The Chairman’s Award

FRC1114 – Simbotics
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• 17 years of FIRST experience
• Lead Mentor for Team 1114, 2004-present
  • 23 Regional Championships
  • 2008 World Champions, 2010 & 2014 World Finalists
  • 2012 Championship Chairman’s Award
• 2005 Waterloo Regional Woodie Flowers Finalist Award
• TEDx Speaker - http://youtu.be/MfC3JdkEVgQ
• Regional Manager, Innovation First International, Canada
• Chairman of the VEX Robotics Game Design Committees
Outline

• Overview
  • What is the award for?
  • Why should we submit?
• What does it take to win
  • What do we need to do?
• The Submission
• Essay
• Presentation
• Video
• Executive Summary
• Extras
• General Tips
Overview

• What is the award for?
  • “It honors the team that, in the judges’ estimation, best represents a model for other teams to emulate, and which embodies the goals and purpose of FIRST.”

• What is the mission of FIRST
  • “To transform our culture by creating a world where science and technology are celebrated and where young people dream of becoming science and technology leaders.”
Overview

• Why should we submit?
  • Common question
  • All teams should and many already are fulfilling the mission of FIRST
    • Submitting is just about documenting what you have done
  • Documenting captures your team history
  • Useful for marketing and sponsorship recruitment
  • Helps diversify the team, provides avenues for students with a variety of skillsets
    • Having a wider cross section of students, makes culture change within your school and community much easier

• It’s a lot of work…
  • Golden rules, priority list, jack of all trades master of none…
What do we need to do to win

• Six major criteria
  • “How strongly does the submission document the impact FIRST has on the learning experience of the students, school curriculum, engineers, and/or community during the team year as well as in prior years?”
  • Don’t just focus on the students, cover all the areas!
  • How has FIRST changed lives!
    • e.g. Graduate rates, scholarships, workforce success, corporate growth, employee development
What do we need to do to win

• Six major criteria (cont’d)
  • “Has the team explained/demonstrated why/how it should be a role model for other FIRST teams to emulate?”
    • Focus on what you do best, that helps fulfill the mission of FIRST
    • Make sure you set yourself apart, what do you do that is unique?
      • If you focus on the standard, you’ll sound like every other team; you need to stand out here
      • Talk about what you are the best at in your region
    • On 1114 we focused on team growth, and FRC community resources
      • Things we felt that we were the best in the world at
What do we need to do to win

• Six major criteria (cont’d)
  • “How well has the team communicated its excitement and impact within the entire school, community, and beyond through participation in FIRST during the team year as well as in prior years?”
    • Again, focus on all three items
    • How has the team changed your school?
      • Tie it back to culture change!
      • Enrolment increases, new programs, new equipment, funding, etc.
    • How has the team impacted the community
      • Charitable efforts, demonstrations, local media
    • Beyond?
      • What have you done on a national and international level
        • Big at the Championship level, less so at a regional/district level
What do we need to do to win

• Six major criteria (cont’d)
  • “Has the team documented an innovative way to spread the FIRST message?”
    • Again, set yourself apart!
      • If your innovative way to spread the message is the same as everyone else, you’re doing it wrong…
  • 1114 Examples
    • Ontario Science Centre Exhibit, Degrassi: The Next Generation, CFL Game, student created curriculum is Design and Tech centre
    • SimPhone App & Kitbot on Steroids
      • Dream big!!!
What do we need to do to win

• Six major criteria (cont’d)
  • “How well year-round team partnership effort is reflected during the past team year as well as in prior years? (You can define partnership in many ways, including: the partnership among the team’s students/corporate sponsor/engineers; school/university sponsor/engineers; students/adults; community/team)”
  • Partnership takes many forms and goes in BOTH directions
    • Teams focus too much on what organizations do for students, and not enough on what students do for organizations
      • Easy way to set yourself apart!
    • e.g. Doing demos for sponsors to help generate business, sponsors using the team to train new employees, team used as a recruiting tool for employers, etc.
What do we need to do to win

