Assignment for 15.840 Friday, February 12, 2016

Goals

The goal of this session is to give you some experience in responding to reviewers. Sometimes, we hit it just right. For example, “Website Morphing” received a conditional acceptance on the first round. The response to reviewers was less than one page. Other times papers struggle in the review process. They may struggle because they are poorly written, done incorrectly, or provide no incremental contribution.

They may also struggle for reasons not entirely related to quality. We may believe they are quite good even if the review team disagrees. Perhaps the paper was sent to the wrong reviewers, or the reviewers evaluated the paper from a different philosophy. For example, the reviewer might care very deeply about forward-looking consumers, but you are convinced that forward-looking consumers are, at best, a second-order effect in your analysis.

For a successful career, you must believe in yourself and be willing to fight for your paper when this happens. Of course, it also helps to be able to distinguish between true and false rejection—you don’t want to invest more energy in a doomed paper. However, don’t give up too soon. As part of the Advisory Board of Marketing Science, we once looked back at the most seminal papers published in Marketing Science. Almost all had difficulties getting published.

Believe it or not, it is also important to distinguish between true and false acceptance. Getting a bad paper accepted can undermine a career—I’ve seen it happen. In my career, with a few notable exceptions, the impact of a paper seems to have been inversely correlated with the ease with which it made it through the review process. At the top schools, hiring, promotion, and tenure decisions are based more on post-publication judged quality than on the number of publications.

Assignment

We will cover two papers. One that made it through the review process and one that is in process. If you prefer, you may work in teams of two for this assignment. But it is expected that both members of the team will work on both papers. It is not acceptable to split the papers between the team members.

The first paper was submitted to the International Journal of Research in Marketing. This paper was rejected on the first round, but the editor was encouraging. The authors revised the paper and it was conditionally accepted on the second round. I have provided the original reviews and the original submission. (Please do not look up the final paper. I will provide it after the seminar.)

It is not uncommon for reject-and-resubmit papers to be accepted, although it usually takes a couple of more rounds. Those researchers that succeed in our field listen carefully to criticism. They
hold their ground when they need to hold their ground, but accept criticism when it is valid. Reject-and-resubmit papers have a good chance of getting published, but only if the authors take review team’s the advice seriously.

1. Read both the IJRM paper and the IJRM reviews.
   a. Identify which comments are fair criticisms and which are reviewer misunderstandings.
   b. Identify those comments to which you need to respond and those comments that you will fight.
2. Prepare a revision plan.
   a. Describe what new research you need to do, if any, before you can revise the paper. (You do not need to do this research for the seminar.)
   b. Describe which literature, if any, you need to review and include. (You do not need to actually do the literature review for the seminar.)
3. Prepare a “response to reviewers.”
   a. For each reviewer comment, write a short response. The standard form is to summarize the comment and then summarize what you have “done.” (You don’t have to do it, just pretend you have done it.)
   b. Provide a title for the new paper.
   c. After the seminar, I will provide the actual response to reviewers.
   d. The authors’ response was six pages, double-spaced. Use this as a guideline.
4. Write an abstract for the new paper.

The second paper, Preference Discovery, is still in progress. It, too, received a reject and resubmit, but this time from Marketing Science. This paper has been revised substantially and is almost ready for submission. In many ways it is almost an entirely new paper. I provided the original submission, the reviews, and the planned resubmission.

1. Read the original paper, the reviews, and the revision.
2. Indicate what, if anything, you feel still needs to be done. (The synthetic-data experiments are placeholders, they will be corrected.)
3. Prepare a “response to reviewers” of no more than 5-6 pages.
   a. Describe what the authors have done.
   b. Include anything else you feel should be done.