

Guest Editorial from a Previous Editor-in-Chief: Reflections of a Former Editor

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How I Got Appointed

I was in the hallway at a Marketing Science conference trying to figure out which session to attend next when I noticed that the distinguished trio of Frank Bass, John Little, and Don Morrison was bearing down upon me. They ushered me into a small, dimly lit room and asked whether I would like to serve as the next Editor of *Marketing Science*. My first comment was: we already have an Editor—Don Morrison had recently been appointed as the founding Editor. It turned out, however, that Don had now been appointed editor of *Management Science*, requiring the appointment of a new Editor for *Marketing Science*. I was one of three Area Editors for *Marketing Science* at that time and felt honored to be chosen as the next Editor by Frank, John, and Don. I requested a couple of days to think about the offer, spoke with my wife (who wasn't too thrilled that the added responsibilities would leave even less time for my family), and accepted. In other words, I have the honor of being the last Editor of *Marketing Science* who was chosen by a set of kingmakers (albeit very distinguished kingmakers) in the equivalent of a dark, smoke-filled room! Since I was chosen, future Editors have all been selected by a committee following a set of sensible rules and regulations.

Editorial Challenges

The first thing I learned very quickly was that the Editor has to walk a fine line between authors and reviewers. You cannot be unfair to either the authors or the reviewers. I had to make sure that authors would accept our decisions (it took those whose papers were rejected some extra time to accept our decisions!), while ensuring that the careful comments of the reviewers weren't ignored in a cavalier manner in my cover letter. This doesn't mean that one should never make decisions opposed to the recommendations of the reviewers. The classic example that comes to mind is the paper "Mental Accounting and Consumer Choice," submitted to us by Dick Thaler. The referees recommended unanimously that the paper should be rejected because it was not a typical *Marketing Science* paper (no mathematics, models, hypotheses, etc.). However, what it contained was a

wealth of interesting ideas. The more I thought about it, the more I liked the paper. However, to make sure, I called Abel Jeuland, the Area Editor for the manuscript. To my delight, Abel agreed with me and we decided to ignore the reviewers' comments and accept the paper. It has since become the most highly cited paper in *Marketing Science* (if you haven't read it yet, go to Volume 4, Number 3, the Summer 1985 issue of the journal). The bottom line is that the Editor should be prepared to make tough decisions based on his/her reading of the paper and not just count the "yes" and "no" votes of the reviewers.

The other innovation I introduced was a Board of Industry Reviewers. I wanted industry people to both contribute to the journal and to read it. Despite my best efforts, getting industry contributions was very difficult. Hence, to get them to be part of the journal, I set up a Board of Industry Reviewers and asked one or two of them to comment on a selected set of papers that we published. Not all the commentaries were successful. However, several of them were very insightful and added to the value of the papers for both industry and academic readers.

Where We Failed

My biggest failure was in not reducing the turnaround time for reviews. Unfortunately, neither I nor my Area Editors thought of some of the nice ideas implemented by future Editors (e.g., John Hauser's 2-2-2 system—as I recall, it was two reviewers, two pages per review, and two rounds of evaluation) to reduce turnaround time.

Statement of Thanks

I thank both Don Morrison and my Area Editors (Abel Jeuland, Rick Staelin, and Jerry Wind) for their help and guidance. Don, in particular, was a wonderful guide. He was the Marketing Departmental Editor at *Management Science* when I submitted my first two papers there. He did a masterful job of combining the reviewers' comments and the strengths of my papers to greatly improve the revised drafts. I hope I was successful in following many of his precepts to fulfil my goal of making *Marketing Science* a top-notch journal.