



Publishing in AMJ: Tips from the Editors AOM 2015 PDW Vancouver

Gerry George





Topics

- Some *AMJ* statistics
- What kinds of papers fit *AMJ*'s mission?
- The editorial team
- Reviewing for *AMJ*
- Tips for improving your chances at *AMJ*



Some *AMJ* Statistics

- Now in its 58th year
- Receives 1250 original submissions per year (1500+ total including revisions)
- 52-day turnaround for fully-reviewed submissions
- Highest impact factor among exclusively empirical management journals 6.5 (2 year)
- Has 12 papers an issue, 72 papers per year



AMJ papers...

- **Conversations**
 - Does your study define a new conversation (theory/lens/paradigm) or divert an existing conversation into a meaningfully different area?
- **Context**
 - True to context, inspired by phenomenon
 - Relevant and interesting to managers (broadly construed)
- **Credible**
 - Rigor in study design and data analysis
 - Persuasive in its argument and framing of issues



What Papers Fit *AMJ*'s Mission?

- Mission Statement
 - The mission of the *Academy of Management Journal* is to publish empirical research that tests, extends, or builds management theory and contributes to management practice. All empirical methods--including, but not limited to, qualitative, quantitative, field, laboratory, and combination methods--are welcome. **To be published in *AMJ*, a manuscript must make strong empirical and theoretical contributions and highlight the significance of those contributions to the management field.**

Experimenting at the fringes

Focus on the phenomenon

- Strong theoretical contributions need not imply weak adherence to the phenomenon
- Bring the richness of the context into the study
- How can we make this practical?
 - Explain the phenomenon a lot more in the intro, hypotheses development and discussion
 - Use the introduction to situate theory, but also why the setting makes it an interesting anomaly
 - Explain how theory is enriched by the context
 - Experiment with the format, multi-method, interview data



Experimenting at the fringes

Frame for Impact and Relevance

- Big problems, unanswered questions
- Important phenomenon of managerial interest
- Trends shaping organizations and their futures

- Bring impact centre-stage
 - Picking topics that are Grand Challenges
 - Blending theoretical contribution with managerial relevance
 - Shaping ‘Managerial Implications’ as a central piece
 - Using the From the Editor notes as stage setters



What Papers Fit *AMJ*'s Mission?

- For more info, see <http://aom.org/amj/>

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Academy of Management

Author Resources

Includes articles and editorials on making a contribution, publishing laboratory or qualitative research in the journal, the review process, and journal trends.

- **PDW on Publishing in *AMJ***
 - August 2012: Professional Development Workshop offered at Academy of Management meeting in Boston. [PDW Slides](#)
- **Publishing in *AMJ* Series:**
 - June 2011: Jason A. Colquitt, Gerard George. [Publishing in *AMJ* Part 1: Topic Choice](#)
 - August 2011: Joyce E. Bono, Gerry McNamara. [Publishing in *AMJ* Part 2: Research Design](#)
 - October 2011: Adam M. Grant, Timothy G. Pollock. [Publishing in *AMJ* Part 3: Setting the Hook](#)
 - December 2011: Raymond T. Sparrowe, Kyle J. Mayer. [Publishing in *AMJ* Part 4: Grounding Hypotheses](#)
 - February 2012: Yan (Anthea) Zhang, Jason D. Shaw. [Publishing in *AMJ* Part 5: Crafting the Methods and Results](#)
 - April 2012: Marta Galatracruz, Bennett J. Tanner. [Publishing in *AMJ* Part 6: Discussing the Implications](#)

Journals & Publications

- Read/Search AOM articles
- ▶ Academy of Management Discoveries
- ▼ Academy of Management Journal
 - Welcome to AMJ
 - ▶ Read Online
 - Information for Contributors
 - Submitting a Manuscript
 - Incoming Editorial Team
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 - Author Resources
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- ▶ Academy of Management Review
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Heuristics on process and acceptance rates

8% acceptance rate

Every month:		100 Manuscripts
Desk Reject/Edit	40%	(60 reviewed)
R&R	30%	(42 rejected, 18 revised) (approx. 1 in 3 reviewed papers get a revision)
R1	50%	(9 revised, 9 rejected) (30% of revisions get a conditional accept in R1)
R2	10-20%	(8 accepted, 1 rejected)



