

## The Best of Both Worlds

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Several years ago, I was asked to write an article for *EON* on remote management of the Editorial Office.<sup>1</sup> As a senior partner for what at the time was a very small band of contractors specializing in professional peer review, I was proud to tout the benefits of working from home as our Managing Editor profession developed into something more permanent that could be done off-site from the publisher, society, and university. We worked very closely with Managing Editors and as Managing Editors to serve a few publisher and society journals located in other parts of the country. The article I wrote gave tips and tricks on working remotely and mainly focused on the remote relationships with Editors, publishers, and societies. A handful of us worked together to manage a handful of titles from our home offices. We often met in cafes and collaborated via instant messaging, email, phone, etc. At that time, technology and the changing landscape of academic peer review enabled us to professionalize the role of the Managing Editor without the need for overhead such as rent, utilities, furniture, and other expenses related to managing a brick-and-mortar office. We were very successful as Managing Editors working from home, just like most of you are still today.

Fast forward seven years, and I was asked again by *EON* to address this topic in the “modern” world now that remote management of the Editorial Office is not such a novel idea. Online submission systems like ScholarOne, Editorial Manager, and eJournal Press have propelled this profession into the twenty-first century. Of course,



J&J still has clients all over the globe and continues to function as Managing Editors from remote locations on behalf of our clients. However, as we have grown, I have less advice on how to manage a growing staff working out of home offices. On the contrary, what I have found and would like to share here is that as our small band of independent Managing Editors has morphed in a growing professional company of almost 70 full-time employees with benefits and human resources needs, the partners and management at J&J really feel the need to have a presence in a brick-and-mortar office. Do not get me wrong, I do still think this job can be done from anywhere, and so we allow all employees to work from home one to two days a week. However, in order for us to fully optimize our skills, share experiences, and collaborate in such a way as to offer our clients the most professional peer-review management possible, we have found we need a “command center” and have begun to put more and more emphasis on our company structure.

In January of 2014, J&J converted all contractors to employees. In doing so, we felt we would be able to better recruit and retain professional Managing Editors focused on a career in academic peer-review management. We now offer a robust

1 Deyton J. Remote management of the editorial office. *EON*. 2008;1(5):11–12.

benefits plan that includes vacation, sick time, professional development, and health insurance, among many other benefits.

J&J has also developed a management structure to help ensure effective communication, professional development, and collaboration. In addition to the two original partners, we also have a director of operations who manages all aspects of the office, our recent expansion into a new suite, computer needs, human resources, hiring, and everything else that helps us maintain the best Managing Editors possible. We have also appointed coordinators for each of our four areas of focus: peer review, production, copyediting, and system support. Each publisher also has a client manager reporting to their respective coordinators who oversees the needs of that particular client and manages the Managing Editors and Editorial Assistants working in that department.

As we have grown and developed a management structure, our employee-based company really needs traditional office space and hours to properly function as a cohesive organization.

As I mentioned, we do allow all employees at J&J the opportunity to set their schedule and work from home up to two days a week. However, we have found over the years that we are able to offer a better service to our clients, as well as a more engaging company atmosphere for our employees, if we have office hour times together as an organization. Although there are countless benefits to working from home, like saving on commute time, saving gas money, and saving the environment, to name a few, working as an independent Managing Editor can often be a slightly

isolating profession, especially if you work from home in a different state than your publisher, Editor-in-Chief, and society. Our focus over the last few years has been to develop a company that not only better serves our clients, but contributes to the original mission of J&J to professionalize the role of Managing Editor and other professions involved in managing successful peer-reviewed journals. We feel our employees gain great insight from each other when they have face-to-face time to collaborate and exchange ideas. Carolyn deCourt, a J&J Managing Editor who works with the American Chemical Society, explains it best:

*Most days I prefer coming into the office, because I feel I'm more motivated being surrounded by other working bodies, and I am more likely to be able to help out with other projects around the office. It is easier to communicate thoughts with my team and is great for team bonding! Working from home is always a nice change of pace, and allows you to focus without the hustle of the office. In the case of sickness or a family emergency, it's great to have the option to work from home to take care of things while being able to complete your daily tasks at the same time. The happy medium between the two keeps me from getting burned out at one or the other.*

Our evolution to a brick-and-mortar office also helps to keep all our employees abreast of important and pressing issues in the publishing world. For example, when we send 10-12 employees to the ISMTE annual conference, we ask them to then report on their favorite sessions at the next J&J staff meeting. In this way, everyone learns about predatory publishers, COPE, system upgrades, poster topics, standards initiatives like ORCID, CRediT, and Ringgold, and other hot topics in STM publishing. J&J sends several staff to all the major meetings, including those of the Council of Science Editors, the Society for Scholarly Publishing, and the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers, as well as editorial management software user conferences, and many more. Then we bring back the topical and informative sessions to the company as a whole.



Our ability to have staff meetings, department meetings, and management meetings in our conference room allows for better collaboration, training, oversight, coverage, and a sense of community for our employees. Without our office presence, we feel this sort of industry growth would be more challenging for a company our size. Our abilities to work from home, set our own schedules, and work autonomously on our own titles are usually considered benefits and are easy enough to do, as there is a lot of flexibility in this profession. What we have found as a company is that the right balance of company office hours and home office hours gives our employees the best of both worlds.

Kat Farley, a J&J Production Editor for PLOS copyediting sums up our current situation quite nicely:

*In this field, it's easy to get bogged down in isolated processes and day-to-day tasks. We're all only responsible for one or two pieces of an immense publishing puzzle, and staff and department meetings help us keep the big picture in mind. All of our teambuilding happens in the office, and I believe it's strength as a team that makes us able to meet and exceed our clients' needs and expectations. However, your work wardrobe might become a weird mix of pajamas and blazers.*



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