

## **Easier than it Looks: The Why and How of Writing a Paper for the Journal**

So you've delivered a presentation at a NEWWA Conference, putting in the work and dealing with all the stress that it entails. And it went great. Mission accomplished!

Now they want you to write a paper, too? Haven't you done enough?

Sure you have, but why not do a little more? For NEWWA and the Journal readers? For your company? For you and your career?

We know that staring at a blank page with a full paper to write is daunting. We know that time is tight and, in consulting firms at least, chargeability is everything. But the benefits of having a paper published in The Journal are wide-ranging – from looking great on your professional resume (as a selling point both to potential clients and employers), to incentive compensation that your organization may offer, to simply boosting your confidence, morale and profile in the industry.

And, if you approach it the right way, getting that paper done and off to NEWWA's editors is not as difficult as you might think. Here are some tips to help the process go smoothly:

**Use your presentation as an outline.** There's a reason you presented your information the way you did; why not present it the same way in your paper? Use each major PowerPoint slide or theme as a key discussion point in the paper. A typical approach in a presentation – and similarly in the related paper – is something like this:

- Introduction: Why what I'm telling you matters
- Benefits of the thing we want to do
- Goals of the thing we want to do
- Preparing to do the thing we did
- Doing the thing we did
- Outcome of the thing we did
- Conclusion: Lessons learned and why you should consider doing what we did

In the imaginary sample paper, each one of these bullet points would be a paragraph – two at the most. You may be pleasantly shocked at how quickly the rest comes together when you lay it out this way.

**Bulletize your presentation.** Most everyone uses some bullet points in their PowerPoint presentations, but savvy presenters keep them to a minimum. The PowerPoint slides are there to illustrate the major points, featuring supporting graphics and/or interesting images, and the

presenters fill in the blanks with their interesting delivery. To help turn a presentation into a paper, break the unwritten rule of PowerPoint presentations. Convert the visually interesting slides into bullets and build your paper around them. Then use the graphics from your original presentation slides to help support the narrative of your paper.

**Use your presentation notes to fill in the details of the major points.** Ideally, the presentation's learning objectives (or overview slide) would serve as the major themes of your paper, and the bullets from the converted slides would be the subthemes you can use to fill in underneath. For presenters who use the notes function in PowerPoint, or rely on handwritten notes to guide them along, the content of these notes pages can build out the body of the paper nearly to completion. Depending on how detailed your supporting content is, you may find that the story all but writes itself when you add the notes.

**Get help to fine-tune your rough draft.** Utilities and (especially) consulting companies say that they encourage their people to get published, so it only figures that your employer would allow you to tap into the skills of whoever is in charge of communications for the organization. This way, you can get the content of the paper written down without having to worry about crafting it to perfection. If no one is available to support you in this way, perhaps they would spring for a proofreader or freelance writer to tone up your work. It's the least they could do to have a staff member's work featured prominently in the oldest continuously published water works Journal in the United States.

Whenever NEWWA accepts a presentation proposal, the response states clearly that a subsequent paper is part of the deal. Nonetheless, a fraction of those who present follow through and deliver a paper.

Lack of time is the standard excuse for not publishing a paper as a follow-up to a presentation. Yet, once a presenter commits to also becoming an author, and then overcomes the often unfounded perception that the effort required is impossible to squeeze into their schedule, they find that the only barrier to submitting a paper was in their mind.

So if you've presented at any NEWWA event in the last few years, give it a shot. Make a quick outline. Look back at your slides and see what material there is to fill in the outline. Check your notes to see if there's any gold there that you can add. You might be surprised at how far along your Journal paper already is, even though you haven't actually started it yet.