

BPS Symposium Hints

Symposia offer a great opportunity to put together a complete session. Because these sessions are designed around a theme or topic, your work is placed within a set of complementary papers (which may not be the case in regular paper sessions). While the acceptance rate is often higher for symposia than for single papers, *all of the participants are at risk* – when a symposium is not accepted, many more people are affected. Accordingly, the following hints are designed to help submitters to develop high quality symposia.

- **Panel vs. paper symposium.** Panel symposia merely lay out a topic and a panel of participants who will discuss the topic. Paper symposia are a collection of papers around a focused topic or theme. Neither type of symposium is blind reviewed though there may be differences in the way they are reviewed. When deciding which type of symposium to submit, consider the following:
- *Panel symposia highlight well-known participants.* Since panel symposia do not include full descriptions of papers to be presented, much of the weight is put on the quality of the panel and the extent to which reviewers know that the panelists will present diverse and interesting perspectives on a given topic.
- *Paper symposia highlight individual papers.* On the other hand, for most people, a paper symposium will have a better chance of acceptance because it offers more detail on what the participants will present and places less weight on the names of the panelists. Unlike a panel symposium, a paper symposium also allows for co-authors to be included.
- **Introduction/overview of the symposium.** Regardless of the type of symposium, proposals begin with an overview of the topic and a synopsis of what each panelist/paper will contribute. The emphasis here should be on: 1) the importance of the topic/theme, 2) how the papers/panelists present complementary ideas, 3) how they offer distinct perspectives, and 4) how the symposium fits with the domain of each division to which it is submitted.

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- **Fully developed paper summaries.** In the case of *paper* symposia, the next section of the proposal offers detailed summary of each paper. This is not required of panel symposia which discuss the backgrounds of each panelist in the overview section (above). While symposium proposals do not require full papers, the most successful proposals will have more developed summaries of the papers (closer to 4-5 pages/paper). Indeed, just because you have a paper completed, does not mean you need to submit it separately. Your ideas may get more attention if you package your paper with others that put it in context. A well-planned session is more likely to draw an audience.
- **Diverse perspectives on a focused topic.** Regardless of whether panel or paper, symposia should be assembled to address a focused theme or topic. However, the most successful symposia present diverse views on the topic. For this reason, your proposal may be more successful if you go outside your network of friends to invite others who may have very different perspectives.
- **Submit to multiple divisions.** *[Note: this may change in 2010 meeting; please check back for an update before submitting.]* Unlike papers, symposia can be submitted to up to three divisions. This increases the chances of acceptance even if one of the divisions rejects the proposal. You should look at each of the divisions' domain statements to identify those for which your topic would be of interest. There are 24 divisions and interest groups and BPS has been trying to work more closely with all of them – so please be sure to look beyond usual suspects such as OMT. For example, a symposium on arbitration clauses in alliance contracts might be of interest to members of the conflict management division. You will need to make the case for why your symposium is of interest to all the divisions you include so think creatively but don't submit to any divisions frivolously. You can find all of the division domain statements at www.aonline.org.