dave Harrison aptly noted, "We're all authors" and proposed an "Authors' Bill of Rights."

In my view, these editorial statements offer substantial insight into what most *AMJ* readers spend a great deal of their time and energy on—namely, research. (In 2003, the editors will continue to offer

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their fervid insights and will discuss research as well.) From these emotive (and sometimes humorous) essays, I have drawn the notions that reviewers and editors need to maintain balance in our evaluative role (in particular, in the publication decision) and in our helping role (the effort to make all manuscripts better). It is imperative, moreover, that all authors be treated with kindness, respect, and goodwill.

Our Process

Because, perhaps, *AMJ*'s current associate editor model is relatively new (having been implemented in 1997), a recurring question at the last five AOM meetings has been, How do you process your manuscripts? Thus, it seems worthwhile to answer this consistent query. As is widely known, all new submissions are sent electronically to Nancy Grandjean (managing editor) at the *AMJ* office, currently located at the University of Washington. As editor, I read each new submission and decide either to return the manuscript without review or to go forward in the review process. In the last 18 months, I've returned about 15 percent of all new submissions. The purpose of this preliminary screening is to preserve the time and effort of both our reviewers and authors. More specifically, I make a decision (albeit quite subjective on my part), as to whether a manuscript has less than a certain minimum likelihood of acceptance, whether it violates a technical rule (for instance, exceeds maximum allowable page requirements), and whether it falls outside the *Journal's* domain (is, for instance, better suited to an audience of primarily accounting, finance, or marketing—instead of management—scholars). For example, I've returned manuscripts that offer minimal contributions to management theory, report no data, or are written in a manner I couldn't understand.

It is important to note that these returned manuscripts are usually not formally rejected. Most can be fixed and submitted again. Only if I state explicitly that a manuscript is formally rejected is the author prohibited from submitting the same work again.

If the decision is to go forward with the peer review process, I select three reviewers for each manuscript, drawing on my evolving experience with specific topics and individual reviewers and *AMJ*'s reviewer database. Our database contains the self-identified reviewing preferences of thousands of individuals. (*If anyone would like to be entered into our database or would like to have his or her preferences updated, please contact Nancy Grandjean at amjtle@u.washington.edu.*) In addition, the

submission is assigned to an editor, who then becomes the action editor and assumes complete decision-making authority on the manuscript. Generally speaking, each associate editor has been assigned about 22 percent of these new submissions, and I have assigned about 12 percent to myself.

Typically, we ask for a four-week turnaround from each reviewer. After these four weeks, reminders are sent. The initial reminder comes from the *AMJ* office in Seattle, and subsequent reminders come from the office of the assigned action editor.

I am quite pleased to report that the vast majority of reviewers respond with timely and high-quality reviews. Nonetheless, unavoidable delays in reviews do occur, and sometimes, an alternative reviewer must be found. Occasionally, these delays involve mundane and everyday issues. For example, delays can occur because an individual simply missed the e-mail message in which we requested the review. The request for review might have arrived when the individual was on vacation or attending a conference. Alternatively, the action editor might have been away when the completed set of reviews arrived. Sometimes, a delay occurs for sad reasons. For instance, there might be an illness in a reviewer's or editor's family; the reviewer or editor might be ill; or there might be unexpected stresses from caring for an aging parent. Sometimes, however, the delay occurs for quite happy reasons: The birth of a baby or grandchild, the adoption of a new child, one's own marriage, the marriage of a child or a parent's 80th birthday have been cited as reasons for a delay in the review of an *AMJ* manuscript.

An Observation

Since *AMJ* "went electronic" in mid 1999, and certainly during the past 18 months, fast, high-quality reviews have become a very legitimate expectation. At the *Journal*, we work very, very hard, and we will continue to do so to ensure these fast and high-quality reviews. Indeed, we believe that *AMJ* offers the fastest and the best reviews of any major outlet for management research. With that said, I harbor a growing concern about unrealistic expectations. Perhaps I am responding to the ubiquity of e-mail, instant messaging, faxes, overnight express mail, and cell phones. Nonetheless, I sense a growing expectation among some authors that they should receive feedback in less than a month. Certainly, it would be wonderful to get such quick turnaround (and some indeed do). However, I ask authors to recognize that reviewers (and editors) can sometimes experience delays owing to mundane, sad, or happy reasons that preclude fast re-

views of good quality. Moreover, replacement reviewers must sometimes be recruited. Thus, instant turnaround is an ideal that we always strive for, but it is ultimately unrealistic.

A Closing Thought

AMJ could simply not exist as a premier research outlet without the dedicated support of our Editorial Board and ad hoc reviewers. As editors, we get

far too much of the credit for the *Journal's* success. In fact, it is the hard work of the Board and ad hoc reviewers that makes *AMJ* what it is. Thus, the editorial team cannot say it often enough or strongly enough: we sincerely thank each and everyone of you for all that you do.

Tom Lee
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