TIPS ON GETTING YOUR SPEAKING PROPOSAL ACCEPTED FOR 2021
Agenda

- General Information
- 2020 Demographics and Metrics
- 2021 Call for Speakers Information
- Getting from Stuck to Success – tips for getting your submission accepted
Call for Speakers Timeline

Call for Speakers close:
- Full Conference Tracks, Cooperative Learning & Learning Labs, September 18, 2020

Program Committee Review: October-December

Notifications to Submitters: Mid-January
What Are Attendees Looking For

- Information/learning they can apply to their jobs
- Best practices/lessons learned
  - Real implementation stories/detailed case studies
- Intermediate to advanced materials
  - Gear to experienced security professionals
  - No entry-level or definitions
- Real security practitioners
- Good speakers, experts, luminaries
- Diverse perspectives & experiences
- No product or solution pitches
Attendee Specifics 2020

- US-based: 74%
- Security Experience: Just over 10 years
- Top Lines of Business
  - IT/OT/Cybersecurity
  - Software/Hardware
  - Finance/Banking/Accounting/Insurance
  - Business Services/Consultant
  - Government
  - Education
  - Advertising
  - Healthcare/Medical/Pharma
  - Communications Carriers/Telecomm
Submission Process: Topics and Tracks

- Tracks are determined annually based on
  - Previous year’s metrics
  - Security issues/events over the year
- All tracks are not finalized until agenda goes public
- Submissions have choice of over 100 keyword topic selections
Session Selection Process

- First level review
  - Mapped to tracks (usually more than one)
  - Incomplete submissions, blatant pitches eliminated

- Major review: Program Committee
  - Each track has 2-4 expert judges
    - Security professionals, government employees, attorneys, scientists, technology experts, researchers
Session Selection Criteria

- The interest in the topic
  - “Dream track” worthy?
- The **technical merit** of the session
- Best proposal compared to similar submissions
- Previous scores of the speaker, if available
- New speakers welcome!
  - >50% of our speakers have been 1st timers for the past six years
Be Innovative!

- Think outside the box to differentiate yourself
- Do you have 2 different viewpoints/speakers on a topic?
  - Make sure your submission reflects the different perspectives
- Do you have a great debate topic?
  - Create a panel with a moderator and 2 debaters
- Try a different approach
  - Rock opera; mock trial; be original and stand out
Session Formats

- Individual Speaker
- Co-presenters (2 speakers)
- Panel (2-3 panelists)
  - Moderator acts as facilitator; panelists do not use slides
  - All panelists **must be confirmed** at time of submission
- Session length
  - Anticipated to be 45 minutes
The Proposal

- **Session Detail (2,500 characters)**
  - Provide session topics, outline, architecture
  - Most important part for the Program Committee!

- **Short Abstract (400 characters)**
  - Used to market session to attendees; appears online and in print

- **Quick Abstract (200 characters)**
  - Used in print material

- **What prerequisite knowledge should attendees of this session have?**
  - Example: Programming Languages, understanding of specific techniques, etc.

- **Why is your presentation vital to RSA Conference attendees?**
  - Tell us why your session is a not to miss for RSAC 2021!

- **Session Classification**
  - Advanced (High demand by attendees)
  - Intermediate
  - General Interest
Top Reasons for Rejection

- Incomplete submission
- Sales pitch
- Presentation is too basic
- Multiple submissions on the same topic
  - Be unique!
  - For popular topics you are competing with known experts
- Presenter title and/or experience
  - Sales, business development, marketing – red flags
- Previous speaker ratings
- Session Detail!
  - Leave no doubt what your session will cover and why you have a unique perspective that should be the one speaking on that topic
Increase the Odds

- Hotly debated issues; controversy
- Real world experience and knowledge
- Implementations that are different
- Challenge conventional thinking
- Highlight diverse expertise

- Look at submission examples:
  - [https://www.rsaconference.com/events/us20/speakers/submission-examples](https://www.rsaconference.com/events/us20/speakers/submission-examples)
  - Spend time on the session details

- View presentations from 2020:
  - [https://www.rsaconference.com/events/us19/agenda/sessions](https://www.rsaconference.com/events/us19/agenda/sessions)
  - Click on session, see bio, deck, any recordings, etc.
SUCCESSFUL SUBMISSIONS: GETTING FROM “STUCK TO SUCCESS”
The most effective way to get the judges attention is to show them something new and surprising.

