ACSAC Speaker's Handbook

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The purpose of this handbook is the maximize the effectiveness of your presentation at the Annual Computer Security Applications Conference (ACSAC). This handbook addresses the following types of presentations:

- **Presenting a Paper**. There are two parts to a paper presentation: the actual paper contained in the proceedings, and the oral presentation during the conference. The main purpose of the oral presentation is to convince the listeners to read the paper in the proceedings. Highlights from the written paper should be presented in a clear and interesting fashion so that the listener will be able to determine whether he or she has further interest to pursue.

- **Presenting a Panel/Forum Position**. These are short presentations that succinctly summarize your position on a topic; they are not tutorials or overviews of the area.

- **Presenting a Tutorial**. A tutorial presentation is a "short course" on a topic related to computer security. Students in the course typically have a handout that consists of a hardcopy of the presentation, as well as a set of supplemental reading or a textbook.

- **Presenting a Case Study**. A Case Study should inform the audience about a computer security application. It works best when there is considerable exchange with the audience. Thus, marketing pitches are not appropriate, but solid technical presentations work best. Presentations will not be included in the proceedings, but will be available from the conference web site after the conference. Case Study presenters are free to distribute any literature associated with the presentation, but this is not the same type of material that is handed out during a tutorial (i.e., tutorials hand out both slides and instructional material).

We want you to feel good about your presentation, and we want the audience to appreciate the effort.

Note: This handbook uses the term "briefing chart". This is the same thing as what PowerPoint calls "slides", and what others have called "vugraphs".

1   Presenter Tips

These tips relate to the conduct and content of the presentation:

1.1   **Keep your presentation focused**:

1.1.1   Presentations should identify the key points. Clearly tell the audience: the problem, who cares, and your solution.

1.1.2   Both within each slide and for the presentation as a whole: make your most important points first. This way, your main material has been presented if questions don't allow you to finish.

1.1.3   For complex information use: Particular, General, Particular. Give a particular specific example, then a general overview, followed by a repeat of the particular to reinforce the point.

1.1.4   Know your time limit… and stick to it. The time limit varies for each type of presentation, but ending on time shows respect for any other speakers and your audience.

1.2   **Know your facility:**

1.2.1   Be familiar with the place in which you will speak. Arrive early, walk around the speaking area and practice using the microphone and any visual aids.

1.2.2   When attending other sessions, take note of how the projector and microphone work.

1.3   **Be prepared for problems**:

1.3.1   Show up early. This will permit you to address any mechanical problems or room conflicts. And, if there's no need to fix a problem, this gives you extra time to mingle with the audience.

1.3.2   ALWAYS HAVE A BACKUP PLAN!! We always hope the projectors and laptops work, but sometimes things go wrong. Have a backup of your presentation on removable media (floppy or CD), in case of laptop failure. It is also useful to have overhead transparency backups of your presentation, in case the projector fails. If you don't have overhead transparency stock available, make sure you have a clean black and white paper copy.

1.3.3   Bring your own laptop. The conference does not guarantee that it will be able to provide laptops for each session.

1.4   **Know the audience as people.** Greet some of the audience as they arrive. It's easier to speak to a group of friends than to a group of strangers.

1.5   **Know the audience's background**. Remember this is an international conference. Avoid using terminology, laws, and regulations that are specific to a single nation, if possible; otherwise, explain them.

1.6   **Practice makes perfect:**

1.6.1   If you're not familiar with your material or are uncomfortable with it, your nervousness will increase. Practice your speech and revise it if necessary.

1.6.2   The conference has an office. You're welcome to use it to practice your presentation. Just contact any conference committee member to arrange this.

1.6.3   When you rehearse, time your presentation. Delete material to make sure you finish. Leave enough time for questions.

1.7   **Take it easy**:

1.7.1   Relax.

1.7.2   Visualize yourself giving your speech. Imagine yourself speaking, your voice loud, clear, and assured. When you visualize yourself as successful, you will be successful.

1.7.3   Realize that people want you to succeed. Audiences want you to be interesting, stimulating, informative, and entertaining. They don't want you to fail.

1.7.4   Don't apologize. If you mention your nervousness or apologize for any problems you think you have with your speech, you may be calling the audience's attention to something they hadn't noticed. Keep silent.

