

Newsletter

of the IFAC Technical Committee on Human-Machine-Systems

Issue 2004_2, September '04

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Welcome to the IFAC-HMS 2004 in Atlanta

While doing your final touches, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you all to the IFAC-HMS 2004 in Atlanta. It will be a pleasure to me when the TC 4.5 will be represented actively.

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, a meeting for the TC 4.5 community will be arranged. According to the program, we will meet on the second day of the conference, i.e. Wednesday, September 8, 2004. Time and venue will be announced there. So please remember to check on notice boards or other announcement facilities that will be available there.

The agenda for this meeting will include:

- A review of the TC 4.5 activities
- Planning the next activities including determining a venue for the IFAC-HMS 2007
- Contributions for the 16th IFAC World Congress
- The IFAC TC 4.5 Web site

All interested participants are invited to join us in Atlanta.

An attractive program is waiting for us.

Hope to see you soon!!!

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Detlef Zuehlke

Chairman TC 4.5 HMS

Welcoming new members to the IFAC TC 4.5 Community

I am glad to inform you that the IFAC TC 4.5 has got new affiliated members recently. **Prof. Fantuzzi** and **Dr. Montanari** of the Human-Machine Interaction Group, Dipartimento di Scienze e Metodi dell'Ingegneria at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia in Italy have recently joined the TC 4.5 community. On behalf of other TC 4.5 members, I would like to welcome you all.

I would like to motivate you all to invite others to join this community. The challenging issues of future HMS can only be tackled with our combined efforts.

So let's enrich each other with HMS knowledge.

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Detlef Zuehlke

Chairman TC 4.5 HMS

Results of survey about organizing international conferences

Despite the efforts that have been made to make an international conference as attractive as possible, nearly all conferences have been facing problems to attract enough participants over the last years. This survey should help to find reasons for the poor attendance by collecting influencing factors that could be relevant for conference organizers. These were compiled in an online questionnaire which was accessible not only to the TC 4.5 Community, but open to everybody. Thanks to all participants.

Feedback was received mainly from Europe and Asia. Most of the participants had an academic **background** (89%) with an experience of 5 years.

To start with, participants were provided with possible **prime reasons** for choosing an international conference and were asked to mention the corresponding importance (see Figure 1). As expected, *scientific quality*, *practical relevance*, getting *contact* to other participants and the *overall cost* are the important reasons for visiting a particular international conference. Although some conferences offer *free entrance to cultural events*, this seems to be unimportant to most survey participants.

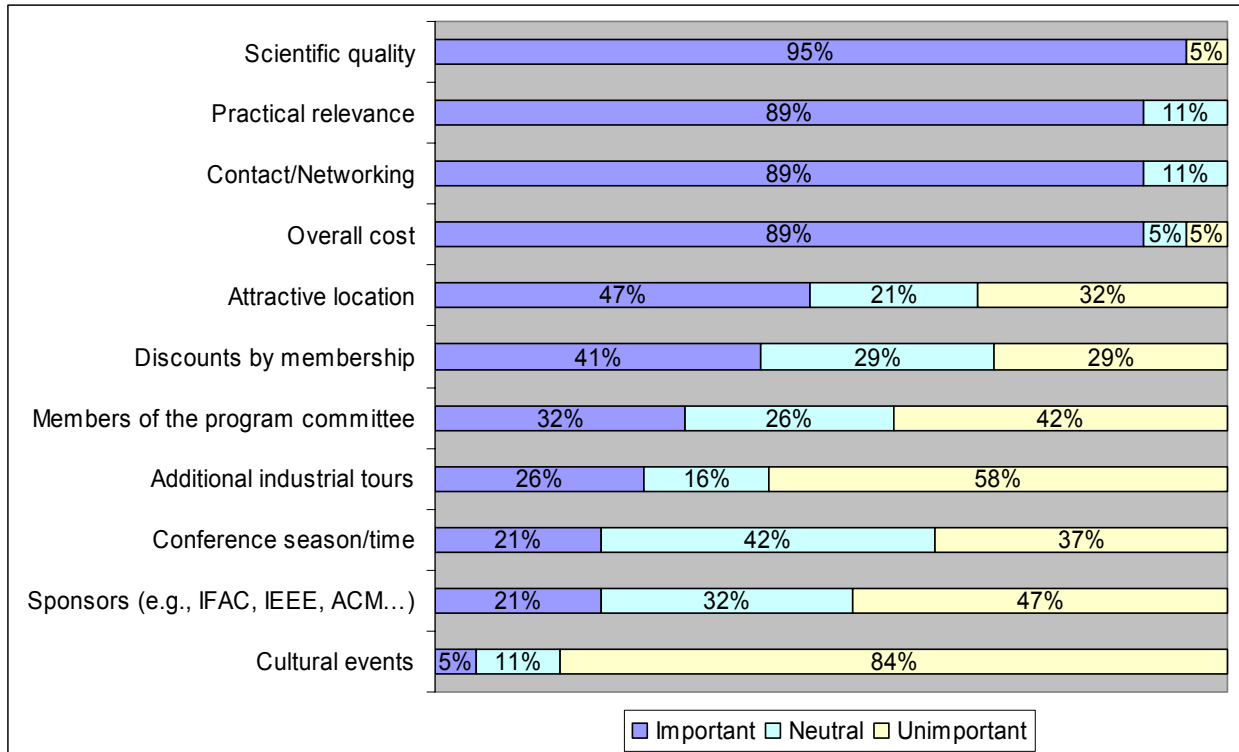


Figure 1: Reasons for choosing an international conference and the corresponding importance

Regarding the **program organization**, participants were requested to state the importance of *Podiums*, *Presentations*, *Symposiums* and *Workshops*. According to the survey results, most participants would rather attend Presentations with different topics rather than Workshops, Symposiums or Podiums (see Figure 2).