Examples of interesting concepts:
- “We tried to sell fake corporate data on the underground market to see how much it was worth”
- “We measured something unusual about our cloud providers that is a key indicator of secure practices”
- “We created a tool that correlates patterns of posts on social networking sites with vulnerabilities”

Things to think about:
- Why is this topic important?
- Why do you have an interesting viewpoint on the topic?
- How did you draw your conclusions?
- Why is this the right time for the industry to focus on this topic?
Stuck 2: Just the facts...

Breakthrough: Be [*bold, fun, provocative, intriguing, persuasive, ...*] creative

- Show that your session will be engaging by being creative in how you write your description.
  - “This presentation discusses some of the potential problems. PowerPoint will be the primary delivery mechanism, and for efficiency, 10pt font will be used to capture key points. The presentation will be enhanced through oral remarks followed by appropriate pauses for cognition. To remove ambiguity: no snacks will be served during this talk.”
  - “Using social media can be problematic. Social media is used by hackers to gain access to organizations. Security professionals should be aware of this new type of approach to insider threats. Social media can include a variety of sites found on the web.”
  - “Despite its many benefits, the social web is a potent tool for facilitating crime. While countermeasures exist, they focus more on the attack than the parties involved. A novel approach to risk assessment shifts our attention to people and the online digital shadows they cast as they go about their lawful or unlawful business. Two imperatives quickly emerge: contain our shadows and detect theirs.”

- Which of these would you pick as a judge?
Stuck 3: All sizzle, no steak

**Breakthrough:** Make your title sizzle...but provide the meat and substance in your session detail

- Remember: Judges are people (reviewing many submissions!) – hook them and then convince that you can deliver
- A good submission (like a good presentation) needs spice and substance
- If you only have sizzle: remember that judges are some of the most experienced thought leaders in security
- If you only have steak: you need to figure out how to deliver your talk in an interesting way...or you may want to consider publishing a paper instead
Stuck 4: Sell Stuff

**Breakthrough:** Focus on important ideas, data, results,…

- Don’t sell products, services, etc. – leverage your expertise to give the community insight
- The fastest way to get a submission rejected is to make it a sales pitch
- Beware the hidden sales pitch
  - The Program Committee is getting really good at spotting hidden commercials
  - Attendees evaluate the commercialization of the session – don’t get tagged for the future!
Stuck 5: Leave your personality and your passion out of your submission

Breakthrough: The passion for what you do should come through in your submission.

- Example: “This project began with the assumption that individuals and organizations leave data on electronic data storage devices when they disposed of them. These assumptions were confirmed using simple and advance digital forensic techniques, tools, and software, many of which are freely available on the Internet.”

- Think this guy is interested in this topic? Do you think you might be interested too?
Stuck 6: Use the senior marketing/sales person

**Breakthrough:** Line up the speaker’s expertise with what they deliver.

- VP of Marketing talking about reverse engineering malware?
- Even if the CMO was the CTO before the acquisition, attendees may avoid the session due to marketing job title.
- If the speaker is good but doesn’t have a technical title, add a technical co-speaker
Stuck 7: Don’t go the distance

Breakthrough: Complete the entire submission!!

- Make sure that:
  - Proposed panelists/co-speakers are confirmed
  - You fill in all the form fields
  - You make the “session detail” different from the abstract

- Most incomplete submissions get rejected – make sure you have filled in all fields

- If an agency or marketing is doing the submission for you, don’t let them!
  - You are the subject matter expert and this submission is based on your expertise. That’s what will make your submission stand out!
**Bonus Stuck: Don’t Submit**

**Breakthrough:** RSA Conference speakers actually submit within the Call for Speaker deadline

- Even if they get rejected one year, they try again and usually get accepted in the future
- If you get rejected, ask why
Q&A

- Questions to think about
  - What experiences can you share with RSA Conference attendees?
  - Is there someone you would like to have as a co-speaker?
- View the presentations from RSA Conference 2020
- Review the content on the website
- Use the offline form to prepare your submission first
- More questions – rsacspeakers@info.rsaconference.com