Editorial: How to Get Your Manuscript Published in this TRANSACTIONS in Six Months or Less

IT IS both more prestigious and more difficult to publish in this TRANSACTIONS than in nearly any other journal or conference digest. The competition is fierce and the standards are high. Here are a few common-sense tips on how to prepare your paper to give it the greatest chance of acceptance. Of course, there is no substitute for a brilliant solution to an important engineering problem. But, there is more to a good TRANSACTIONS paper than meets the eye. Read on. You will be surprised at how many very simple things you can do to ease your paper through the review process and get that coveted acceptance notification delivered straight to your in-box.

For me, the most important stage of writing a paper starts before I have put down a single word on paper. This is the planning stage of the paper. Some authors begin by writing up an outline. I prefer to gather my graphs together and look them over. Others look over similar papers that have been previously published in this TRANSACTIONS. Whichever way you approach writing a paper, ask yourself what story you have to tell, and whether that story is complete. The planning stage is essential because it helps you gain important perspective and set up a logical organizational framework for your paper. It also keeps you from starting in on a paper before you have gathered sufficient measurements or completed the analysis.

Once you have gathered your ideas, download the Word or LaTeX IEEE template for this TRANSACTIONS' submissions from http://www.mtt.org/publications/For_Authors/for_authors.htm. Read the template before you begin. It is chock full of sound advice on grammar and style, and contains many useful tips. Starting your paper in the template will also result in a more professional-looking submission. This favorably impresses the reviewers.

I cannot overemphasize the importance of grammar and organization of your ideas. Reviewers are very busy people and they were chosen because they have made important contributions to the field. Thus, your number 1 goal is to get the reviewer to understand and appreciate your technical contribution as quickly as possible. The last person you want commenting on your technical work is a grumpy reviewer who has just spent an hour marking up your paper with a red pen or, worse yet, struggling to understand the point you are trying to make. Remember that nearly all reviewers put many hours and sometimes days into reviewing a paper, and you want to make their job as easy as possible.

Good grammar and exposition are difficult to come by, and you probably did not go into electrical engineering because prose flows from your pen. It helps to revise and then re-revise over a period of two months or more. It is often surprising how many weaknesses you can find this month in last month's brilliant tour-de-force.

Whether you are a native English speaker or not, take your paper to an expert for grammatical proofreading and correction: a native-speaking English literature, history, or philosophy professor or graduate student. Go over the paper together with your grammatical advisers. Be inquisitive, and try to understand not just what they suggest changing, but why.

If you see this TRANSACTIONS' reviewer as your most important adversary in the publishing process, you need to learn editorial jujitsu. Start by lining up your own set of technical reviewers well before you submit. Just as with your grammatical advisers, arrange a meeting with each of your technical reviewers. Try to use this process as a way of getting them to talk about the paper. You will find what they say to be far more useful than what they wrote. Sometimes you will find that you simply did not think of writing down some key points.

Above all, keep your cool. What your reviewers and grammatical advisers tell you will be hard to hear. However, if you do this right, your editorial jujitsu will have put the reviewers to work for you. You see, reviewers often provide exactly what you lack the most, which is perspective—perspective on all sorts of things, from the most subtle technical issues to the most obvious (in retrospect) organizational problems.

If you want your paper to be accepted in the first review cycle, you need to get this TRANSACTIONS' reviewer to focus on your brilliant technical contributions. You do not want your reviewer sorting through your previous publications trying to decide what is new and what is old. Keep in mind that reviewers and readers alike prize both originality and completeness, and you will do far better pleasing your reviewers and readers with new ideas and with complete and original papers than trying to explain why your current paper differs significantly enough from your last to deserve publication.

No discussion of this TRANSACTIONS would be complete if it did not touch on conference Special Issues and the relationship of "expanded" to conference papers. Much has changed in recent years, with conference papers generally becoming archival and available electronically. Writing a good paper for a conference Special Issue is far more difficult than writing any other TRANSACTIONS paper. The root of the problem is that some topics are well suited to a conference paper, and others to a TRANSACTIONS paper, but only a very few to both.

However, maybe you have your heart set on one of these Special Issue papers. "What to do?" I hear you ask. First, start early.

Digital Object Identifier 10.1109/TMTT.2004.842512

Contrary to popular belief, writing two good complementary papers really does take *twice* as long as writing one paper.

Be sure to choose a subject that is actually large enough to justify two separate submissions, and that contains a subtopic suitable for a conference paper. The conference paper should be a short vignette, completely and thoroughly treating an important aspect of the entire study, but no more. I am not talking about simply putting highlights in the conference paper or "dumbing it down." These papers have very little long-term value. It should be short, complete, and standalone, and readers should still be able to read the paper in future years and learn something that never appeared anywhere else.

