Publishing in AMJ:
Tips from the Editors

Professional Development Workshop offered at the 2013 meeting of the Academy of Management, Orlando, FL.
Welcome!

• How many of you have:
  • Never submitted to AMJ?
  • Gotten your work rejected from AMJ?
  • Published your work in AMJ?
Purpose of Workshop

- To offer tips, advice, and suggestions to improve the quality of your next AMJ submission
Structure of Workshop

- First half
  - Presentations on issues that are critical to publishing in *AMJ*, regardless of your content area
- Second half
  - Rotate through editors’ tables
First Half: Presentations

- Gerry George: An AMJ Overview
- Jason Colquitt: Topic Choice
- Tim Pollock: Writing “the Hook”
- Carol Kulik: AMJ: A Global Journal
Getting your work published in AMJ
Gerry George
• 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 56th year

• Receives 1200 original submissions per year (1500+ total)

• Averages a 65-day turnaround for fully-reviewed submissions

• Highest impact factor among exclusively empirical management journals 5.91 (2 year) and 10 (5 year)

• Growing from 9 papers to 12 papers an issue, which means from 54 to 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.
What Papers Fit AMJ’s Mission?

• Mission Statement

  – Authors should strive to produce original, insightful, interesting, important, and theoretically bold research. Demonstration of a significant “value-added” contribution to the field’s understanding of an issue or topic is crucial to acceptance for publication.
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/
### Editorial team with a global perspective

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Mike Malgrande, Managing Editor
Heuristics on process and acceptance rates

7-8% target acceptance rate
(note this is for thumbrule approximations, not guarantees)

Every month: 100 Manuscripts
Desk Reject/Edit 30% (70 reviewed)

R&R 25% (52 rejected, 18 revised)
(approx. 1 in 4 reviewed papers get a revision)

R1 50% (9 revised, 9 rejected)
(approx. 1 in 2 revised get a revision or conditional accept)

R2 10-20% (7 accepted, 2 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
  – Third stop: Action Editor
    • Chooses five reviewers in an effort to sign up three
    • Makes final decision on manuscript
How reviewers score papers

![Reviewer Score Criteria](image)
Rating each paper

[Quality Assessment]

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

**Brief Guidelines for Reviewers**

- 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 section

**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 "re-drawn" manuscripts obtained with consent by the editorial teams). Although different editors use different styles when writing their reviews, all of the reviews conform to the guidelines described above.
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
Getting your work published in AMJ

Questions?
First Half: Presentations

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Topic Choice

- Why focus on topic choice?
- Consider the case of AMJ-2013-9999
Topic Choice

• Why focus on topic choice?

• Consider the case of AMJ-2011-9999
Topic Choice

• Why focus on topic choice?

• Consider the case of AMJ-2011-9999
AMJ’s Mission

• Authors should strive to produce original, insightful, interesting, important, and theoretically bold research. Demonstration of a significant “value-added” contribution to the field’s understanding of an issue or topic is crucial to acceptance for publication.
When is a Topic *Important*?

- Integrity
- Citizenship Behavior
When is a Topic Important?

Integrity → Citizenship Behavior

Agreeableness

Conscientiousness
When is a Topic *Important*?

- **Integrity**
- **Citizenship Behavior**

- Compliance
- Ethical Behavior

The Academy of Management Journal
When is a Topic *Important*?

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Behavior

The Academy of Management Journal
When is a Topic Important?

Integrity

Citizenship

Behavior

Promotability
AMJ’s Mission

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When is a Topic *Insightful*?
When is a Topic *Insightful*?

- Integrity
- Situational Ruthlessness
- Typical Performance
- Promotability
When is a Topic Insightful?

- Integrity
- Situational Ruthlessness
- Promotability
- Cognitive Ability
- Maximum Performance
- Typical Performance
AMJ’s Mission

• Authors should strive to produce original, insightful, interesting, important, and theoretically bold research. Demonstration of a significant “value-added” contribution to the field’s understanding of an issue or topic is crucial to acceptance for publication.
When is a Topic Interesting?
Topic Choice: Summary

- Choose an important topic
  - Don’t just fill a nuanced or semantic gap--change the scholarly conversation
- Make it insightful
  - Expand the scope of your model to include relevant mediators and complementary variables
- Choose an interesting topic
  - Examine relationships or phenomena where the end isn’t obvious or predictable
First Half: Presentations

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What We Do

Answer *Interesting*
Unanswered Questions

Tell the Story

Why?
Why the Introduction is Important

• Creates the first impression with readers

• 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?

• Establish the Inter-textual Field: Identify the “conversation” (Huff, 1999) you are joining, 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 the Inter-textual Field: 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 polemical and 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
• **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 resolve the conflict (Hollenbeck, 2008)
Pitfalls and Common Mistakes

• Fail to Motivate and Problematize
  • Assume motivation is obvious
  • Assume there is 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 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
Writing Introductions

• Early or Late?

• Proportion of total writing time?

• Revise, Revise, Revise, Revise, Revise, Revise, Revise, Revise, Revise, Revise, Revise, Revise...

  • Ruthless Rewriting

  • Iterative Enactment

• Clearer Map
First Half: Presentations

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AMJ: A global journal

International Authors
(29 countries and growing)

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
Structure of Workshop

- First half
  - Presentations on issues that are critical to publishing in AMJ, regardless of your content area
- Second half
  - Rotate through editors’ tables
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10 Minute Break

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Conclusion

• Thank you for coming!

• All slides will be posted to the Author Resources page of the AMJ website