The Editorial Team

- What happens when a manuscript is submitted to *AMJ*?
 - First stop: Mike Malgrande, Managing Editor
 - Second stop: Gerry George, Editor-in-Chief
 - Reads submissions to determine desk decisions and action editor assignment
 - Handles desk decisions for macro papers, delegates some desk decisions for micro papers
 - Pick clear and substantive KEYWORDS
 - Third stop: Action Editor
 - Chooses five reviewers in an effort to sign up three
 - Makes final decision on manuscript

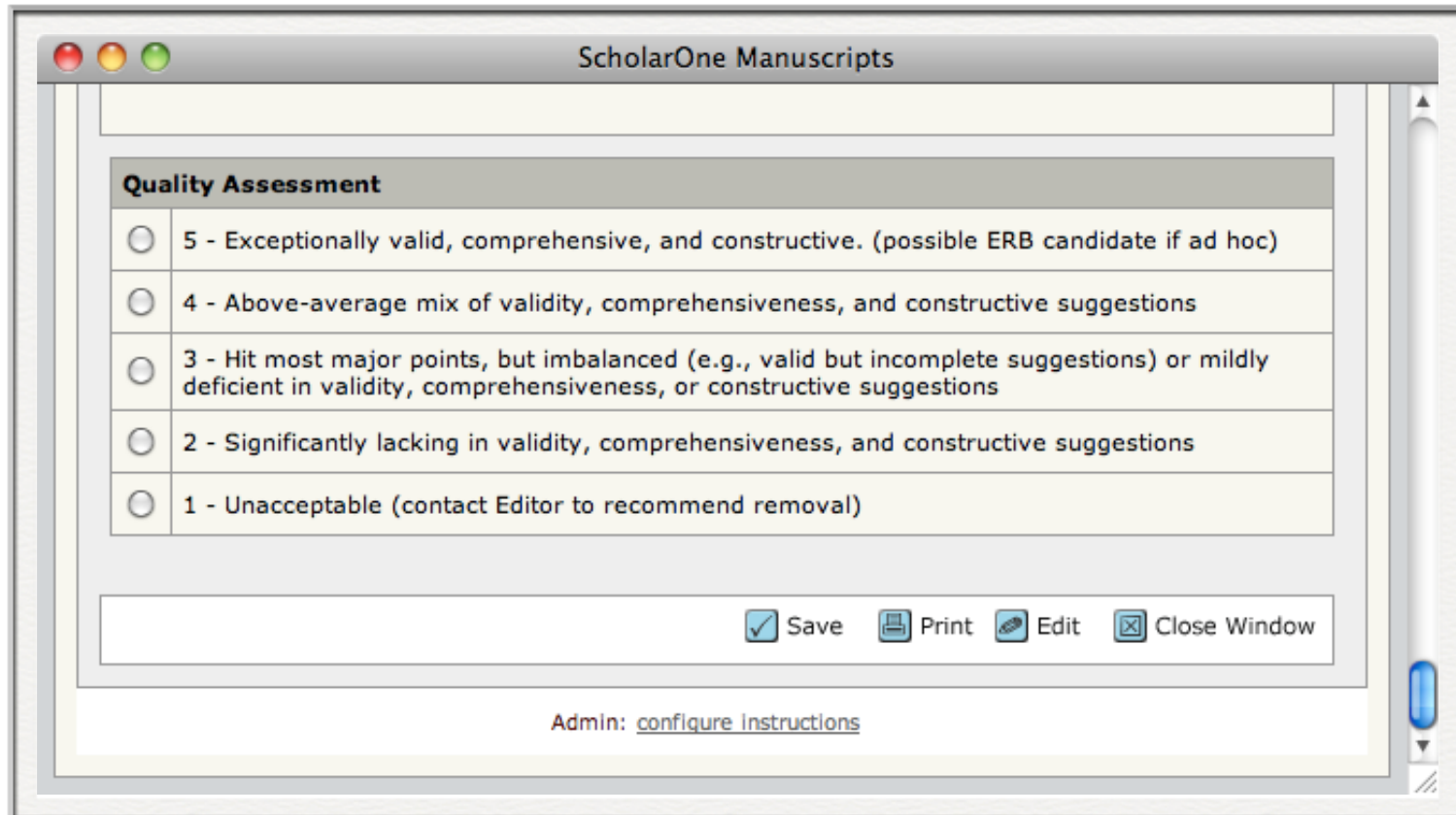
How reviewers score papers

Date Assigned: 30-Jun-2015
Date Review Returned: 19-Jul-2015

Criteria	Completely inadequate	Weak	Modest	Strong	Very Strong
Theoretical contribution (i.e. testing, creating, or extending theory)	✓				
Interestingness, innovativeness, and novelty	✓				
Clarity of exposition			✓		
Empirical contribution	✓				
Methodological rigor		✓			
Engages an important problem for organizations	✓				
Potential significance of contribution	✓				

Recommendation
Accept
Accept with Minor Revision
Promising that a major revision would result in a publishable paper
Unclear whether a major revision would result in a publishable paper
Doubtful that a major revision would result in a publishable paper
✓ Reject

Rating each paper



ScholarOne Manuscripts

Quality Assessment

<input type="radio"/>	5 - Exceptionally valid, comprehensive, and constructive. (possible ERB candidate if ad hoc)
<input type="radio"/>	4 - Above-average mix of validity, comprehensiveness, and constructive suggestions
<input type="radio"/>	3 - Hit most major points, but imbalanced (e.g., valid but incomplete suggestions) or mildly deficient in validity, comprehensiveness, or constructive suggestions
<input type="radio"/>	2 - Significantly lacking in validity, comprehensiveness, and constructive suggestions
<input type="radio"/>	1 - Unacceptable (contact Editor to recommend removal)

Save Print Edit Close Window

Admin: [configure instructions](#)



Reviewer Resources at AMJ



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Reviewer Resources

Brief Guidelines for Reviews

Ideally, *AMJ* reviews should:

- Be 2-4 pages in length
- Be focused on 6-8 major points
- Have those points numbered in a rough order of importance
- Have minor points, if covered, placed into a separate section, continuing the numbering from the major points portion.

Sample Reviews Written by the Editors