- Six major criteria (cont’d)
  - FIRST Growth
  - “Describe the team’s initiatives to help start or form other FRC teams”
  - “Describe the team’s initiatives to help start or form other FIRST teams (including Jr. FLL, FLL, & FTC)”
  - “Describe the team’s initiatives on assisting other FIRST teams (including Jr. FLL, FLL, FTC & FRC) with progressing through the FIRST program”
  - “Describe how your team works with other FIRST teams to serve as mentors to younger or less experienced FIRST teams (includes Jr. FLL, FLL, FTC & FRC teams).”
What Shouldn’t We do

• Don’t do things just for the sake of winning the award
  • Many teams partake in endeavours solely because of the award
• Focus on doing things that the team actually wants to do
  • If you are invested in the idea, you’ll naturally do a better job and make a larger impact
  • “We need to plant trees for Chairman’s!”
    • Really?
• Focus on what you love and what you’re good at
• Don’t try and be someone else
  • What worked for Team X might not work for Team Y

• Team Award
  • Everyone needs to be behind the efforts
    • You can’t achieve culture change, if the culture doesn’t exist within yourself
The Submission

• The entirety of the submission needs to cover the six major criteria, while fitting within the limits in the rules
• Just like building an FRC robot
  • FRC Robots are limited to a 112” perimeter, 120 lbs, one battery, X number of motors, etc.
  • CA submissions are limited to 10,000 character essay, 5:00 presentation, 5:00 question period, 3:00 video, etc.
    • Like a robot focus on your high priority items
    • We usually picked to major topics to focus on
      • e.g. SimPhone & Degrassi
    • Don’t needlessly duplicate, it wastes resources
      • Presentation shouldn’t rehash the essay
The Submission

• Each portion of the submission can be used to tell a different portion of the story
  • Some teams divide it up by major criteria, I prefer to divide it up by style
    • Essay – Used for factual information about team achievements and endeavours
    • Presentation – Tell the story behind the numbers. Emphasize the key points in the essay, go in depth, highlighting what’s important.
    • Video – Used to tell the emotional side of the team story
      • Much easier to convey impactful emotion through edited video
    • Question Period – To reinforce and clarify key points, also an opportunity to introduce new information
    • Executive Summary – Summarize everything into a digestible format. Introduce facts that didn’t fit within the rest of the puzzle
  • The better this “puzzle” fits together, the more cohesive and powerful your submission will be.
    • Work to eliminate gaps!
The Submission

• Common Question!
  • Should we have a theme?
    • Themes are nice way to help make the puzzle look more complete
    • Provide a sense of unity
    • A point of differentiation from other teams
      • DO NOT PLAIGIARIZE
    • Some teams theme the entire submission, others just the presentation
    • Don’t force a bad fit!
  • Examples
    • 67’s recipe, 1114’s museum tour, GPS, Quilt
    • The theme should fit with your team branding/identity
    • Being topical is good
The Essay

• Start early! (Like now…)
  • 10,000 characters (1,500 words) doesn’t seem like much
  • You needed time to edit, review, and rewrite
  • “The key to effective writing is rewriting”
    • Teams go through hundreds of versions. You can’t do that in one night.
• Have the essay proofread by multiple people
  • Get professional help, don’t rely only on your peers
The Essay

• Use numbers and statistics to illustrate impact
  • Raw numbers without context are weak
    • “68% of our students went on to study engineering” vs. “68% of our students went on to study engineers, which is an increase of 35% since our team’s inception, and is 42% higher than the national average”
  • Effective statistics take time, need a lot of research
• Make sure all your numbers are verifiable!
  • You need to be able to prove all your numbers to the judges
  • Your biggest claims will be the most scrutinized
    • Virtual footnotes
• Do not exaggerate or lie
• Do not plagiarize
The Presentation

• Use the presentation to tell the story behind the facts given in the essay
  • The presentation should complement the essay
  • It should not duplicate nor replace the essay

• Who should present
  • Students who are outgoing, enthusiastic, well spoken, calm under pressure, and quick thinking
    • Often a skillset not found on a team. Recruit!

