

## ***Peer review: How the pros do it***

***The Academy of Management Journal (AMJ)*** publishes empirical studies relevant to all areas of management. Our primary requirement for publication is that the paper makes a significant contribution to empirical knowledge and theory in management.

*AMJ's* policy of "double-blind" review means that the reviewer and the author do not know the identity of the other. This means that you should not know or guess who wrote the paper. Such knowledge is likely to introduce potential bias in the evaluation.

### ***Tips on Addressing the Substance of the Review***

- \* **Theory:** Does the paper test, create, or extend management theory in a meaningful way? Does the study inform or improve our understanding of prior theory? Are major concepts clearly defined?
- \* **Literature Review:** Does the paper cite appropriate literature and provide proper credit to existing work on the topic? If not, can you offer important references that the author has missed? Does the paper contain an appropriate number of references (i.e., neither over-referencing nor under-referencing)?
- \* **Method:** Do the sample, measures, methods, observations, procedures, and statistical analyses ensure internal and external validity? Are the statistical procedures used correctly and appropriately? Are the major assumptions of the statistical techniques reasonably well met (i.e., no major violations)?
- \* **Integration:** Does the study provide a good test of the theory and hypotheses, or sufficient empirical grounds for building new theory? Is the method chosen -- either qualitative or quantitative -- appropriate for the research question and theory?
- \* **Contribution:** Does the paper make a new and meaningful contribution to the management literature in terms of theory, empirical knowledge, and management practice? Is the topic important and interesting? Is the length of the paper commensurate with its contribution?
- \* **Citations:** Have you given proper reference or citation to the original source of the comments that you write in the review if they are taken from others' work (or even your own)?

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### ***Tips on Offering Advice in Constructive Ways***

It is important that authors learn from the reviews and feel that they have benefited from the *AMJ* review process. Therefore, it is never enough just to say that you do or don't like a paper.

\* **Be Constructive:** Even if a paper appears beyond salvation, it is still important that your review be constructive. If the problems cannot be fixed in the current study, try to suggest how the authors could improve their chances in their next research venture.

\* **Identify Strengths:** While it is important to identify critical weaknesses, it is equally important to identify major strengths. One of the most important tasks for a reviewer is to distinguish between limitations that can be fixed in a revision and those that definitely cannot. You are doing a great service to the field any time you can help an author shape a mediocre manuscript into an insightful contribution.

\* **Consider Contribution:** Technical correctness and theoretical coherence are obvious criteria for a successful submission, but don't forget to consider the overall contribution that the manuscript offers. There is no point in our publishing a technically correct and theoretically coherent article if the contribution it offers is not meaningful, interesting, or important.

\* **Be Specific:** It is crucial that you tell the author what the problems are and how these problems can be addressed (where possible). This advice should be in the form of specific comments, reactions, and suggestions. The more specific you can be, the more helpful your review. It is also helpful to the author (and action editor) if you *number* your points or paragraphs to facilitate communication in the Action Editor's letter.

\* **Non-English Native Authors:** Occasionally you will be asked to review submissions from authors whose native language is not English; in those cases, it will also be important for you to distinguish between the quality of the writing and the quality of the ideas that the writing conveys. These may be good even if they are not expressed well.

\* **Personalized Writing Style:** When you write your review, imagine what you would say if you were actually giving the authors feedback in person. We ask that you try to personalize your writing style, for instance by using "you" rather than "the author," and "your paper" rather than "the author's paper," in writing your review.

\* **Don't Comment on Authors:** Your comments should always be about the paper, not about the authors. Be tough on the issues, not on the authors.

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\* **Don't be Two-Faced:** Although we want supportive and friendly reviews, we do not want reviews that are overly kind in the "Comments to Authors," but very negative in the private "Comments to the Editor." Such reviews place the Action Editor in the very awkward position of having to reject articles despite seemingly positive reviews that are not, in reality, positive. It is good to have empathy for authors, but not to be dishonest with them about the extent of your concerns.

*Adapted from: Academy of Management Journal Guidelines for Reviewers (2004-2007)*

*[http: aom.pace.edu/amjnew/reviewer\\_guidelines.html](http://aom.pace.edu/amjnew/reviewer_guidelines.html)*