To illustrate the kinds of reviews our editorial team is looking for, the micro and macro editors have written reviews of hypothetical *AMJ* submissions (the papers are actually "file-drawer" manuscripts obtained with consent by the editorial team). Although different editors use different styles when writing their reviews, all of the reviews conform to the guidelines described above.

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Improving Your Chances at *AMJ*

- Four most common themes for rejections:
 - Theoretical Contribution
 - Novelty
 - Scope
 - Technical Adequacy



Improving Your Chances at *AMJ*

- Get “friendly reviews” from colleagues who publish in, and review for, *AMJ*, at each of these stages:
 - Topic choice
 - Study design
 - Writing

What We Do

**Answer *Interesting*
Unanswered Questions**

Tell the Story



Scott Graffin



The Introduction's Importance

- Creates readers' first impression of the study
- Determines whether readers move on to the rest of the article
- Frames how reviewers read the remainder of the paper – looking for reasons to give a revision, or reasons to reject



Key Questions

- Who cares?
- What do we know, what don't we know, and so what?
- What will we learn?



Who Cares?

- “Hook” the reader – Capture their attention and interest
- Highlight why the study matters to both theory *and* practice
- Two most prevalent hooks used by the AMJ Best Paper Award winners:
 - The Quote
 - The Trend



Who Cares?

- **The Quote:** Quotation or vignette that engages the reader in the intriguing and practical nature of question

Alex Trotman's goal: To make Ford No. 1 in world auto sales.

Kellogg's cutting prices . . . to check loss of market share.

Amoco scrambles to remain king of the polyester hill.

- Ferrier, Smith & Grimm (1999)



Who Cares?

The Trend: Highlight trends in the real world or the academic literature that are important or represent some puzzle or paradox

- “Moreover, people associate creativity with a variety of other positive attributes, including superior intelligence, humor, and leadership ability (Sternberg, 1999). Such beliefs have helped spawn a virtual cottage industry of management books and business school courses that extol the virtues of creativity and provide suggestions for eliciting higher levels of creativity” – Elsbach & Kramer (2003)

What do we know, what don't we know, and so what?

