

**Proposal for the Improving
the
Journal of Small Business Management**

**As proposed by the
Internal Review Committee**

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In February, 2014 Dr. Ayman El Tarabishy (Executive Director of ICSB) and Dr. George Solomon (Editor in Chief) appointed an internal committee made up of two of the more senior Associate Editors (AE) of JSBM (Professor Alain Fayolle and Professor Alan Carsrud) to address a variety of issues concerning the quality of the journal, the consistency of the journal's decisions, its internal processes, and finally its policies with respect to publishing conference proceeding papers.

The later concern was triggered by recent policy changes at both the Journal of Business Venturing and Entrepreneurship: Theory & Practice stating that papers who were published in full in journal proceedings in full could not be published again in those journals unless entirely rewritten and the old work cited. The former concerns came from the need to raise the profile of JSBM both in terms of its impact factor but also to return it to the top of the preferred journal lists of both SSCI and the Financial Times. As a result of conversations between the committee members and discussion with senior researchers in the field who serve as reviewers for the journal the following detail issues were selected for attention and proposals for dealing with each are proposed for discussion. Thus the following:

Improve quality of submissions

While AE's could invite quality submissions from major conferences, like ICSB, RENT, USASBE, BCERC, FERC, IFERA, etc. we do run into the issues of papers having been published in a conference proceedings and thus the copyright and plagiarism issue arises. This will be discussed further in another section.

While the use of Special Issues (SI) with focused invited papers can address this need to some degree, it likewise means that novel papers or topics may well be ignored. Too often SI editors invite top researchers, which is good, but they may also ignore rising young researchers as well. Care needs to be taken in determining the number and topics of SI's to maintain the journal's reputation and to

encourage new veins of work. SIs need to be chosen in a way that encourages new lines of research which could enhance the impact factor of the journal in the future.

Another approach to improving publications is to revise the guidelines for submissions to include greater details about what is expected in literature reviews, methodology descriptions, statistical analyses, etc. in advance of submissions. Tied to this is each AE should be assigned a primary and back up area of expertise. People submitting would then know who is most likely to be given their submission. This would help avoid AE's getting papers for which they are only marginally experts and thus not fully capable of making a desk reject decision about the quality. More on this topic later. We believe this can be implemented rather quickly

Raising the Impact Factor for JSBM

Critical to this is that we must increase the quality of the papers that are published both from their impact on theory development and of relevance to the practice of entrepreneurship, small business, and family firms. AEs should encourage fellow researchers to consider JSBM for their best papers, this includes working to identify creative young researchers to submit papers based on their dissertations. AEs who attend conferences should be on the lookout for topics and papers, topics, and authors which fit the profile of the journal and encourage their submission. This is something that can be implemented quickly.

Improve quality of papers submitted to reviewers and published

The consensus of the committee is that there needs to be **greater use of desk rejects** by existing and future AE's. Some AE's do not use this decision on papers that end up being rejected soundly in the first round. There may be a number of reasons for this such as not knowing the area of the paper very well or their simply not knowing how to access this feature. Desk rejects would reduce the work load on both the reviewers looking at obviously poor papers, and would improve the turn around on decisions to authors. This would require not only that AE's know the area being researched in a paper, but that they provide the rejected authors with a clear reason why the paper was desk rejected. Clearly this means we need to identify the primary research areas for an AE. This means that AE's should be recognized experts with a publication record in that area. Currently we have AE's that are not widely published. Recommendations on the minimum standards for AE's will be found below.

We are getting some papers that are "copies" of prior studies. We have caught several of these by chance but it is clear that we need to do more. All accepted papers should go into turn it in software and all papers being submitted need to be warned in advance that this will happen. This will help address the issue of papers fundamentally being identical to papers published elsewhere. We make students go through this turn it in process, we need to do the same for papers being published to avoid copyright issues.

Improving the review process

We need to update once again the pool of reviewers. This may mean purging reviewers who are not active researchers themselves or who have not reviewed for the journal in over 4 years or whose rating as reviewers is in the lower quartile of all reviews. Having poor to weak reviewers who are not strong researchers does not improve the journal quality. We need to provide timely and appropriate feedback

to submissions even if they are rejected. At least one reviewer should be familiar with the methodology being used

Have reviewers get the final decisions on papers even if a reject. The feedback on why a paper was rejected and what the other reviewers said would be helpful once a decision has been made. Feedback should help reviewers learn from the experience. This should be able to be done immediately as other journals in the Wiley system do this.

At least one reviewer should be familiar with the methodology being used. We need a pool of reviewers with methodology backgrounds (both qualitative and quantitative) as well as individuals with strong statistical skills.

Finding good reviewers with specific expertise

We should go through the authors of papers published within the journal and all authors who are not currently on the list of potential reviewers should be asked to join the JSBM review board. This tied with purging reviewers who have not reviewed in the last 4 years will give us a more active group of researchers to act as reviewers. This could be done immediately.

Qualifications Standards for AE's

Anyone who is appointed in the future, or reappointed, as an AE's, must have least 10 publications and at least 5 of these must be SSCI accredited publications. In addition we recommend that of those SSCI publications one should be an article recently published in JSBM. We also recommend that AEs be assigned areas of review that fit their expertise. This will help us identify where we may have gaps in AEs with respect to content knowledge and can then actively hunt for AEs to fill those content gaps. AEs who are appointed to represent affiliate organizations must have an established publication record to be an AE. There are AEs whose own publication records are weak to non-existent and these should be phased off the board as rapidly as possible.

Training AE's and New Review Board Members

We are proposing that new AE's should go to at least one workshop the year they are appointed to learn about the standards of the journal, the publication philosophy of the journal and for AE's how to handle desk rejects. We believe these could be held in conjunction with ICSB, USASBE, ECSB etc. meetings. We also believe that new reviewers and those wishing to be named to the Review Board be invited to these sessions as well. We think this approach will help to assure that reviewers take a more rigorous approach to doing reviews. These sessions could also be a way to create a community around JSBM.

Improving Impact factor of articles

We recommend that all submitted papers have to have clearly identified sections that address both theory building and practice (or policy). Entrepreneurship needs both stronger theories and better application of research to practice and these are things that any paper in the journal should be able to clearly state their value added. This can be done rather quickly

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