

Tomorrow's Professor Msg.#197 How Do You Handle Rejection?

Folks:

Everyone who attempts to publishers peer-reviewed manuscripts faces rejection. The excerpt below gives some tips on how to reduce the chances of rejection and how to handle it when it does come. The posting is from, *Writing for Professional Publication: Keys to Academic and Business Success*, by Kenneth T. Henson, Eastern Kentucky University (pp. 118-120). The book is published by Allyn & Bacon, A Viacom Company, Needham Heights, MA 02194 and is copyrighted 1999 by Allyn & Bacon. Reprinted with permission.

Regards,

Rick Reis
reis@stanford.edu
UP NEXT: Certain Knowledge and the Conventional University

Tomorrow's Research

----- 724 words -----

HOW DO YOU HANDLE REJECTION?

As an experienced writer and teacher of writing, I always want to respond to this question with fatherly advice and say something like, "I view rejections as evidence of growth." But to the novice, such fatherly advice may sound like "Eat your spinach; it's good for you." Well, as many parents will attest, spinach is good for you-but only if it doesn't cause you to throw up. Similarly, getting rejections may be good for you, but only if they don't cause you to give up. Greg Daugherty~ editor of Money magazine (1996, p. 28), says that if you haven't been rejected lately, it may mean "you simply aren't trying hard enough."

Perhaps a better response is that all successful authors get rejections. Successful writers grow as a result of rejection because they learn from experience. Some aggressive novices ask the editors for advice. They ask the editors of referred journals for copies of the reviewers' evaluations of their manuscript. With this feedback in hand, rejections can become painful blessings.

Perhaps the best advice for dealing with rejections is to study the rejections immediately, make the necessary improvements, and promptly send the manuscript to another publisher. If no feedback is received, either ask for it, or quickly examine your returned manuscript for editorial marks. Then make the needed corrections, put the manuscript and a self-addressed stamped envelope in an envelope, and send it to another publisher. Remember, sometimes the reasons behind rejections are unrelated to the quality of the manuscript.

There are two reasons for handling rejections hastily. If you leave the rejection on your desk, you will dwell on it--even if only in your sub-conscious and it seems to grow. Second, by promptly sending the manuscript out again, you decrease the time between acceptances, and this increases your number of publications. If your manuscript has any value at all, there is likely to be some correlation between your number of acceptances and the time that your manuscript spends on an editor's desk.

After twenty years of writing, I still get rejections, and each one has a little sting. But each rejection brings a smile as I think, "That's O.K. I've been rejected before, and I can take pride in knowing that I've been rejected by the very best."

Experienced authors know that some of their time is better spent planning to avoid rejections. Jesus Garcia uses an approach that is both preventive and objective. He has worked out a method to reduce rejections and a method to deal with rejections objectively.

Rejection should not be the most difficult part of writing, but it is. I suspect potential authors do not write for publication because they do not wish to deal with rejection. I learned early in my writing career that I would need to develop my own mechanism for addressing rejection. After a few rejections, I sat down and developed a process.

First, I always attempt to develop quality manuscripts. Usually, when I have a manuscript rejected, it is not because it is poorly written or poorly put together. Nor is it because my idea was not well thought out.

Second, I target the manuscript or at least two journals. If one rejects it, I send it to the other.

Third, when I receive a rejection I read the cover letter and file the manuscript for a week.

Fourth, after the hurt has subsided, I return to the manuscript and read the cover letter and the constructive criticism provided on a rating sheet or on the manuscript. (If no constructive comments are provided, I send the manuscript to the second journal).

Fifth, when constructive criticism is provided, I weigh the comments and make those changes I feel are warranted. I then send the manuscript to the second journal.

Individuals wishing to write for publication should not copy my approach but develop a mechanism that is reflective of their own personalities.

Garcia's effort to develop a quality manuscript before sending it to an editor saves time and disappointment. His process of carefully scrutinizing and using criticisms to improve the manuscript is wise. This may be difficult when readers are unkind, but remember that, left unchanged, the manuscript might affect others in equally negative ways. Garcia's concluding advice is the voice of experience, individual authors must develop their own systems for dealing with rejection.

TOMORROW'S PROFESSOR MAILING LIST
Is sponsored by the STANFORD CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING