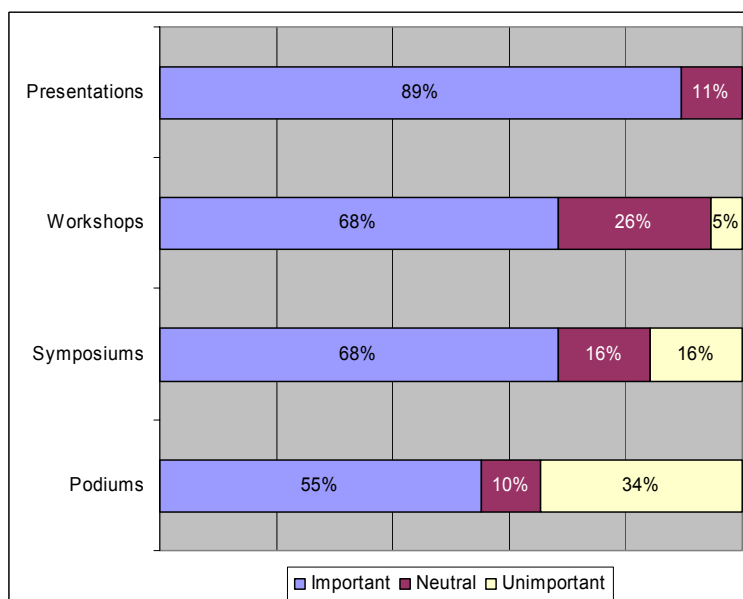


Figure 2: Importance of Presentations, Workshops, Symposiums and Podiums to the organization of the conference program

Parallel sessions also belong to the conference organization. 42% of the participants would prefer parallel sessions. The same number was against this arrangement and for 16% of the participants parallel sessions are irrelevant. Up to 5 parallel sessions could be acceptable.

When asked, whether the participants would prefer a conference concentrating on one **single topic** or **on multiple topics**, 47% were for multiple, 37% were for single and 16% did not find it relevant. Among those who preferred conferences with multiple topics, the distribution of the preferred number of topics was 43% for 3, 14% for 4, 29% for 5 and 14% for 10 topics.

Since the location of a conference might also influence visitors, it was important to know a conference location that could be attractive for survey participants. Is an **attractive location** a big city, a historical one, one with easy travel arrangements or one with leisure facilities? The survey revealed that having *easy travel arrangements* to a conference location is the crucial factor (46%), followed by the *history* of the city (27%) and its *size* (16%).

Somehow related to the conference location is the **preferable ambience**. While most participants could prefer a *university campus* (41%), for 32% the ambience *does not matter*. Other options were *middle class hotel* (16%) and *top hotel* (11%)

Concerning the **duration of an international conference**, 16% of all survey participants were for two days, 79% for three days, 5% for four days but not longer.

It was also interesting to know the **number of conferences attended in a year**. While most participants attend two conferences (32%) there is a good percentage attending only one conference (26%) as well as three (21%). 16% visit four and 5% visit more than five conferences.

The primary **expectation** of conference visitors was another issue. Expectations were almost equally distributed among *application oriented findings* (31%), *latest scientific/research findings* (38%) and *expert overview of future technologies* (31%)

Another relevant factor is the **number of participants**. A conference with less than 200 participants is more pleasant (47%) than one with less than 100 participants (16%) or less than 500 (21%). According to the survey, the number should not be greater than 500 (5%)

As to which **month** an international conference should be held, 17% preferred June, while for 48% the month does not matter. The months February, March, April and December are not suitable for conferences, according to the survey.

The **maximum acceptable cost** for a three days international conference should not exceed 700 Euro, so the survey (39%). This cost should include the conference fee and hotel costs. Other options were costs less than 1000 Euro (16%) and less than 500 Euro (38%). For 6% of the participants the cost does not matter.

With these factors taken into consideration by conference organizers, a good turn-up can be reached.

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Kizito Ssamula Mukasa

IFAC TC 4.5 Editorial

Submission deadline for the 16th IFAC World Congress in Prague extended

The organizers of the IFAC World Congress have decided to extend the deadline for submitting **PAPERS, INVITED SESSIONS** and **INVITED PAPERS** till the **September 30, 2004** due to numerous requests for postponing. This should be a motivation for us all to submit contributions.

I welcome those who will be in Atlanta to discuss this issue during the TC 4.5 meeting.

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Detlef Zuehlke

Chairman TC 4.5 HMS

Forthcoming events

- [9th Symposium on Analysis, Design, and Evaluation of Human-Machine Systems](http://www.isye.gatech.edu/IFAC-HMS2004)
September 7-9, 2004, Atlanta, USA
<http://www.isye.gatech.edu/IFAC-HMS2004>
- [16th IFAC World Congress](http://ifacplaza.certicon.cz/index.php)
July 4-8, 2005, Prague, Czech Republic
<http://ifacplaza.certicon.cz/index.php>

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Kizito Ssamula Mukasa

IFAC TC 4.5 Editorial

EDITORIALS

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