Presenting Your Work As a Poster

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1.   Introduction

Congratulations in being selected as part of the Richard Newton Young Fellows at DAC. In this document some of the essentials for planning and presenting a poster are outlined to help you be better prepared for the poster presentation. Please read this document before starting your poster design.

The rest of this document is organized as follows; in Section 2, the preparation steps for the poster design are discussed. In Section 3, some practicing and delivering tips are given. Finally, the need to know points are given in Section 4.

2.   Preparation

To start working on a poster, you need to pay attention the following: audience, location, content, and visual and graphics. Each of these are discussed briefly below.

Audience:
To be able to better communicate your ideas you need to know:
-   Who you are talking to and
-   Why you are talking to them
At the poster session, we are expecting approximately 300 EDA experts to be present at the session. These experts will have a very diverse background ranging from senior academics and industry leaders to undergraduate students. There will also be a number of recruiters from different companies in the room trying to find the best possible match for their companies. Remember this is a formal event.

Location:
The Poster session is located in Level 3 Lobby. There will be over 100 posters in the room. Your posters have to be the exact sizes given in the poster format that we have provided you with.

The content:
On the day of the poster session, there will be many students showcasing their work. A typical audience member will look at your work for approximately 10 seconds before deciding if they would like to come closer and talk with you or go to the next poster. Therefore, you need to make sure that you leave a very good first impression. You need to focus your ideas and have **one** take home message, which is stated very clearly. Here are some questions you need to answer to make sure that your ideas are focused and your take home message is clear.

- What is worth telling?
- Why is it important?
- Who cares?
- What is exciting about it?
- What is the headline?
- So what?

Once you have your take home message set, then you can use tools such as mind maps to speed up the planning of your presentation [1]. Make a list of things you "must have", "should have" and "could have" in your poster. Keep all the must haves, but do not crowd your poster with the "could haves". Make sure that content fits together and the ideas work together.

Make the presentation of your ideas more interesting by using pictures, examples, and case studies. You can even make your poster *interactive* to attract a larger number of audiences.

Finally, you should determine the best order and locations for each part of your poster. Remember, it is a lot less time consuming to work everything out on a blank piece of paper before you go to implement it all in power point.

Visuals and Graphics:
There are 5 factors that affect the visuals of your presentation: Focus, Text, Color, flow and results. Each one is briefly explained in the following.

Focus: Because of the way human eyes are made, we always focus on the middle of a page. Therefore you want to put the most important part of your work, i.e. your thesis contribution and your main message in the middle of your poster.

You can use pop out effect to bring attention to specific points. To make something pop out, you can use different color, shapes or orientation.

You can also use hierarchy to make sure that your audience will focus on the main messages of your poster. You achieve hierarchy by using the locations, sizes or contrast.

Text: When deciding on what to write in your posters, remember that: "Less is more". Avoid long sentences and paragraphs instead use phrases. A good challenge is try to have 50 words or less in your poster.

Your text should also be legible. Do not use *fancy fonts* or light colors. The best posters have light color background (preferable white) and dark color fonts (preferably black). Use font sizes that can be read from 1.2 meters (4 feet) away.

Color: You should color to add dimension, meaning and bring focus to the most important parts of your work. Remember that human eyes are more sensitive to colors red and green and less sensitive to color blue. So choose your colors accordingly.

Flow: For an English speaking audience, the start of your poster should be on the top left hand side and then move down and right or right and down. Leave clues on the flow of your slides by adding numbers or arrows to each segment of your slide. To see some great examples of numbers and arrows can be used to indicate the flow of a poster look at the poster by LoveInfoGraphics.com called "are we over the worst" [2].

Results: Make sure your results are presented clearly. Figures are a lot more preferable to tables. Make sure you use colors to differentiate the results, usually red means alarming results and blue and green mean improvement. To have more comprehensive on how to use visual variables, you can have a look at the presentation given here [3]. To obtain more information on how to group and show your results look at the presentation by Irene Rae [4].

Make sure all your graphs and figures have clear titles, axes and legends that are readable from 1.2 meters (4 feet) away. A good graph is clean and simple. So avoid grid lines and color background.

3.   Practicing and Delivering

Once you have made your poster, you need to practice how you are going to present it on the day of the poster session. Make an elevator pitch (a 30 second attention grabbing speech about your work). Practice this speech several times and ask your friends to listen to it. You need to be able to give this speech without hesitation.

Make sure you make a list of questions that are more likely to be asked and practice responses to them. This practice will not only help you present better but will also help you in your defense and also for any job interviews you will be having.

Print out a few copies of your resume, preferably a 1-page version. Put them in an envelope and bring them along with your business cards. Hang the envelop to your poster board and have everything ready to give out to the attendees that are interested in your work. Also, bring copies of your abstracts (in a big envelop) so that if someone wants more information about your work, you can hand the abstract to them.

On the day of the poster session, dress formally, arrive half an hour early to find your poster spot and make sure you have hung your poster before the start of the session. Make sure your poster is hung square. Be ready at your poster during the assigned time and be ready to answer the questions that can come up.

## 4.	Need to Know Points

Follow the guidelines for your poster:
-Poster should be in the format that we have provided for you.
-It is best **NOT** to print individual 8.4''x11'' (A4) papers and tack them to the board.
-Do not use foam core or any other heavy material for your poster.
-Make sure you have the title of your poster and your name, your supervisor's name, your university on the posters.
-Make sure you print out your poster and bring it with you to the poster session.

Remember that posters are visual representations of your work. A good poster is:
-Focused on one single message
-Have lots of images and graphs and few words (50 or less)
-Should be organized in a logical manner.
-Clearly visible from 4 feet away.
-Should not have too many equations.

Here are some hints to help you with your poster:
-Use light color background and dark color letters.
-Good graphs are clean and simple (avoid grid lines and colored backgrounds)
-All your graphs should have titles, axes, and legends which are readable from 4 feet (1.2m) away.
-In your text use phrases rather than full sentences.
-Your title should be at least 2'' (5 cm) tall.
-Try to use examples to attract the attention of the viewers.

On the day of the presentation (June 3th), please make sure that you:
-Dress formally
-Arrive half an hour early
-Hang your poster square
-Are at your posters during the assigned time
-Have business cards handy

Best wishes to you and see you at DAC.

References:
1. Hugh Kearns, "Presenting your research with confidence – Step by Step Guide to Powerful Presentations", A ThinkWell publication, ISBN 978-0-646-56211-7
2. http://www.loveinfographics.com/categories/economy-infographics/is-the-worst-over-economic-contraction-infographic-infographic#!prettyPhoto-9974/0/
3. John Brosz, "Presentation: Visual Variables", http://people.ucalgary.ca/~jdlbrosz/VisualVariables.20131030.pdf
4. Irene Rae, "Design 101", http://rene.chargingwombat.com