Touch Points for Reviewing

From the co-editors of SMJ

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A. Good Reviews Do the Following

1. **Summarize the main current and potential strengths of the paper**: Your goal is to help the authors understand the most important contribution that the paper can make, in terms of framing an important question, identifying potential answers, and providing a viable empirical and/or logical path to a reliable answer.

2. **Summarize the biggest challenges**: Identify 3 to 5 main issues that the authors will need to deal with if the paper is going to move forward to achieving the contribution. The issues will commonly include a mix of framing, logic, research design, and analysis. Addressing the issues might or might not be doable in a revision. The reviewer's job is to identify a potential pathway, while the editor's job is to decide whether the authors are capable of following the path. In the next revision, you can then assess whether the authors are making appropriate progress in dealing with the first set of challenges, while identifying the next level of issues.

3. **Provide some degree of detail**: Identify key points within each of the main challenges. The goal here is to identify the major building blocks that the author will need to tackle within each key issue, without overloading yourself and the author with details that will become irrelevant once the major issues are tackled. You can accomplish points 1 to 3 in a relatively small number of pages of focused commentary and suggestions.

4. **Are constructive and open-minded:** Take the authors' point of view in terms of what they are attempting to achieve, while being hard-nosed about what they need to do in order to achieve it. In parallel, be open-minded about framing and methodological choices, while again being hard-nosed about pushing the author to achieve as much reliability as possible in the logic and, where relevant, the analysis, within the constraints of the question and empirical context.

5. **Understand the journal's norms of framing and analysis**: Different journals have different approaches to how to frame an argument and how to deliver reliable answers. For the *Strategic Management Journal*, for instance, it is useful to look at the "Policies and Procedures" page, which has discussions of topics such as endogeneity, theory, quantitative research., and qualitative research.

http://smj.strategicmanagement.net/downloads.php.

B. Good Reviews Avoid the Following

1. **Laundry lists**: Avoid simply providing a long list of items, most of which will be irrelevant once the authors work on the main points.

2. **Take over the paper:** Avoid telling the reviewer what questions you would have asked and what main lines of logic you would have pursued had the study been your work.

3. **Impose your preferred design**: Avoid attempting to impose your preferred way of framing an argument and/or designing an empirical study.

4. **Review topics that are beyond your scope**: If a paper falls outside your competence and/or comfort zone, send the paper back to the editor as quickly as possible, with a polite request to be sent papers in areas you are more familiar with. At the same time, be willing to push yourself in tackling new questions and methods that you find interesting.

Thank you for providing authors with constructive, open-minded, and timely comments. Thoughtful reviewing is the fundamental backbone of scholarly advance!