HOW TO WRITE A CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Your abstract is your selling piece. It's the tool you use to convince reviewers you have something worth putting on stage at a conference, and convince delegates to come and listen to you.

Most conference abstracts are reviewed blind, which means all identifying information is removed from the abstract. This ensures reviewers are not influenced by knowing who the author is.

Often there will be many more abstracts submitted for a conference than there are spaces in the program. So it's important to ensure you are submitting a high quality abstract for a high quality presentation.

Read the abstract submission information carefully. If there is anything in there you don't understand, don't hesitate to contact the organisers for more information. There will be criteria in the submission process that you will need to meet – word count, type of presentation, theme of presentation – and failing to complete these properly may mean your submission isn't reviewed.

If you have access to abstracts from previous years' conferences, read a few to see how other people presented their ideas.

What to include

Your abstract needs to cover the following things

- An outline of the subject you will be talking about and why it's important to this audience – what will people learn from attending your session?
- The background of the topic you will be discussing and what the current thinking is
- A description of your project/research/activity and the methods used
- What you found – if it's research, what were the results? If it was a project, what happened as a result?
- Why it matters - what is the significance of what you have done? Are there broader implications or applications for your work? Why should people be interested in this?

How to get it on paper

The conference reviewers will need to know that your presentation will be interesting and attract people to your session. You need to engage your audience and the conference reviewers will need to know how you will hold their attention.

Write your abstract well. Use plain English and easily understandable sentences. The reviewers aren't interested in whether you know lots of complicated words, they want to know if your presentation will be interesting to the audience.

Once you've written the abstract, read it out aloud. Does it make sense? Read it to someone else, do they understand it? Are they interested in finding out more about what you have to say?

Don't leave it to the last minute to submit. Double check your spelling, punctuation and grammar. If these aren't your strong suit, give it to someone else to edit.

Further reading

https://blogs.mcgill.ca/gradlife/2013/02/13/how-to-write-a-conference-abstract-or-how-not-to-write-one/

https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2015/01/27/how-to-write-a-killer-conference-abstract/

https://www.archivists.org.au/documents/item/998

https://thesislink.aut.ac.nz/?p=6446