

SUGGESTIONS FOR SPEAKERS: Usability Professionals' Association Conference 2001 – Usability, A Winning Experience

Thank you for agreeing to share your expertise at our 10th annual conference, in Lake Las Vegas, Nevada. We think this year's conference program is the best one yet, as it is a subset of more submissions than ever. Our objective is to help promote an educational and fun environment for sharing and leveraging the knowledge of attendees and speakers alike. UPA conference attendance has increased annually, most recently from 450 in 1999 to 825 in 2000. This year's conference promises to attract even larger audiences from a greater diversity of nations and languages.

Based on the formats of the most successful UPA presentations, we would like to suggest some practices for increasing presentation effectiveness. These ideas have come directly from attendees' ratings and remarks on session evaluations. While we acknowledge that many presenters are very experienced, we hope these suggestions will be of some help to all presenters, in optimizing presentations for the UPA audience.

Suggestions

1. SPEAKERS' PRACTICE ROOM

Take advantage of the speakers' practice room, available on June 24th in the Safi Boardroom. For your convenience, a projector will remain set up there until Friday, June 29th.

2. PLAN INTERACTION

Audience participation is important. UPA attendees have consistently favored presentations where speakers ask questions of the audience and incorporate this relevant, shared information into their talk. Plan interactivity into your presentation in the form of practical exercises, Q&A or audience sharing of their relevant experiences and stories. We recommend allowing 20% of your overall time for sharing ideas, experiences, and issues, as a whole audience or in small groups.

3. GIVE EXAMPLES

Pepper your own stories and examples throughout your presentation. Describe practical applications of your main points.

4. SPEAK SLOWLY

Minimize the use of colloquialisms and acronyms, and reinforce main points in visuals (slides/overheads). More than 10 countries were represented in the 2000 conference attendee's list. Make it easier for non-native English speakers to take meaningful notes and more fully understand all the content of your presentation.

5. USE A SIMPLE PRESENTATION TEMPLATE

Use the content templates suggested by UPA's conference committee for the 2-3 opening and closing slides. Our goal is to provide some consistency in opening

and closing sessions across all tracks and types of presentations to help attendees organize/confirm their choices and take away learnings. In particular, we are responding to participants' feedback in prior years that they be able to easily confirm presentation content in the first few minutes to help them accurately choose the best sessions to meet their needs. Attendees also wanted focused summaries of main points to use as quick reference.

6. INCLUDE A PRESENTATION OVERVIEW SLIDE

Project an initial 'abstract' slide so attendees can read it as they enter your room. A suggested template for this slide is included. It should contain the following information to help people confirm their choice of session and set expectations for how your topic relates to the overall conference theme and your particular presentation track.

- Your name, professional affiliation
- Session title, as it appears in the program
- A goal statement of no more than 10-15 words that describes how your session content explores the conference theme and the topic of your track.

7. KEEP SLIDES SHORT AND EASY TO READ

We recommend that you put no more than five bullets on each slide. Use large text. Use a text color that contrasts well with the slide background color.

8. SUMMARIZE

Reprise your goal statement at the end of your talk and link your closing remarks directly to it. Plan time to close your presentation with a summary of your own main points that particularly reflect the goal statement that began your session (see #5 above) and including the most relevant and appropriate points, ideas and issues raised through audience participation. UPA attendees are generally a practical group and they have valued those speakers who provide take-away insights, techniques, and methodologies that can be immediately applied to real work situations.

9. USE SLIDES AS A TOOL

Use your slides as a visual tool, and to remind you of main points. Do not read the text directly off your slides.

10. REFER TO OTHER PRESENTATIONS

Refer to points you heard during other presentations at UPA, when appropriate. This helps promote a community feeling at UPA.

11. RESPECT OTHER USABILITY PROFESSIONALS

Of course it is fine to cite and disagree with others' work. However, it is not acceptable to denounce others' work when they are not there to respond.

12. FINISH ON TIME

Finish your talk on time or early. Respect the break times. Some presenters think they are doing a service by giving a longer talk, however, breaks are planned carefully, and attendees expect and want them on time.

13. BE AVAILABLE

Be prepared to make slide sets or other visuals available from a Web site or in hardcopy upon request. Many attendees want reference materials and contact information to follow up with presenters after the conference. Also, at the conference, you will be given a “speaker” ribbon to attach to your nametag. Please wear it so attendees who were at your presentation can find you more easily and to discuss your talk with you.

14. AUTHORS, MAKE YOUR BOOKS AVAILABLE

If you have written a book, it can be offered for sale at the conference bookshop. Specific information will be provided at www.upassoc.org about two months before the conference.

15. REMIND ATTENDEES ABOUT SESSION EVALUTIONS

At the end of your talk, remind attendees to answer the session questionnaire. This is the best way we can all learn about what the attendees want in future conferences. And, you can learn which parts of your talk work best, and which parts could use some polishing.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the UPA 2001 Conference Committee for additional information. You can find contact information at www.upassoc.org. Once again, thank you for presenting at UPA 2001. We are looking forward to learning from your experiences, and having “**A Winning Experience**” this year.

Kara Pernice Coyne, Conference Co-Chair
Laurie Kantner, Conference Co-Chair
Judee Humberg, Content Chair