- **Identify the Conversation:** Focus on one scholarly “conversation” (Huff, 1999), where it hasn't gone, and why it needs to go there (Locke & Golden-Biddle, 1997)
 - **Synthesized Coherence** – Identify two conversations and bridge across them
 - **Progressive Coherence** – Identify an ongoing conversation and describe how it needs to move forward
 - **Non-Coherence** – Present competing perspectives reflected in the same or different conversations and explain how you will adjudicate between them



What do we know, what don't we know, and so what?

- **Problematize your Contribution:** Establish how the current state of the conversation is deficient (Locke & Golden-Biddle, 1997)
 - **Incompleteness:** Field needs to be developed further
 - Can be too incremental
 - **Inadequacy:** Fails to incorporate important perspectives
 - **Incommensurability:** Is altogether inaccurate
 - Can be overly antagonistic



What do we know, what don't we know, and so what?

- Give readers a clear sense of how you will deliver on your promise to change, challenge, or advance the conversation that you have entered
- “Just because a gap exists does not necessarily make the study interesting or worthwhile.” – Outstanding Reviewer
- “Not all gaps need to be filled!” – Different Outstanding Reviewer



What will we Learn?

- **Consensus Shifting:** Identify widely-held assumptions, proceed to challenge them, and describe the implications for ongoing research
- **Consensus Creation:** Show a lack of consensus in the literature and describe how your study either clarifies the lines of debate or resolves the conflict
(Hollenbeck, 2008)



Pitfalls and Common Mistakes

- Fail to Motivate and Problematize
 - Assume motivation is obvious
 - Assume there is inherent value in being “the first” to study something
 - Focus more on “gap filling” than on addressing a question, problem, puzzle or paradox



Pitfalls and Common Mistakes

- Lack of Focus
 - Try to cram too much in; becomes long and rambling
 - Try to use too many rhetorical fireworks and never say what the paper is about and why we should care
 - Spend too much time describing the structure of the paper



Pitfalls and Common Mistakes

- Overpromising
 - Set overly-high expectations by claiming contributions that the theory and/or results don't deliver
 - Research questions in introduction don't match the rest of the paper
 - Make claims so extravagant they seem outlandish and self-serving



An Effective Introduction

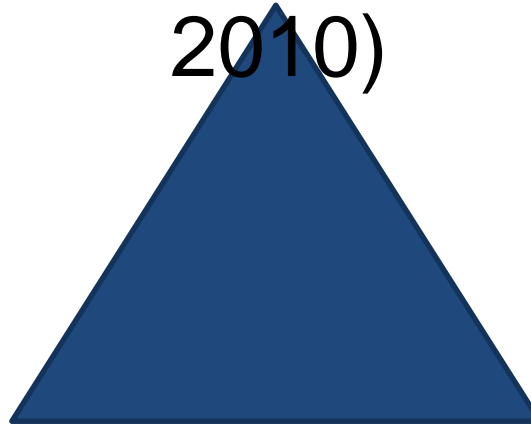
- Is short and focused; 3-4 double spaced pages
- Hooks the reader and makes them care about the study's topic
- Clearly states the research question and its relevance – i.e., identifies what we know, what we don't know, and why it's important
- Clearly enumerates the study's contributions and explains what we'll learn
- Doesn't write checks the rest of the article can't cash



AMJ: A global journal

International Authors
(30+ countries since
2010)

International
Readers
(110 countries)



International
Editorial Team
(15 countries)

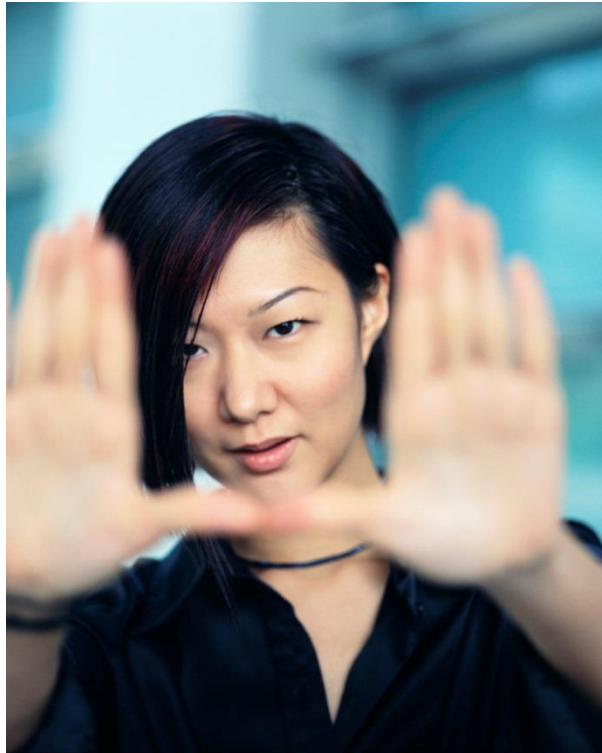
A commitment to making AMJ a global journal
in submissions, acceptances, and readership



