'8 reasons I accepted your article'

Journal editors reveal the top reasons a manuscript gets published

**By Elizabeth Zwaaf   Posted on 15 January 2013**

At Elsevier, it's the responsibility of every editor-in-chief to maintain and develop their journal's profile and reputation. The editor also has the final responsibility for content, ensuring that it meets the aims and scope of the journal and reflects changes in the field by presenting new and emerging research.

In September, Elsevier Connect published an article by Dr. Peter Thrower, Editor-in-Chief of *Carbon*, called "8 reasons I rejected your article." Because of the article's popularity, we followed up by asking five of our editors a related question: What are the top eight reasons you accept a paper? They all came up with similar reasons, which we present here along with their commentary.

The eight reasons are summed up by Dr. Torsten Pieper, Assistant Editor of the *Journal of Family Business Strategy* and Assistant Professor at the Cox Family Enterprise Center, Coles College of Business, at Kennesaw State University in Georgia, and his colleague, Dr. Joseph Astrachan, Editor-in-Chief of the journal and Executive Director of the Cox Family Enterprise Center and Professor of Management and Entrepreneurship.
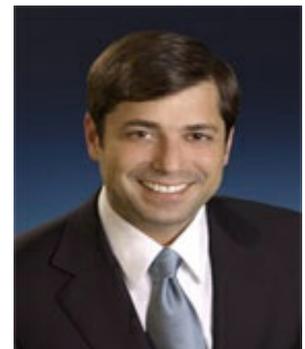
1. It provides insight into an important issue – for example, by explaining a wide variance when numbers are spread out from the mean or expected value, or by shedding light on an unsolved problem that affects a lot of people.

2. The insight is useful to people who make decisions, particularly long-term organizational decisions or, in our particular field, family decisions.

3. The insight is used to develop a framework or theory , either a new theory or advancing an existing one.

4. The insight stimulates new, important questions.

5. The methods used to explore the issue are appropriate (for example, data collection and analysis of data).

6. The methods used are applied rigorously and explain why and how the data support the conclusions.

7. Connections to prior work in the field or from other fields are made and serve to make the article's arguments clear.

8. The article tells a good story, meaning it is well written and easy to understand, the arguments are logical and not internally contradictory.

"Ideally, we would like to see articles perform well on all eight points, and that the author strives for a good balance amongst these criteria," said Dr. Pieper said.

'Show me something new'

"For the subject, it is what I have seen over the years in the journal and what I feel is current, novel and not derivative," he said.

Professor Florence added that he is intrigued by work that is very new and by papers he wishes he thought about doing himself. After the paper has survived reviewer scrutiny, Dr. Florence said, it helps when the reviewers are unanimous in their views. While the reviewing process is very strict, reviewers might be split on their final decision: for example, one might recommend "rejection," another "major revision" and the third "accept as is."

"What we are seeing in *Life Sciences*, as well as other journals, is the explosive growth of new technology which has broad implications on these studies," he said.

Do your own work

While a paper might "tick all the boxes," the question on everyone's mind is, "Is it original?" With the increasing use of technology — and several software programs now available to detect plagiarism, such as CrossCheck — the paper's originality can be easily determined and detected before the referees see it. At Elsevier, many papers undergo this scrutiny.

While plagiarism is not a crime per se, it is considered a moral offense and can involve liability for copyright infringement.

"There should be no hints of plagiarism or fabrication in the paper," said Dr. Francesco Visioli, Editor-in-Chief of *Pharmacological Research* and the recently launched journal *PharmaNutrition*. Also, he added, "data in the figures should match those reported in the results, and the results are not in contradiction with each other."

Use varied research methods

Dr. Pieper, who moved from Germany to the US about five years ago, looks at the type of research submitted from different parts of the world. "Moving from Europe to the US, I see there is a marked difference between the output of US researchers compared to their European counterparts in qualitative as opposed to quantitative research for my family of journals," he said, pointing out that well over 75 percent of submissions coming from the US use quantitative methods compared to about 50 percent from Europe.

"This clearly demonstrates to me that European researchers are more embracing of alternative methods to explore a phenomenon of interest," he said. "Going forward, I would like to see a more even balance in the papers submitted from the US."

Resources for authors

Before submitting a paper, authors should study the journal's aims and scope and consult with the Guide for Authors.

For more advice, check out the step-by-step guide *How to publish in an Elsevier Journal* and the Publishing Connect Author Training Webcasts .

For information on the Elsevier's online submission system, visit the Elsevier Editorial System (EES) customer support site at support.elsevier.com. [divider]

The Author

Elizabeth Zwaaf is a Marketing Communications Specialist at Elsevier. In this role, she has helped promote the work of the Innovation Explorers community to a wider audience at Elsevier and in the research community. She is currently heading up an internal campaign that focuses on where Elsevier gets customer feedback and how it's used.

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