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Some Do's and Don'ts on Presenting Papers at Finance Conferences and Beyond

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The Golden Rule

Maximize the opportunity to have your research heard and known

- Accept the invitation, show up and strive always to deliver
- Your peers – usually too busy to read the papers – use these opportunities to watch & evaluate you & your work
- One opportunity often leads to the next (Remember: “Every talk is a ‘job talk’”)
- Think about your reputational capital



How to organize a talk

Rule #1

Understand your constraints

- Think about how many slides are feasible for a 90-minute seminar talk versus an 18-minute conference talk versus an 8-minute discussion
- Respect the “Rule of 2”
- Practice your talk; reduce slides, then practice some more
- Never say “I do not have time to present...” & then renege
- Do not challenge the authority of the session chair or the seminar host; they are “your friends”!



Opening any presentation

Rule #2

Focus on your work and its contributions

- Opening slide is about YOUR paper! What you do, how you do it, & what you find (this is NOT a mystery novel)
- DO NOT start with a long literature review
- Next slide outlines the key contributions (what is new and why is this finding important)
- Motivate as broadly as you can why you and your co-authors engaged in this research project



Present the work to the audience

Rule #3

Focus on communicating
the main message

- Emphasize only what the audience will remember later
- Present the “showcase” table of results (no robustness tests), or model framework & key propositions (not proofs)
- Make sure graph labels, tables are legible, show few equations, & define variables in equation (no one read paper first!)
- Focus on economics, not how many asterisks (“t-test-itis”)
- Do NOT read your slides to the audience



Before & during the conference

Rule #4

Attend even if you cannot present or discuss

- Ascendant scholars should strive to attend 1 – 2 major conferences (AFA, WFA, EFA, SFS Cavalcade, FMA) and 1 - 2 specialty ones in your field each year
- Submit your papers, be aware of deadlines
- Can you get sufficient funding? Self-finance to finesse school-imposed constraints?
- Ask questions at sessions, panels, tutorials; people watch
- Attend as many luncheons, receptions as possible



Discussing a paper

Rule #5

Critically and constructively review

- You are not the referee to advise the editor on publishability; consider what you, as author, would seek from the exchange
- Emphasize strengths & weaknesses to the audience; help to position the paper for the audience; focus on how weaknesses could be remedied
- Make 2 or 3 main critical comments at most; no editorial ones
- **DO NOT WASTE TIME SUMMARIZING THE PAPER!** (Worse, do not tell us you ran out of time to offer a review, if you did!!!)
- Never pronounce your lack of expertise on the paper and never crassly utilize your time to showcase your own work