SECTOR CFP SELECTION PROCESS

Contributed in part by SecTor Co-Founder, Brian Bourne.

HOW WE SELECT PAPERS

We accept submissions up until midnight of the deadline, and then the entire advisory board takes a few weeks to review all submissions and meets as a group to debate the merits of each submission. This involves some spirited conversations, soapboxing, quiet research and then some more high-volume conversations. The whole selection process lasts five or six hours and it is as exhausting as it is fun.

Our advisory board consists of a group of security veterans with no financial interest in the event. They leave all bias at the door, and completely disregard the submitter's travel expenses, employer, or sponsorship status. This leaves them free to vote for the talks that they really want to see, which is great news for our attendees, because they are guaranteed high-quality content judged purely on its merits.

OUR SELECTION CRITERIA

Over the years, SecTor's organizers have developed an acute sense of what makes a good conference talk. The selection criteria includes:

- The applicability of content to the audience
- The balance of content in our overall program
- Technical depth, with a preference for unique, bleeding-edge material and research

We want our attendees to take away something new and actionable, because that's where the value lies for them. They should be able to apply what they learn at SecTor immediately to improve the security posture at their own companies.

In addition to content, we also ask our reviewers to evaluate the speaker. We have set a high bar and we want to make sure that attendees learn new and actionable content. Part of that is making sure the speaker is an effective communicator. We do recommend sharing a link or two of videos of you presenting. It really does help.

SUBMISSIONS THAT ARE QUICKLY DECLINED

How can you avoid falling into the list of proposals that definitely won't make the cut? Over the years, we've noticed a few recurring issues that lead us to decline speaker submissions:

- Submissions that appear to be a lightly veiled product pitch
- Submissions that lack an action the audience can take away and apply without buying the speaker's product
- Submissions that have been presented many times before
- Speakers who have received low feedback scores at previous SecTor or Black Hat events

We don't automatically decline submissions done by a marketing and PR teams, but let's be clear. We accept a talk based on unique research delivered by a specific researcher/speaker. We expect that individual to present their content at SecTor regardless of their employment status at the time of the event. If the content is corporately owned and presented by an individual who was hired to promote the business, then this really is a flag for us.

We also sometimes decline a talk that might have been awesome but didn't include enough information for us to be sure. If a submission only includes an abstract, we are left guessing what content might go into it. Submitters that include a proposed talk outline enable our advisory board to see how their talk will flow and what topics they will cover.

SPEAKERS AND RESEARCHERS MATTER TO US

From our inaugural SecTor talk back in 2007, we have always focused on making sure our speakers have an amazing experience.

The experience interacting with us starts with the CFP submission. We value the time and effort each and every submitter puts into their work. Without these proposals, and the amazing community that creates them, SecTor wouldn't be the conference it is. We're very thankful and look forward to reading your next submissions and seeing you at SecTor!

QUESTIONS?

E-mail us at cfp@blackhat.com