

1. Introduction

- a. Over the years, several working groups have experienced sustained success, building a tradition of high attendance (loyalty) and reputation for outstanding sessions (quality). This did not happen by accident, but came about when each successive chair operated with two goals in mind. Through hard work and creativity, the chair developed a quality program (short term goal) and involved potential successors (co-chairs) to insure continuity and sustained high quality in the future (long term goal).
- b. The following is designed to help you, the chair, develop and lead a quality working group. They are ideas and intended to be suggestions and not a recipe or formula to follow.

2. Getting Started

- a. **Advisor.** Your Advisor has been selected because of background and experience in your working group's topic area and willingness to help you make the working group a success. Use your Advisor *early in your planning* for experience, information, and soliciting papers and participation. Get advice on possible Co-chair candidates and help on development of the working group's theme statement.
- b. **Co-chairs.** Recruit as many as you need. Attempt to have them represent all facets of the community. Look for a mix of military/contractor, technical expertise, and service backgrounds. Broad representation in the working group leadership makes a well-rounded program much easier to achieve. Carefully select co-chairs that have the time and organizational commitment to support MORS and the Symposia. Identify and train your replacement(s) for next year.
- c. **Theme Development.** Although your working group has an assigned

general area of interest, it is helpful to develop a general focus or sub-theme for each working group session. This allows development of a tentative "topic budget" for papers and may identify subject areas that will require significant effort toward recruitment of papers. Also, some general target on the mix of types (analytical, modeling, and methodology) of papers is needed.

3. Soliciting Papers

Do not expect the MORS Announcement and Call for Papers to produce all of the papers you will need, or the right balance of content to fit your plan. Experience has shown that less than half of your quality papers will come directly from the announcement – the remainder, and generally the highest quality, come from your active solicitation. You want to strive to fill all sessions allocated to your working group with meaningful presentations.

- a. **Explore the Technical Community.** To create broad interest in your working group, you need to seek wide representation of the technical community. Here is a great place to use your advisor. Most WG Advisors are past WG Chairs and have extensive contacts in the technical community.
- b. **Use your Co-chairs.** One of the tasks delegated to your co-chairs should be solicitation of papers in a specific area of interest or from a particular part of the technical community. You may want to ask them to set up a whole session centered in an area of their expertise. Here is where a broad representation of the technical community and the services within the working group leadership will pay big dividends.
- c. **Use Composite Group Chair or Co-chair.** Your working group belongs to a composite group. One of the goals of the composite program is to support its member working groups. In most cases, the CG leadership has a great deal of experience and may have suggestions in solving your particular problem.
- d. **Balance is the KEY.** Any group of papers dealing with a general subject area

will have natural groupings and may suggest a flow of presentations. Strive to “go with the flow.” However, be aware of a few historical lessons that always seem to come into play. First, mix government (especially military) and contractor presenters within each session. Military presenters, especially when discussing a high profile program, tend to draw larger attendance. Second, sessions devoted solely to modeling or methodology attract only a small subset of potential working group participants – mix the types of presentations. Third, vary the session format when practical (i.e., panel discussion, joint session with another working group, “pro and con” presentations, etc.).

- e. **Keep in touch with authors.** Let the authors of submitted papers know as soon as possible about the status of their paper. Once you have set your agenda, let the presenters know their presentation time. Authors appreciate the personal contact and you will be able to identify any scheduling conflicts early – before the Symposium.

4. Program Variety

Many say that “variety is the spice of life.” Certainly variety in session format contributes to the general quality of a working group’s activities. However, do not alter the format simply for a change. Use different formats to more effectively address specific topics, strengthen weaker papers, or present differing views. Your goal is to keep participation high and interest new participants.

- a. **Discussants.** A good discussant can put a paper in perspective, highlighting its positive contributions as well as its limitations. One effective technique is to plan one or two sessions around your most likely “high quality papers,” providing discussants for each. If you chose to do this be sure to leave additional time in the schedule for the inevitable lively discussions that will follow.

- b. **Panel Discussions.** Some topics are best treated using a panel discussion format. Invite a panel of experts, representing the various positions or facets of the issue, to lead a session. Start the session with comments by each expert and follow this with questions and answers. Encourage the experts to question each other. Panel discussions can be used to cover themes not covered with submitted papers and have proved to be ideal for joint sessions with other working groups.

- c. **Joint Working Group Sessions.** Joint sessions are one way of encouraging “big name” speakers to participate. In addition, the cross-fertilization of ideas and approaches can be invigorating. Be sure your joint session topic will interest a majority of your participants – you first priority is to your working group. Also, there may be limitations on large meeting rooms; make sure to coordinate joint sessions with the MORS Office as soon as possible. Do not aim too high – large undertakings may better be accomplished in a Composite Group Session

- d. **Work-in-Progress Papers.** Based on past experience, many people are reluctant to present incomplete work. However, the feedback received can be invaluable to the presenter. It is your challenge to design and lead a session, which provides positive response to the presenter. Encourage the presenter to end the presentation with unresolved issues to focus the following discussion. In the past, the Air Force Institute of Technology and the Naval Postgraduate School have provided excellent papers built around interim results of a Master’s Thesis or Doctoral Dissertation efforts.

