

Hotel Online Special Report



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Some Readers View the Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly as Being too Academic; The Journal's Editor Michael Sturman Responds

Perhaps I'm Protesting Too Much, But....

In his [December 27th column](#), Stanley Turkel criticized Gary Thompson's response to the criticism that the Cornell Quarterly is too academic. In a survey, a significant percentage of readers of the Cornell Quarterly said that the journal was either "a little" too academically oriented (47.4%) or "far" too academically oriented (12.4%). Dr. Thompson did not interpret this finding as negative, instead saying that "if the CQ tilts a bit toward the academic, that is intentional, even though its articles are meant to be useful for practitioners as well as researchers." Mr. Turkel seemed to take issue with this response, suggesting that it was akin to saying "don't bother us with your viewpoint about the Cornell Quarterly. It will continue to be too academically oriented no matter what its readers want."

As editor of the journal (I am the one solely responsible for the decisions as to its content; Dr. Thompson is not), I felt the need to respond. The accusation of being "too academic" is a criticism I have heard and battled with over my three-and-a-half years as editor, and it is a criticism that needs a response. I think directly responding to this criticism can overcome an unfair perception of the journal, and maybe even help our subscription numbers. I am not "too academic" not to care about those numbers.

First, it is simply false to say that the journal does not care about "your" (by "your" I assume Mr. Turkel means readers of the Cornell Quarterly who also read Hotel-Online) viewpoint. Rather, I have made great efforts to maintain the journal's rigorous academic standards while

enhancing its value to practitioners. All papers submitted to the Cornell Quarterly are reviewed by at least one practitioner. I even had this commentary reviewed by two practitioners. And this is not just for show. I take the practitioners' input very seriously; if a practitioner says an article is not of practical use, it will not get in. Period.

Second, based on practitioner feedback, I have added the case section to the journal. This section includes cases and commentaries, with practitioners being invited to write these commentaries.

Third, readers of the Cornell Quarterly need to be aware of the product. There will always be some academic bent to the journal because our mission has always been to publish research-based advice of value to practice in the hospitality industry. Key here is that submissions must be research-based, as opposed to based on experience or expertise. I have had many interesting papers sent to me that are based on a practitioner's experience in the industry. While these are interesting, and perhaps even useful, they do not fit with our journal's mission. If you want to read the advice of masters of the industry, there are many places one can turn (e.g., books, trade magazines, Hotel-Online). If you want to read research studies relevant to the industry, the Cornell Quarterly is one of the few (and we like to think, one of the best) places you can go. Despite the criticism, a rigorous research-based approach is not mutually exclusive of managerial relevance.

Fourth, while it is going too far to say that we don't care about your viewpoint, I am under no delusion that as editor I can, nor that I am supposed to make everybody happy. The Cornell Quarterly has changed a lot over time. Twenty-five years ago, we published discussions by practitioners, experienced based pieces, cartoons, and even recipes. We simply do not publish that sort of material any more. Although some have made clear to me that they miss this sort of content (and I even get a few recipes submitted now and then), no matter how dissatisfied some may be, that will simply not change.

If you have problems with the content of the Cornell Quarterly, then please do something about it by helping contribute to the kind of research that benefits the industry. All papers in the Cornell Quarterly are submitted by authors. While fewer than 20% ultimately get in, you still need to submit to have a chance. I have repeatedly said that we don't get enough papers from practitioner authors. As a practitioner, I urge that you get involved with research! Of course, I'd prefer that be through Cornell University and the Center for Hospitality Research, but there are many fine hotel schools and business schools that would benefit from greater practitioner-academic collaborations.

