EDITORIAL

Announcing the First JBR Article Award for Exceptional Quality and High Scholarly Impact

Arch G. Woodside
BOSTON COLLEGE

For the first time the JBR is presenting an award to authors of an article published in a prior volume. Lawrence B. Chonko, Baylor University, and Shelby D. Hunt, Texas Tech University, receive the First JBR Article Award for Exceptional Quality and High Scholarly Impact for their publication, “Ethics and Marketing Management: An Empirical Examination,” Journal of Business Research, 18 (1985): 339–359. The award includes a plaque presented at the 2000 Society for Marketing Advances Conference in November in Orlando, a $1,000 prize to the authors, and an invitation to the award recipients to write a commentary for publication in the JBR. Chonko and Hunt’s (2000) commentary appears immediately following this announcement.

The award selection process included several steps. First, the decision was made by Michel Laroche, JBR Managing Editor, and myself to restrict the award to an article published in the JBR during 1985–89. The five-year publication length was manageable for evaluation purposes and the decade since publication permitted room for conducting a citation census in relevant scholarly journals.

Second, in 1999 Gary A. Knight, Florida State University, G. Tomas M. Hult, Florida State University, and R. Edward Bashaw, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, accepted the task of conducting a citation analysis of articles published in the JBR during 1985 through 1999. Their resulting report (Knight, Hult, and Bashaw, 2000) includes citation census in twelve scholarly journals of JBR articles published during 1985–99.

The two JBR articles published during 1985–99 receiving more than 12 citations among the twelve journals were selected as finalists for the award. The two finalists for the award were Chonko and Hunt (1985) and Graham (1986).

Finally, copies of the two finalist articles were sent to the JBR Associate Editors and Book Review Editors with the request to read the papers and recommend one for the award. Both papers received highly favorable reviews by these editors. Based on the citation analysis, reviews and recommendations by the JBR Associate and Book Review Editors, and discussions with the Associate Editors, Michel Laroche, and myself, the Chonko and Hunt 1985 article was selected for the award.

Recognizing exceptional scholarly contributions is reason enough for making such an award. However, the award serves even a more valuable purpose: reflection by the award recipients and by all of us of the research contribution being recognized by the award. Weick (1995) emphasized the great value of reflection for building skills in useful sensemaking.

Such reflection is likely to result in a spreading conviction that “irresponsible” (see Armstrong 1972) and unethical behavior in business situations goes well beyond the dominant “mental model” (see Senge 1990) that only “a few apples are rotten in the barrel.” A strong tendency exists among many (i.e., more than one in four) executives and among all of us to implement actions highly irresponsible when viewed from a distance by customers and the public (cf. Chonko and Hunt 2000). Unless trained to think and act responsibly and humanely, the alleged irresponsible decisions and behaviors by executives of Bridgestone/Firestone during 1975-78 are likely to lead to the alleged irresponsible decisions and behaviors by subsequent Bridgestone/Firestone executives in 2000. Disturbingly, the alleged decisions and behaviors by Upjohn executives (see Armstrong 1972) and by Bridgestone/Firestone executives are not isolated reports in two companies.

Admitting to the substantial possibility that all of us, individually and collectively, may act irresponsibly may be an initial step necessary to designing and accepting safeguards to protect ourselves from ourselves. Who among us will admit to be willing to keep our product on the market while evidence mounts that it is killing customers while competitors’ products
are not? Who admits to (themselves let alone others) of covering up and stonewalling requests of known customer complaints and deaths associated with product use?

Building-in safeguards to lessen the occurrence and size of irresponsible behavior might include the following steps:

- encouraging multiple stakeholder representation on company boards of directors (see Armstrong 1977);
- allowing for effective versus toothless public policy agencies (e.g., Federal Trade Commission and the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration);
- being humble enough to design and attend programs in formal, annual training in how not to act irresponsibly by junior, middle, and senior executives of large corporations and all government agencies;
- supporting further research in business ethics and irresponsible behavior as suggested by Chonko and Hunt (2000)—such research serves to lessen acceptance of the myth that irresponsible behavior in business is not widespread;
- honoring “whistle-blowers” publicly and financially—meta-analysis research evidence of cases of whistle-blowers indicates that whistle-blowers are punished and shunned more than praised after their display of courage (see Brief et al., 2000).

Hopefully this announcement and editorial serves to pique your interest in reading Chonko and Hunt’s (2000) commentary as well as their award-winning contribution (Chonko and Hunt 1985). Michel Laroche and I express our gratitude to Gary Knight, Tomas Hult, and Edward Bashaw (2000) for their valuable contribution on the impact of articles published in the JBR. Thank you, Michel, William Darley, Harlan Platt, Hans Mühlbacher, Jean McGuire, Barry Babin, Abhijit Biswas, Charles Noble, and Jack Cadeaux for serving with me on the award selection committee. On behalf of the members of the JBR Editorial Board and readers, congratulations and thank you, Lawrence Chonko and Shelby Hunt.

References