1.7.5   Concentrate on the message -- not the medium. Focus your attention away from your own anxieties, and outwardly toward your message and your audience. Your nervousness will dissipate.

1.7.6   Turn nervousness into positive energy. Harness your nervous energy and transform it into vitality and enthusiasm.

1.8   Know how to present:

1.8.1   Face and talk to the audience, not the projector screen, when giving your presentation.

1.8.2   If you have to read something on the briefing chart, read it from the PC screen or transparency.

1.8.3   If English is not your native language, work with a speaking coach. If you can't be understood you will waste everybody's time.

1.8.4   Invest in a laser pointer. They are inexpensive, and are extremely useful.

1.8.5   Use the microphone! Even if you talk loudly enough, or it is a small room, use it! Attendees can't hear when you turn to the screen or away from them. A microphone will insure that you will always be understandable.

1.8.6   Place the microphone correctly. The top of the microphone should directly face your mouth. Place the microphone about 4-6 inches below your mouth, in the center of your chest. Try to avoid wearing chains or necklaces that can hit the microphone.

1.8.7   Show your enthusiasm! Don't hide behind a lectern. Use gestures. Walk around, directly engaging the audience.

1.8.8   Pay attention to the non-verbal signals your audience is giving you and adjust your presentation accordingly.

1.9   Don't offend your audience:

1.9.1   Humor-make sure it's on point, not nasty or gratuitous. It's preferable to leave humor out if you risk alienating anyone-let alone the possibility of not being funny. Don't start your presentation with a joke; you're not an after-dinner speaker.

1.9.2   Do not use masculine pronouns—use plurals. Even though it may not always be grammatically correct, you should say "they" instead of "him or her" and it will sound better-both because it's shorter and because no one can be alienated. Why risk not communicating simply because someone may be sensitive?

1.10   Don't bore your audience:

1.10.1   If your audience is already familiar with the background or history in your area, don't repeat it.

1.10.2   Remember you are talking to the security community. Security basics are already known and need not be presented.

1.10.3   Don't define terms unless you are using them in a way different from common usage in the security community.

1.10.4   If you are on a panel, and your fellow panelists have already said what you wanted to say, don't repeat it.

1.11   Handling questions:

1.11.1   Remember that people's opinion may be based more on how you answer their question than on how you present.

1.11.2   Right after you call for questions, count to 10 before assuming no one will ask.

1.11.3   To assure questions are asked, plant a person in the audience and give them a question. This also gets others motivated.

1.11.4   Repeat the question asked, if you are in a large group.

1.11.5   If appropriate (i.e., for tutorials), encourage people to ask questions throughout.

1.11.6   Keep answers to questions reasonably brief. This provides the opportunity to handle more questions.

1.11.7   For panels/forums, do not take general questions during your presentation; they should be deferred to the moderator, if necessary. Clarification questions are acceptable.

1.12   Encourage interactivity. For tutorials or question sessions, seek interaction. Get students to respond. Call on people if necessary. Without response it's hard to tell how your presentation is being received. In some companies, the corporate culture suggests keeping a low profile. Let your students know that its OK to speak up (time permitting).

1.13   Work with your Session Chair (if you have one):

1.13.1   Make sure your session chair has a brief biography of you before the conference. This should be a paragraph or two; not a resume.

1.13.2   Make sure the session chair knows how to pronounce your name.

1.13.3   Find your session chair well before your session (ask the program chair if you need help). Introduce yourself, and confirm that there are no unanswered questions about your biography.

1.13.4   If possible, coordinate with your session chair the loading of all presentations onto a single laptop. This reduces the time lost during changes of speakers.

1.13.5   As noted above, be prepared. If time permits, test all presentations on the laptop that will be used.

2   Presentation Tips

These tips relate to the format and style of the actual presentation itself:

2.1   **Make your charts readable:**

2.1.1   Don't try to cram too much material into a briefing chart. Try to use the 7±2 rule (i.e., the goal of 7±2 bullets on a briefing chart).

2.1.2   Do not use handwritten briefing charts. Instead, use a computer program or special machine to prepare your briefing charts. Use large print, **at least 18 point**, in your briefing charts. The information must be visible from the back of the room.

2.1.3   Don't have eye charts: lots of text that you know will be impossible to read. Reformat or extract the points you wish to make.

2.2   **Use Landscape Mode**. If possible, use landscape (11"×8½") mode for your briefing charts. This corresponds better with the aspect ratio of the screen.

