

Abstract Best Practices

For presentations at the
PNCWA Annual Conference
recorded February 15, 2013



Outline

- Components of an abstract
- Things to do
- Things not to do
- Submitting the abstract
- How abstracts are evaluated
- What's Next



Components of an Abstract

Four main components:

1. Problem statement
2. Approach
3. Results
4. Conclusions



Components of an Abstract

1. Problem Statement

- Why do we care about the problem?
- What practical or scientific gap does your work fill?
- Examples:
 - “In response to odor complaints received from residents...”
 - “Our Town is currently investigating management strategies to address the impacts of urban development on stream systems...”



Components of an Abstract

2. Approach

- What did you do to get your results?
- Examples:
 - “A comprehensive sampling and flow monitoring program was conducted to determine...”
 - “Our Town studied the relationships between stream flow and bed and bank soil stability of cohesive sediments at 38 sites on 27 tributaries...”



Components of an Abstract

3. Results

- What did you learn or create?
- Examples:
 - “We found that significant amounts of sulfide were generated upstream of Main Street due to low flow velocities, low slope and relatively long sewer section length.”
 - “Our response includes a basket of strategies that mimic natural hydrology...”



Components of an Abstract

4. Conclusions

- What are the larger implications of your findings?
- Specifically, how do these findings fill the gap identified in the problem statement?
- Examples:
 - “As a result of this study, a multi-pronged H₂S control strategy has been implemented.”
 - “Our Town developed a suite of proposed strategies of affordable and implementable solutions...”



Components of an Abstract

- Other resources on abstracts:
 - <http://research.berkeley.edu/ucday/abstract.html>
 - <http://www.ece.cmu.edu/~koopman/essays/abstract.html>
 - <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/abstracts/>
- Example abstracts from 2011 PNCWA Conference:
 - http://www.pncwa.org/assets/2011Conf/MediaPubs/pncwa2011conf_regbro_complete.pdf



Things to do

- Have your abstract reviewed before submission
 - Technical review
 - Grammar/editing review
 - Use fellow professionals and/or your own company resources for these reviews
- Make the topic relevant
 - Incorporate “hot” aspects of your topic, like energy conservation or likely funding sources
 - Incorporate a conference focus
- Involve other project team members if possible



More things to do

- Plan to include “Lessons Learned” in your presentation and reference that in the conclusion portion of the abstract.
- For equipment-focused topics be sure to include detail on the problem statement or condition that can be solved.



Things not to do

- Submit an abstract that has not been checked.
- Get too technical. Save the technical stuff for the presentation.
- Focus on a comparison with competitors as a means of promoting your work.



Submitting the Abstract

- Electronic submissions at this site:
<http://www.pncwa.org/abstracts>
- Be ready with
 - PNCWA username and password (if you have one already)
 - Short but descriptive presentation Title
 - Names, organizations, and emails for all authors
 - Identify one main Presenting Author
 - Typed and edited abstract less than 300 words
 - Up to 3 topics to be associated with the abstract, chosen from list in Call for Abstracts
 - Up to 5 keywords
 - Biography of Presenting Author



How Abstracts are Evaluated

- Each abstract is read and evaluated by 3-5 members of the Technical Program Committee (TPC).
- Average score of the abstract is provided to the TPC Chair who puts the 120 or so highest ranked abstracts into subject tracks for the conference.
- Sometimes abstracts don't fit nicely into the subject tracks and tweaking of the lineup must occur.
- Highly rated abstracts that don't fit into a track are occasionally invited to a poster presentation.



How Abstracts are Evaluated

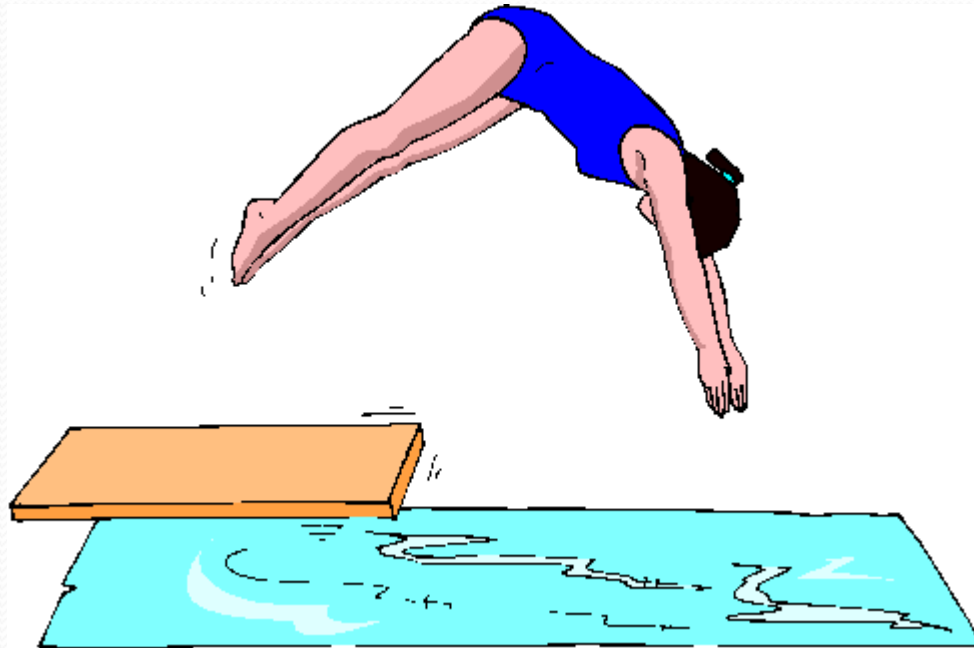
- Rating Criteria (may change from year to year):
 - Quality of content
 - Significance for theory or practice
 - Originality and level of Innovativeness
 - Relevance for the “Call for Abstracts”
 - Quality of Abstract Presentation
 - Overall Recommendation



What's Next (Suggested Schedule)

- June, 1st week: Presenters will be notified
- June, July, and August: Develop presentation, usually as Powerpoint
- September, 1st week: Have your presentation reviewed!!
- September, 2nd week: Finalize your presentation and copy to a thumb drive
- September, 3rd week: Attend PNCWA 2013 in Bend and have a great time!

Final Advice



DON'T WAIT. DIVE IN!