Reasons for Rejection

- Framing and contribution
- Theory and method
- Presentation

Framing and Contribution



The pitfall:

- Location is not automatically a contribution!
- What's the contribution to **theory**?



Framing and Contribution

Common examples of **weak** frames

- “Construct in country” papers that examine well-established constructs in a new context
- “Comparative country” papers that present descriptive differences across contexts using well-established constructs
- Any frame that puts the context more front-and-center than the theory



Framing and Contribution

Creating **stronger** frames

- Shift the theoretical question to the foreground
- Context may be immaterial, or
- Context may change, expand, or bound our understanding of the theoretical relationships

Examples:

Board gender diversity in Australia

Racial diversity in Malaysia

Theory and Methods



The pitfall:

- Under-developed theory and/or
- Inadequate research designs
- Use the right tool for the job!



Theory and Methods

Common examples of **weak** theory/methods

- “Theory development by citation”; causal reasoning and well-grounded hypothesis statements are lacking
- Using cross-sectional data to test causal, longitudinal, or temporally sensitive arguments
- Samples that are too small, truncated, or otherwise poorly matched to the research question
- A flawed design will undo a solid front end



Theory and Methods

Creating **stronger** theory/methods

- Apply the most rigorous methods possible in your location – to *test and expand* theory
- Develop expertise with the most portable methods (qualitative interviews and intensive case studies) – to *develop* theory

Example:

Australian SMEs

Presentation



The pitfall:

- It's not the English!
- It's about more subtle (and more fundamental) communication missteps

ScholarOne's American Journal Editors feature
(on the author dashboard of manuscript central)



Presentation

Common examples of **weak** presentation

- Failing to follow “house style” in article/structure, reference formatting, or table/figure presentation
- Failing to follow “house style” in the paper’s meta-structure – how arguments are laid out
- Failing to build on mutual knowledge – by citing inaccessible material or leaving out critical background



Presentation

Creating **stronger** presentations

- Know the conversation you are joining
- Immerse yourself in the journal's "house style"
- Anticipate the reader's expectations; you may need to educate the reader if expectations are inapplicable
- Use peer reviewers who know the "house style"

Examples:

OB/HRM vs IR/HRM

American demographics



Developing Strong Qualitative Papers

Theoretical Contribution

- Significantly advances understanding of the phenomenon; changes, challenges, or fundamentally advances knowledge...causes us to think about a phenomenon in a new way
- Creates new theory or elaborates existing theory
- Shows transferability/analytic generalizability
- Moves beyond description...avoids amazing examples of the obvious



Developing Strong Qualitative Papers Empirical Rigor

- Provides transparency about how data were collected and analyzed, what is motivating the study, why the site and method(s) are appropriate
- Cites sources to support the method(s) **used**
- Establishes the adequacy of the sample...
 - Nature of phenomenon—broad sweeping or more narrow?
 - Nature of data—rich or more mundane?



Developing Strong Qualitative Papers

A Convincing and Compelling Story

- Integrates rather than merely mentions data sources (e.g., interviews, archival, participant observation, etc.)
- Showcases and interprets data in meaningful ways (balance of showing and telling)
- Completes the analysis
- Establishes a clear line of sight from data to theorizing about it...equifinality



Developing Strong Qualitative Papers

Ideas and Resources

- Deconstruct and model qualitative papers published in AMJ
- Invite a friendly review by a qualitative researcher
- Sit in on qualitative sessions at the Academy
- Check out author resources for qualitative research on AMJ's website
- Consult well-accepted texts or articles on the method(s) you are using



What Next?

Meet the Editors!

Table Rotations

15-20 minutes each rotation

Two rotations!

See Name Tags and Table Numbers