

# How to Get Your Papers Accepted at LISA

Tom Limoncelli, Employed  
Adam Moskowitz, Unemployed  
(please hire him!)

# Overview

- why you should listen to us
- what is the submission process
- what we like and dislike
- Q&A

# We got street creds!

## □ Tom:

- 5 papers at Useenix/LISA cons

- "a bunch of" Invited Talks

- Been on many Prog Comms (PC)

## □ Adam:

- Papers and Invited Talks

- More PCs than Tom

# Disclaimer

- ◆ This is what Tom and Adam think
- ◆ Other PC members may disagree
- ◆ Each committee is different
- ◆ We don't guarantee *your* paper will be accepted if *you* follow our advice

# Read The Fine Manual

- Complete instructions are in the "Call For Papers"
- Follow them.

# The Paper Submission Process

- Authors submit extended abstracts
- Abstract read by committee members
- Accept/reject announced
- Accepted? Write full paper
- Present 30-minute talk at conference

# What is an extended abstract?

- A short version of the paper.
- 4-5 pages... not 4-5 paragraphs.
- Not a teaser... must actually explain the technology, concept, etc.



# Purpose of the extended abstract

- Lets Program Committee decide whether to accept full paper
- Lets author know whether to invest time & effort in writing full paper

# What is the decision process?

- Each paper is assigned to 4-5 "readers".
- Other committee members may also choose to read it.

## Decision Process (2)

- Each reader ranks the paper based on criteria such as value, quality of writing, appropriateness to the conference, and so on.
- Rankings submitted via web by a certain date.

# Decision Process (3)

- Comments and scores are collected, collated, then distributed to all committee members
- Committee meets, discusses each paper, votes
- Comments and decisions are mailed back to authors

# The Meeting

- Papers with clear high or low scores are automatically accepted (or rejected)
- unless a committee members asks for a discussion

# The Meeting (2)

- Papers with mixed scores are discussed
  - sometimes heatedly
- Decision is made
  - not always unanimous
- Program is considered as a whole
  - which sometimes leads to revisiting earlier decisions

# What criteria wins a debate?

- Is the work worthwhile?
- Has it been done before?
- Can the author write well?

A blue spiral-bound notebook with a silver metal spiral binding along the top edge. The cover is a solid, textured blue color. The text is centered on the cover in a white, sans-serif font.

**What makes a good  
paper?**



A blue spiral-bound notebook with a silver metal spiral binding along the top edge. The cover is plain and has a slightly textured appearance.

**Tom's opinion**

**There are 3 rules**

# Rule 1: Know the audience

- The committee is highly technical.
- Don't explain how to install, don't explain the history of the world.
- DO show that you've researched what's already out there.

## Rule 2: Give up the goods

- Start out with the innovation
  - even if you use terms that may not be clear.
- Later explain terms and process.
- (The opposite of what you learned in school)

# Rule 3: Explain why work is original

"How is your work different from others?"

This is Tom's most important criteria for determining accept/reject.

**Adam's opinion**

# A good paper...

- Is relevant
- Is new, or disproves something old, or significantly improves on prior work
- Clearly describes problem and solution
- Clearly shows method, data, and results

- Discuss prior work, how this work differs, why existing solutions not used
- Demonstrates knowledge of prior related work
- Is well-written (clarity, usage, grammar, spelling)

A dark blue, spiral-bound notebook cover is shown. The spiral binding is visible along the top edge. The cover has a fine, pebbled texture. Centered on the cover is the text "5 things to do" in a white, sans-serif font.

**5 things to do**



# 5 things Adam thinks everyone should do.

1. Clearly and concisely describe the problem and your solution
2. Compare/contrast your work with existing related work
3. Show your data
4. Show your results
5. Give references

# 5 things Tom thinks everyone should do.

1. WRITE!
2. Focus on what you did that is unique.
3. Measure (collect data, graph it, go beyond "worked fer us!")
4. Don't spend more than 1 paragraph on installation.

5. In the abstract: assume the reader knows the field, don't waste my time explaining it. That's what's the full paper is for.

6. Feel free to write notes to the PC.

[In the full paper this section will list a detailed history.]

[I submitted 2 papers, if you only pick one, please pick this one.]

# Our Pet Peeves

# Tom's Pet Peeve

Papers that are about "why I think x-y-z is a great open source tool." That's not a paper, that's a product review. On the other hand, a paper about the deployment of such a tool might be useful, but "war story" papers are very rare. (Just ask me, I've presented 2-3).

# Adam's Pet Peeve

Papers that are Yet Another Solution to an already solved problem that don't even mention the existing solutions -- let alone compare the new work with the existing work (not to mention show how/why this new work is better).

Q & A