2.3   **Remember: Bullets, not paragraphs**. Try not to use wordy sentences—use single words or sentence fragments. The briefing chart should highlight what you are saying—not repeat it. Some tips:

2.3.1   Omit repeated words on a briefing chart.

2.3.2   Delete adverbs and adjectives such as "really" and "very."

2.3.3   Use a table for comparisons to omit repeating words.

2.3.4   Omit non-impact words, especially in titles, such as: "that", "while", and "in order to."

2.3.5   Simply your words: use "estimate" instead of "give an estimate;" use "to" instead of "in order to;" and use "tell" instead of "give you information."

2.3.6   Ask yourself, "Is this information pivotal to help my audience do, know and believe my objective?"

2.3.7   Put in what your audience needs to know, not what you know.

2.4   **Color and Presentations**:

2.4.1   Use contrasting colors. A dark background with light text is usually easily readable. Confirm that the contrast and colors are acceptable and pleasing to the eye when projected.

2.4.2   Note that every projector colors text slightly differently.

2.4.3   Avoid using red text. Red text is often hard to read.

2.4.4   Try out projection in advance. Colors that look good on the monitor screen may not project very well.

2.4.5   Avoid busy backgrounds. Keep the background simple. Too much in the background makes the text hard to read.

2.4.6   Don't use too many colors.

2.5   **Font Selection**:

2.5.1   Stick to one or two fonts with different sizes and styles (Bold, Italics). In general, you should choose one sans-serif and one serif font, and use any headline fonts sparingly.

2.5.2   Don't sacrifice readability for style. Sans-serif non-condensed fonts are typically easier to read on projected briefing charts.

2.5.3   Don't make things too small. The actual minimum depends on the font used, but if you are below 18 points, don't expect people to be able to read it. Use of points sizes between 18 and 22 is marginally readable.

2.6   **Use of charts and graphics**:

2.6.1   Use pie charts for comparison of components. Use line charts to show trends. Use bar charts to do both.

2.6.2   Include a good combination of words, pictures, and graphics. A variety keeps the presentation interesting.

2.6.3   Graphical representations or charts make much more impact than simple bulleted lists. Use them if they are appropriate.

2.6.4   Photographs don't reproduce well. Try to avoid using them if you are printing and handing out your briefing charts.

2.7   **Structuring the Presentation**:

2.7.1   For panels/forums, skip the presentation agenda. In a 10-15 minute presentation, it is not necessary and there is no time.

2.7.2   For long presentations, separate the material into sections.

2.7.3   If you are not using section numbering, a title briefing chart between sections is highly recommended (a copy of the agenda, with an arrow showing the current section, works well for this).

2.8   **Reuse of Charts**. Do not continually reuse briefing charts if it is likely people have seen the presentation before.

2.9   **Remember the audience.** Avoid jingoism: In your examples, be aware of who you portray as good or bad. Remember there is an international audience.

2.10   **Proof, proof, proof.** Please make sure you pass your briefing charts through a spelling checker and/or have someone review your briefing charts. I'm sure none of us make spelling errors, but our fingers do slip on the keyboards from time to time.

2.11   **Keep Panels and Forum Presentations Short.** For panels or forums, keep your initial presentation to no more than 5-10 minutes. Remember that a panel presentation is not a full-length speech, but rather a discussion among the members of the panel/fora and the audience.

3   Printed Notes (Tutorials Only)

These suggestions relate to the printed version of your briefing charts. They do not apply to paper presentations.

3.1   **Have a title**. Your presentation should have a title briefing chart.

3.2   **Include all charts**. Make sure that all briefing charts that you plan on presenting are included, in the order you plan on presenting them.

3.3   **Number all charts**. Make sure that all briefing charts in your presentation are numbered and that the numbers show in the notes. They do not need to be numbered sequentially from the beginning to the end of the presentation; if you wish, you may number them sequentially within subject matter groups (for example: methods-1). If you do the latter, please make sure that there is a table-of-contents (agenda) briefing chart in the presentation that gives the order of the subject matter groups.

3.4   **Include a bibliography and glossary**. Include, in the material handed out, a bibliography and glossary of terms. Remember that different things have different meanings in different contexts; for example: a database audience has an entirely different meaning for the word "keys" from a security audience.