• How should the presenters look?
  • Good…
    • Professional or tie it in with the theme
      • Make sure they’re comfortable! Events are long days.
The Presentation

• Visual Aids
  • Useful for both the judges and the presenters
    • Great for cueing the presenters, giving them something to point at and focus on
  • Some teams prefer Powerpoint via a projector
    • You must supply your own equipment
    • Setup time counts towards your 5:00
  • We prefered presentation boards
    • Quick to setup, no technology risk
The Presentation

- Presentation Board Example
The Presentation

- Presentation Board Example

"The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well."
The Presentation

• Question Period
  • 5:00 vital minutes to clarify and emphasize points both from the essay and presentation
  • Answering questions is like playing tennis
    • Three ways to return a shot
      • Just get it back into play
      • Hit it towards your opponent
      • Hit it to a spot that sets up your next shot
    • Three ways to answer a question
      • Just say something in response
      • Answer the specific question
      • Answer the specific question, then add something that emphasizes one of your main points
    • Also useful for job interviews
  • Practice, practice, practice
    • Use a variety of question askers
  • Presenters must know all content inside and out
    • Past and present
The Presentation

• You must rehearse the overall presentation
  • Do not try and wing it
• I prefer not to have the presentation fully scripted
  • Most students who memorize a script, end up sounding robotic and unnatural
    • Exception: drama students
  • Presenters with a deep understanding of content and point form notes sound much more natural
• Beware of monotony
  • Vary your intonation to add variety
    • BAM points – Say it with emphasis!
• Make regular eye contact with all judges in the room
• Look interested!
The Video

• A great way to tell the emotional story of your team
  • So much harder to do in a 10,000 character essay
  • Even in a live presentation, takes an extreme amount of skill
• Have fun with it
  • This is your story. Be creative.
    • Do not plagiarize!
• Use the media for inspiration
  • Movie trailers, commercials, etc.
  • What moves you? What gives you “all the feels”
• Music enhances any story
  • Must by free of copyright restrictions
• Production values make up for a lot
  • Use a microphone!
• Huge project, needs a dedicated subteam of students
The Video

• Video Examples
  • Team 1538 – 2013
    • http://youtu.be/p62jRCMkoiw
  • Team 1114 – 2012
    • http://youtu.be/qFwz3FZqiuc
  • Team 1114 Chairman’s Inspiration Video – 2012
    • http://youtu.be/or42k-Mmb6c
Executive Summary

- Executive Summary
  - Almost serves as your own checklist of the five major criteria
  - Do not duplicate items here among the different areas
    - There are so few characters to work with, you don’t have room for duplication
  - Point form is acceptable here
  - A nice spot to fit in facts that felt out of place in the essay and or presentation
Extras

• Extras
  • Create buzz about your team via social media
  • Nice to give something to the judges
    • We provided a booklet of submission content, and supporting material that verified all our numbers
      • Virtual footnotes. e.g. “Daisy by the numbers”
    • Letters of support
    • Visuals
  • Handouts in the pit, spread the word about your program
  • Judging is based on interview, however it doesn’t hurt to impress other judges
Final Thoughts

• The Chairman’s Award process should be fun
  • If it starts to feel like a chore, you need to re-evaluate why you are submitting

• Always remember what the Award is meant to recognize

• The goal isn’t to win the award, the goal is change culture. If you make real strides towards a culture change and document it well, the award will come in time.
Resources

• www.facebook.com/frc1114
• Twitter: @frc1114
• YouTube.com/Simbotics
• www.simbotics.org
  • Our entire 2012 submission is available online
• Contact
  • Email: karthik@simbotics.org
  • Twitter: @kkanagas
  • Facebook: /karthik.kanagasabapathy