



The cost and value of reviewing

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The final product of an academic journal, the accepted and published paper, is a complex one. One of the necessary ingredients of a good paper are good reviewers. They push the author(s) by helpful comments and remarks to “produce” in different rounds a further improved version of the manuscript. It is quite natural that author(s) are not delighted about too many or too challenging remarks of the reviewers or about too many rounds to go which are often described as “very risky”. Nevertheless, the vast majority of reviewers invests an incredible amount of time in reviewing papers and most of them are highly interested in helping the authors to improve their paper, finally to improve our knowledge, in our case on management accounting and control.

Mostly, also for the Journal of Management Control, they do not get paid for their input. If we consider that reading an empirical paper with 50+ pages, writing the review and some necessary further analyses in the related literature takes in the minimum 7 to 8 h, this can be regarded as a significant investment of time and, often not considered, money. If we assume an annual income of a reviewer (including social insurance, bonuses etc.) of € 100,000 and 46 weeks of work per year with 60 h each, the costs of one review amount to $100,000/46/60 \times 8 = € 289$.

Is this number crunching? No, the € 289 per review are just a symbol for the investment of each scholar in the double blind review process. And, it is just the cost of the resources used, but not of its value representing years and often decades of research experience. A story about Pablo Picasso is a nice metaphor of the value of experience: Picasso was at a party. A woman recognized him and approached the Master. She asked, “Will you create a sketch for me?” Picasso agreed, and, as he pulled out his sketchpad, asked the lady for a subject to draw. “A bird in a tree will do,” she responded. Picasso spent about 5 min drawing on the sketchpad. Finished, he ripped the sketch off the pad, handed it to the woman and said, “That will be \$10,000.” The woman was shocked. “Ten thousand dollars! Why, it only took you 5 min to draw that sketch!” Picasso replied, “No, madam. That sketch took me a lifetime.”

As, for most journals, the publication of a paper and the review process is free of charge, both authors and editors are lucky to get this highly specialized and skilled

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resources of the reviewers for free. If we move on with our example and consider three revisions with two engaged reviewers, we can quite roughly estimate the “full costs” of an accepted publication: $2 \text{ reviewers} \times \text{€}289 \text{ per review} \times 3 \text{ rounds} = \text{€} 1,734$ only for reviewing costs. If we consider a natural acceptance rate far below 100%, we also have to add the costs for the rejected papers to that of the accepted ones, similar to the calculation of a product with very low yield rates.

Overall, we are very gifted that, on the one hand, a journal such as the Journal of Management Control has reviewers dedicating their time to excellent reviews, and that, on the other hand, their affiliations support this by financing their salaries and positions. This should not be taken as natural and granted. In total, 99 reviews were finished in 2017 which represents as a sum a significant input of resources in the review process ($99 \times \text{€} 289 = \text{€} 28,611$) only by our reviewers.

Thus, it is the editors’ privilege and commitment to honour our excellent and highly dedicated team of reviewers. Also this year, we recognize their expertise and input by highlighting some of them as best reviewer and distinguished reviewers:

Best reviewer award 2017: **Erik Strauss**, University of Witten/Herdecke, Germany

Distinguished Reviewers 2017: **Martin Hiebl**, University of Siegen, Germany
Thorsten Knauer, Ruhr University of Bochum, Germany

Paola Madini, University of Kent, United Kingdom

Sandra Tillema, University of Groningen, the Netherlands

The articles of this double issue of 2018 represent the broad horizon of methods and topics around management accounting and control typical for the Journal of Management Control.

Cost stickiness as the asymmetric cost behaviour of increasing versus decreasing activity levels has gained wide attention in the management control literature. *Shohei Nagasawa* explores cost stickiness effects of a large sample of Japanese local public enterprises. He compares the cost behavior of these enterprises with that of commercial enterprises using panel data covering 40 years. Furthermore, he analyzes the change over time, industry driven differences, the relationship of cost stickiness effects with population changes, and with the political influence on these local public enterprises.

In a conceptual paper *Gabriele Fassauer* investigates how management control can contribute to a person’s innovative behavior at the workplace. By regarding innovation as “desired deviance”, the author introduces Merton’s anomie theory to explore under which conditions the multiple forms of control proposed by the objects-of-control framework are likely to produce desirable and undesirable deviant behaviors.

A mixed study design is chosen by the third paper in this issue. *Daniela Argento*, *Timurs Umans*, *Patricia Håkansson* and *Annika Johansson* employ both qualitative and quantitative methods consisting of semi-structured interviews and surveys addressing external auditors in Big 4 audit firms in Sweden which have engagements with internal audit functions. The paper explores how external auditors experience their decision to rely on internal auditors’ work.

Tiina Henttu-Aho uses a multiple case study approach to investigate differences in the design and use of control systems across three industrial firms that had recently sought to improve their planning systems. The paper examines how rolling forecasting is used for planning and linked to other practices in a management control system. The findings reveal two approaches to forecasting, a proactive-type of planning and a reactive type of planning with different use of rolling forecasts.

Finally, *Josep M. Argilés-Bosch*, *Josep Garcia-Blandón*, *Diego Ravenda* and *Mónica Martínez-Blasco* demonstrate in a quantitative study that the relationship between most slack variables and firm performance is curvilinear. However, the inflection points lie mainly outside the distribution range of the slack variables. Thus, the curvilinear relationships between slack and performance are, in fact, neither U-shaped nor inverted U-shaped. Using a sample of US firms, the authors analyze the influence of three indicators of absorbed and unabsorbed slack on two frequently used dimensions of firm performance: profitability and sales growth.

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For the team of editors

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