- e. **State-of-the-Art Presentation.** Invite a speaker to provide an overview of the “leading edge” work going on in an area of interest to the working group. The survey should highlight controversial issues and approaches, and conclude with suggestions of important research topics. After the presentation, allow time for lengthy

discussion within the working group.

f. Interdisciplinary Flavor. Look for opportunities to reach out to other disciplines whose work may be of interest to your group. Possibilities include history, psychology, social sciences, engineering, and statistics. To make such a session productive, YOU must be prepared to lead a discussion that will illuminate how the speaker's ideas could be used in your area.

g. Participant Response Time. Set aside one thirty-minute portion of a session to allow for exchange among the participants. Lead the participants in a discussion that elicits comments on major analytical or modeling efforts being conducted in their organizations. Keep it fairly general to insure that proprietary or security restrictions do not interfere.

5. Attendance

Attendance is important to a quality-working group. Good participation is as important as good papers to a working group's success. Quality of presentation, discussion opportunities, and session atmosphere and conduct all contribute to that intangible goal – a quality-working group. The leadership of a quality-working group strives to develop and maintain a core of loyal participants.

a. Central Theme for Session Reduces Disruptions. Stressing a central theme helps focus participants on a particular subject area and reduces the number of people leaving mid-session because of shifting subject matter.

b. Advertise at the Symposium. A majority of the Symposium attendees participate in more than one working group – they shop for what interests them. Publish your schedule in one or two prominent places and keep it updated. This reduces confusion and helps get interested participants to the

right sessions.

6. Quality Sessions

The key to building a lasting constituency for your working group is to provide a quality product at each session. Always strive for quality, even at the expense of quantity. Fewer quality sessions focused on the pressing issues of interest to your participants is always preferable to a full schedule of sessions filled with poor quality papers. You are responsible for the quality of each presentation – set standards and stick to them.

a. Scheduling Presentations. Past experience indicates that approximately 30 to 40 minutes per presentation (depending on session time allocation and including discussion time) is generally the most effective time allocation. Some papers may require more time and this should be arranged in advance and accounted for in the schedule. Another option may be to take several short (but related) papers and combine them into one time slot. Whatever your plan, AVOID trying to CRAM too many papers into one session. You MUST allow time for spontaneity and interaction between the participants. ALWAYS have one or two papers available for backup.

b. The First Meeting. Take a few minutes at the first meeting to set the stage for the Symposium. Focus the group and the schedule. Advertise what you believe to be “highlight sessions.” Specifically, you may want to include:

- (1) An overview of your program, to include a few words on each of the upcoming presentations. You may choose to distribute abstracts. Provide a revised program if your program differs from the printed program (cancellations and substitutions). DO NOT rearrange the times of the presentations listed in the final program.
- (2) Unless size and time are prohibitive ask the participants to introduce themselves, indicate where they are from. Briefly discuss their current

work. Note comments that indicate areas that might be of interest to the group as a whole (possible group discussion topics to cover a very last minute cancellation by a presenter.)

- (3) The Working Group and Composite Group Chairs will have a Town Hall meeting with MORS leadership on Wednesday as a forum to encourage better communications. Mention this meeting and solicit ideas and comments from the group that you can bring to this meeting.

- c. Filling Gaps.** Expect some presentation attrition at the last minute. Do not compensate by changing the schedule. Instead, use backup papers, extend the discussion on an interesting paper, or discuss in-progress work among the attendees to fill the “no-show” spaces. Plan ahead! Keep up with your planned backups – you may need to contact them quickly.
- d. Keep on Schedule.** Keep to your time allocation, especially for the first presentation of the session. Too many good papers get shortchanged on the discussion because they are “last up” in a session. Be aggressive and keep the presenter on time. Use display cards indicating time remaining to warn the presenter that time is about up. Do not let the presenter spill over into planned discussion time. This helps to keep to schedule and not kill lively discussions due to the press of time. Remember the working group participants’ time (for discussion) is as important as the presenters.
- e. Presentation Quality.** Impress on your presenters the need for quality – in papers, presentations, “visual,” and handouts (if allowed), etc. Try to get copies of the visuals early enough in advance of the Symposium to allow time to recommend (or insist upon)

improvements. Encourage the use of videotapes and other such media. Try to avoid the classic slide after slide filled with words and equations. DO NOT let the fact that a person needs to present a paper to attend MORS affect your judgment when selecting papers for your sessions. Arrange for a few backup papers and refer others to working groups that might have interest. Also, pass along all unused papers to the Poster Session Chair (lots of papers can be accommodated there.)

7. Build Group Loyalty and Tradition

Over the years, some MORSS working groups have developed a fiercely loyal constituency. This has contributed to sustained attendance and enthusiasm year after year. Quality papers flow into these working groups and the momentum is maintained. If you are not chairing one of these groups, try some things to get the momentum started. Besides working hard to put together a quality program, look for other ways to build some cohesiveness. Some working groups organize a Working Group Dinner on Tuesday after the mixer. This is an excellent opportunity to foster group interaction. If sustained over a couple of years, such an activity can become a tradition that continues to build loyalty and attendance.

8. Help Available from the MORS Office

As soon as possible, provide the MORS Office with a list of your tentative speakers and any special requirement for rooms or equipment. They are ready and willing to help with speaker registration, security and disclosure form processing and special logistical arrangements for particular sessions. They need your input to help you make things run smoothly.