When you write up the main body of the paper for a Special Issue, try summarizing the conference paper in a few paragraphs or a short section, rather than repeating the conference paper in its entirety. The expanded TRANSACTIONS paper is not just the conference paper with more words and equations. It should build on the conference paper, but in a way that both publications are worth reading and so that a reader learns different things from each. This strategy will help you write two truly distinct and complementary crowd pleasers, is sure to wow the reviewers, and will give you a great additional opportunity to advertise your work.

Finally, there is a possibility that a reviewer will still object to your paper. In this case, there are only two possible courses of action that will steer you clear of the endless review-cycle vortex. You can determine that the reviewer was right to begin with, and fix your paper, or you can figure out why the reviewer misunderstood you, and fix your paper. Trying to convince a TRANSACTIONS reviewer, who is typically an expert in the field, that he or she never should have objected to your work in the first place is guaranteed to send you straight into the maw of the vortex!

Using these simple tips will not cover up technical blunders or ensure acceptance in this TRANSACTIONS. But it will most assuredly put you in a far better position to get your work and insights out to your most important audience, your peers in the microwave community that this TRANSACTIONS serves.

Finally, I need to talk about properly referencing papers. Not only do incomplete and inaccurate references create an impression of carelessness, but errors and the time required to correct them are *the* major reason for delays in copy editing (the time between the manuscript being sent to the IEEE and its being published).

Some rules and examples for IEEE references are as follows.

Always use month and year of publication in references and abbreviate months. Use initials for the first names of authors in your list of references, and include all authors' names. If the periodical is an IEEE publication, the issue number and month of publication is necessary. Any IEEE TRANSACTIONS that was published prior to 1988 (with the exception of the PROCEEDINGS OF THE IEEE) must carry the TRANSACTIONS' acronym, e.g., vol. MTT-25). Note that the correct reference for this TRANSACTIONS is *IEEE Trans. Microw. Theory Tech.* The correct reference for the 2004 IEEE International Microwave Symposium (IMS) is "in *2004 IEEE MTT-S Int. Microwave Symp. Dig.*" Do not use acronyms for conferences: spell out the full name of the conference (e.g., use Int. Electron Devices Meeting instead of IEDM). If references carry online information, the author should include this (i.e., http information, etc.) at the end of the reference. Finally, keep your eyes open for the automated reference checker being developed by the IEEE!

- *Periodicals*: Author(s) Initial(s), Surname(s), "Title of paper," Title of Periodical, vol #, issue #, pp. xx-xx, Abbrev. Month, Year.
- *Books*: Author(s) Initial(s), Surname(s), "Title of chapter in book (if applicable)," *Title of Book*, xth ed. City of Publisher, State/Country: Abbrev. name of Publisher, Year, Chapter X (if applicable), Section X (if applicable), pp. xx-xx.
- *Reports*: Author(s) Initial(s), Surname(s), "Title of report," Name of Company, City of Company, State/Country of Company, Report number, Year.
- *Handbook* (generally a "book" published by a company, as opposed to a publisher): *Title of Manual/Handbook*, x edition, Abbrev. Name of Company, City of Company, State/Country of Company, Year, pp. xx-xx.
- *Published Conference Proceedings*: Author(s) Initial(s), Surname(s), "Title of paper," *Unabbreviated Name of Conference*, City of Conference, State/Country, Abbrev. Month Year, pp. xx-xx (published conference proceedings **MUST** include page numbers).
- *Unpublished Papers Presented at Conference*: Author(s) Initial(s), Surname(s), "Title of paper," presented at the Name of Conference, City of Conference, State/Country, Year.
- *Patents*: Author(s) Initial(s), Surname(s), "Title of patent," U.S. Patent # xxxxx, Abbrev. Month Day, Year.
- *Theses (Masters) and Dissertations (Ph.D.)*: Author(s) Initial(s), Surname(s), "Title of thesis/dissertation," Abbrev. Department, University, City of Univ., State/Country, Year.
- *Unpublished References*: Author(s) Initial(s), Surname(s), private communication, Abbrev. Month, Year. *Or as applicable*: Author(s) Initial(s), Surname(s), "Title of paper," unpublished.
- *Standards*: *Title of Standard*, Standard number, Date/Year.

Admittedly, the tips and tricks in this paper were learned the hard way by the author. They do not necessarily represent the editorial policy of this TRANSACTIONS.

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