A checklist for prospective authors of *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*

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In several recent editorial articles in the *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* (Ahlstrom, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c), I noted that we receive numerous submissions to *APJM* that are potentially of interest, but often have improperly organized and undersold arguments, or simply lie outside of the aims and scope of this journal (Ahlstrom, 2011). These problems hurt otherwise interesting papers as it can be difficult to see their specific value and contribution. Those articles also provided several recommendations to prospective authors in terms of crafting their papers, avoiding desk rejections, and responding to reviewers. Interested authors should look carefully at those *APJM* articles as well as this journal's aims and scope, which can be found on *APJM*'s website along with other instructions and helpful information on writing for scholarly publication (Ahlstrom, 2010a, b, c, 2011; Huff, 1999, 2008; Machi & McEvoy, 2008; Sutton & Staw, 1995).

This article seeks to provide a summary of some of that information by supplying a quick checklist of a few key items to which authors should pay particular attention in preparing their papers for *APJM* (see Table 1). This checklist, while not exhaustive, provides some essential guidelines for a prospective author to check before submitting a manuscript to *APJM*.¹ In addition, authors should take note of the different types of papers published in *APJM* (e.g., Ahlstrom, Chen, & Yeh, 2010; Ahlstrom, Lamond, & Ding, 2009; Dieleman, 2010; Peng, Li, Xie, & Su, 2010) as well as the books and articles cited here as they provide some additional helpful information on possible research as well as an array of research- and publishing-related topics for authors (e.g., Ahlstrom, 2010c; Huff, 1999, 2008).

¹ Authors should also be sure to read the instructions for authors and other submission information on the Springer-*APJM* website: <http://www.springer.com/business+%26+management/business+for+professionals/journal/10490>

The *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* would like to welcome our newest Senior Editor, Fang Lee Cooke of Monash University in Melbourne.

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Table 1 A quick checklist for prospective *APJM* authors.

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- Formatting and style
 - Aims and scope
 - Research question
 - Introduction
 - Contributions
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Formatting and style; aims and scope

Authors should be sure to format their manuscripts consistent with the journal guidelines. Authors can find the style guidelines on the Springer-*APJM* website, but it is also good to read a couple of *APJM* papers to see how articles are generally formatted and organized. We take our guidelines for text style and references formatting seriously. Sending a paper to *APJM* using another journal's style suggests to the editors a lack of attention to detail or little knowledge about *APJM* and what it publishes. Significant formatting problems may also be cause to return a manuscript to an author for reformatting prior to any formal review. In particular, two formatting problems I see again and again are submissions with single-spaced text, and improperly done references, such as using numbered footnotes instead of the “name and date” citation style. *APJM* uses about the same format as does the *Academy of Management Journal*, which calls for a fairly standard 12-point font like Times Roman and not bold, except in the headers and in the references section. In addition, tables and figures should be placed at the end of the manuscript, paragraphs should not be numbered, and there should be no extra spacing between paragraphs unless called for by the presence of a primary header, just to name three more common problems.

Similarly, the style of the manuscript should be impersonal and academic. One manuscript we received wrote something like “are you ready for rapid change in your environment?” Another manuscript provided the readers detailed steps for a new method of quality control. Such submissions seem to be business magazine articles, consultants' reports, or textbook chapters and not academic management papers (cf. Ahlstrom, 2010c). Prospective authors need to keep the audience of their target journal in mind. At *APJM*, that audience is comprised primarily of academic management and international business researchers, and that audience is primarily interested in the building, testing, and improvement of management theory, along with the presentation of interesting empirical or case results that are theory-driven and (potentially) useful or explicatory to managers and organizations (Ahlstrom, 2010b; Huff, 2008; Nair & Ahlstrom, 2008; Sutton & Staw, 1995). While certainly interesting, textbook-type chapters and articles geared more for business magazines do not fit the aims and scope of *APJM* (see Ahlstrom, 2010c, 2011). Perspectives, review, and commentary papers are all welcome (e.g. Ismail & Ford, 2010; Lin & Si, 2010; Zhou & Peng, 2010).

The introduction is very important

The introduction of a paper is very important and may be a “make or break” section for the paper. It is important for authors to try to ensure that their introduction

sections contain the right information to summarize the paper for the readers. For example, as I have written on more than one occasion in this journal, authors should have a clear and answerable research question or thesis statement in the introduction of the paper (Ahlstrom, 2010b; Huff, 1999). A good research question or thesis statement leaves little doubt in the reader's mind what the paper will be about. And it is best if this question is posed at or near the beginning of the paper, and certainly earlier than the hypothesis or methods section. Moreover, authors should try to steer clear of overly general statements like "this paper will investigate innovation in China," which is not a research question (Ahlstrom, 2010b).

The introduction should also contain a short summary of the background of the topic—basically a thumbnail literature review that motivates the paper and briefly situates it in that literature.² As such, authors should be very careful about stating "very little research has been done on this topic." If one were to write that in the introduction to motivate the paper, it is important to try to be as certain as possible that this statement is correct. We received one manuscript recently which claimed "only a little research" had been on the manuscript's topic; the authors then only cited one paper in their introductory literature review. Yet in fact, numerous articles and even some best-selling books had actually been written on the topic the authors had in mind—in any case there was certainly a lot more than "a little research" (or just one main paper) on that topic. Authors need to do the literature review with care to show how their paper then fits with the current research stream (Ahlstrom, 2010a; Machi & McEvoy, 2008).

Another vital part of the introduction section is a quick, one to two paragraph summary of the paper's contributions. Many papers at *APJM* are rejected because of low contribution to existing research (cf. Rynes, 2002). For example, a paper that covers some fairly well known ground such as work motivation may find it difficult to state clearly what the paper is adding to the theory and (empirical) knowledge base on this topic.³ Some authors try to sidestep this problem by stating their contributions in overly brief and general terms or by not providing any contributions at all. Such approaches are not acceptable at *APJM*. At a minimum, authors should provide the theoretical, empirical, and practical contributions of their work.⁴ Authors should also expand on their contributions in the paper's discussion section, where more detailed contributions should be provided (e.g., Meyer, Estrin, Bhaumik, & Peng, 2009). Other contributions may be included at that time such as contributions to research design or methodology, if a new or different approach was used in the paper, for example. The paper's contributions clarify its impact on the scholarly conversation in *APJM*, and on the field in general (Meyer et al., 2009; Rynes, 2002; Young, Peng, Ahlstrom, Bruton, & Jiang, 2008). Interested authors should look for further discussion on some of the important topics summarized in this article, including the literature review and contributions, in future issues of *APJM*.

² The literature review should also be expanded considerably in the literature review or theory section after the introduction. See Machi and McEvoy (2008) and Ridley (2008) for more explanation of the literature review.

³ This is not to say that no new research is needed on work motivation. It is just that authors will need to survey the vast and deep literature on motivation and carefully explain how their research will contribute to the theory, empirical evidence, and practice on that important topic.

⁴ Some authors may use the term "implications" instead of contributions. At *APJM* we usually encourage the latter term as it is more specific and direct.

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