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Maybe That Editor Is Just Not That into You

Mark H. Kaplan

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Maybe That Editor Is Just Not That into You

What's the worst part of being a scientist and why is it the rejection? Seriously. It's the job application rejection, and the grant application rejection, and the manuscript rejection. And all of that on top of the routine daily rejection like the barista who just won't get my coffee order right. Seriously. She asked me my name. I said, "Mark, with a 'K' like in knife." She looked at me with a gentle mix of bewilderment and animosity. I have no idea what she put in the cup, although it was still sweeter than the taste of rejection.

The point is that you put yourself out there with your great ideas and your fantastic experimental approaches and someone on the other side of the magic reviewer curtain says, "Meh. Not impressed. Sorry. Try again."

The publication process has come under continuing criticism recently because there are so many places where subjectivity and bias can enter into the process: the gatekeeping editors, the deciding editors, and the two (maybe more) reviewers who finally said yes to provide the review after the previous eight said no. The whole process is a little like online dating. Editors are pretty much at the stage of swiping left or right when they see a paper for the first time. There might not be anything wrong with the manuscript. Swiping left just means the editor is not that into your work. And that's ok. There are lots of editors in the sea. You can find one who appreciates the beauty of your abstract and the firmness of your data.

Growing families of journals can be helpful in this regard. Everyone wants to date the supermodel but when they reject you, they might say, "Have you met my cousin?" The editor might say something like, "Even though it's not appropriate for our journal, your work shows great insight as well as highlighting potential advances and communication of your work may be possible as one of the reports in our sibling journal." There are advantages to these sibling journals, and one deals with the most annoying part of the rejection process: when you're rejected, you have to start all over again at the next journal. This can be an arduous journey of reorganizing text, reformatting references, and re-entering all of your manuscript information (doubly annoying when there are 20+ authors) into the next manuscript management system. Worst is then waiting by the phone (a dead metaphor, I realize) as your submission gets

reviewed ... again. But if your submission was reviewed at the older sibling journal, often those reviews are transferred with the article and are used to guide what the next editor wants, making the whole process a little faster.

And that's where *ImmunoHorizons (IH)* comes in. *The Journal of Immunology (The JI)* has a long history of publishing high-quality, impactful, and long-cited work. Does everyone realize that *The JI* still receives the most citations among immunology journals, and the lengths of time the articles are cited are among the highest in the business? With that impressive record, you might imagine that not all submissions are deemed appropriate for publication in *The JI*. Well, since *IH* came along (our latest tagline is "Publishing all your immunological observations since before the pandemic") some authors now have an option. Authors with work that is scientifically sound but perhaps not enough of an advance for *The JI* might still have an article that is perfectly acceptable for *IH*. What's the best part? Well, to soften the blow of rejection at *The JI*, *IH* editors will prescreen potential transferees and tell you exactly what to do to modify your article to make it acceptable for *IH*. So why should you swipe right if you get an offer to transfer to *IH*? If you modify the article as suggested, decisions are often



FIGURE 1. Swiping right on *ImmunoHorizons*.

made on the same day. Can you imagine getting a decision on your manuscript even faster than you get your dry cleaning? As an added bonus, there are no concerns about prestige signaling if you publish in *IH*. You should be proud you're publishing in an AAI journal, but no one will accuse you of a humble brag when you say, "My latest paper in *ImmunoHorizons* showed that"

So why should you swipe right with *IH* (Fig. 1)? It's an AAI journal and you'll be supporting our community. It's easy to transfer. There are lightning-fast decisions. But the best reason? I think you'll find an editor who wants to swipe right on you.

Mark H. Kaplan

Editor-in-Chief, *ImmunoHorizons*

On Twitter @statfourwork