

## FROM THE EDITORS: WHEN IS A “NEW” PAPER REALLY NEW?

As is the case for each editorial team, a key purpose of the current team in developing these “From the Editors” pieces is to provide information that we hope will be of value to scholars interested in submitting their work to *AMJ* for publication consideration. (And, as is always the case, we remain very interested in receiving your high-quality empirical research that deals with any of the aspects of the management discipline!) To date, editorials from your current team have addressed issues such as (1) the need for each of us as members of a global community of scholars to accept requests to review for *AMJ* if we are submitting our work to *AMJ* (Ketchen, 2008), (2) the details of *AMJ*’s double-blind review process (Ireland, 2008a), (3) the editorial team’s positive reaction to well-designed lab studies (Colquitt, 2008), (4) using context theories as a means of narrowing the micro-macro gap in management research (Bamberger, 2008), and (5) recent changes in *AMJ*’s revise-and-resubmit process and the reasons for those changes (Ireland, 2008b). We hope these “From the Editors” are indeed creating some value for you as you prepare your manuscripts for submission to *AMJ*.

The purpose of this editorial is to address the issue of submitting for a second time a paper that *AMJ* has rejected—that is, asking for a new review by *AMJ*. (Before proceeding, I want to note that I find the word “reject” strong in tone and somewhat unpleasant when used to describe scholars’ reactions to other scholars’ work. However, as we all know, this word is used across disciplines and journals. Although it may not be as supportive in tone for conveying less-than-positive news as many of us perhaps want to be the case, I do not have an alternative to offer. Because of this, the word and its offshoots are used in the remainder of this commentary.)

All of us are familiar with the experience of reading a decision letter in which an action editor details the reasons our paper is being rejected. Of course, the action editor’s reasons are typically an integration of his/her thoughts about the paper and the reviewers’ observations and recommendations. Although reading and digesting the positions expressed in a “negative” decision letter is a difficult experience, we know that learning how to positively and effectively respond to our work being rejected by a journal is an important part of devel-

oping a successful scholarly career. A potentially positive approach to use when a rejection occurs is to carefully read the decision letter and the reviews with the purpose of identifying courses of action to take as well as directions not to pursue. After a period of time, most of us choose to revise the rejected paper and then submit it to another journal. Occasionally though, after revising the rejected paper (and after following the action editor and reviewers’ recommendation for doing so), a few authors choose to resubmit what they feel is now a *new* manuscript to the journal that has already rejected it. This is the action we are addressing here. Merely with the intention of stating a fact and with no desire whatsoever to sound critical, I want to note that the number of manuscripts we are receiving that authors are classifying as *new* submissions (even though the papers were previously rejected by *AMJ*) is increasing. Having said this, let me also clearly and importantly state that authors are telling us in their cover letters that the work they are sending to us was previously rejected by *AMJ*. In this regard, authors are being forthright and ethical when submitting their papers to us in this particular context.

Legitimate debates are possible regarding the most effective, the most desirable, and/or the most humane policy *AMJ* (and other journals) should have regarding such second submissions. In part, the legitimacy of these debates would revolve around the issue of whether or not it is appropriate for scholars to have the option (the right?) to submit their papers to a journal a second time. Should scholars be allowed to do this? Why or why not? Should scholars occasionally be encouraged to do this? If so, why would authors receive this encouragement? Before moving forward, let me say that at the extreme, a paper could be rejected by and resubmitted to a journal until it finally accepts the work for publication. Of course, none of us can imagine a journal establishing a policy that would allow a continuous stream of additional reviews of a previously rejected manuscript. Our experience strongly suggests that authors do not believe *AMJ* has such a policy when they submit their previously rejected work for a second review. The reason I say this is that I am not aware of any paper being submitted to *AMJ* a third time after being rejected twice by the *Journal*.

Despite the thought that has been given to this issue, I do not claim to have “the answer” to deal with this important issue. In essence, the issue being considered is, When is a paper really *new*? In the context of the *Journal's* editorial mission, is a paper new when the same data are used to examine different research questions that are derived from different theoretical arguments? Should a paper that *AMJ* has previously rejected be considered new when different data are used to examine what are essentially the same questions derived from the same theoretical arguments? As can be seen, several permutations exist when one considers research questions, theoretical arguments, and data as the issues to examine when determining if a previously rejected paper is or is not new.

Historically, *AMJ's* policy regarding this matter has been that different and/or additional data must be used for a paper to be considered a new submission. In addition, the desire has been for authors to also use different and possibly additional theoretical arguments to address the chosen research questions. Arguments could be made supporting this policy, and arguments could be made opposing it. To date, however, the editorial team has not formally specified a policy regarding the review of papers that the *Journal* has previously rejected.

After careful analysis of this matter, I would like to note that our policy will be that to be considered a *new* submission, a paper must satisfy three criteria implicit in the previous discussion. More specifically, for a paper that *AMJ* has rejected to be considered a *new* submission, the new manuscript must (1) address modified or new research questions, (2) use new theoretical arguments, and (3) use additional or new data to test the proposed relationships. Satisfying or meeting one or two of

the three criteria is not sufficient. We are specifying this policy in order to clarify how a paper that *AMJ* has previously rejected will be evaluated when submitted to *AMJ* for a possible second review as a *new* paper.

I truly hope that this policy provides clarity regarding how I as editor will decide if a paper that was previously rejected by *AMJ* can be considered to be a *new* submission and as such, ready to enter the double-blind review process. As always, please let me emphasize that the editorial team's desire is to serve the *Journal's* editorial mission as well as the scholars submitting their work to *AMJ* in a transparent manner. Thank you for the opportunity to continue serving you and the *Journal* and for the opportunity to express this particular policy to you.

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