



For the past decade, I have been team managing, coaching, and appraising for Destination Imagination. Every year, I have the privilege of working with multiple teams, and I also lead a team manager support group where I discuss the successes and challenges that we often face. When appraising, I can usually be found at the prep or check-in table, reading through the team's paperwork to ensure that they are ready to celebrate their season at the competition. As a prep appraiser, I am writing this post to share some insights with you.

During the hectic preparation leading up to tournament time, many teams often overlook the critical importance of completing their paperwork with as much passion as they have put into their solution throughout the season. The tournament data form (TDF) is a team's opportunity to tell the appraisers how to give them points. However, I often read the paperwork in prep and wish that there was more detail so that the scoring appraisers could learn just a bit more about these amazing kids and how hard they have worked this season.

As a team manager, you have the privilege of watching your team's solution grow from an idea to a reality. You understand the countless hours they put into that one special prop, or the amount of times something failed before they finally got it to work. You know your team members by name, their strengths, and weaknesses. The scoring appraisers are blind to everything you have watched your team go through this season. That TDF is your team's opportunity to tell the appraiser where to look, what to see, and how hard the team worked to prepare for the tournament.

For example, when the paperwork asks for the team's choice element, I often see something like "song." Imagine how much more the appraisers would know if the team wrote, "We created our own theme song that we wrote, harmonized and sang together." In the section where the paperwork asks for a brief description of the Team Choice Element, make sure the appraisers know exactly what you want them to evaluate. Tell them what you would like them to know about the team choice element. Adding details like "We wrote a 3-verse song with a catchy chorus that we sing together in the opening of our story to open the theme park. The song was something the whole team worked on, and we really wanted our chorus to be memorable." tells the appraisers just a bit more about where to listen for the song, how hard the team worked, and helps them understand the preparation the team took to bring this song into their story.

I am not suggesting that your team writes a novel for their paperwork. The appraisers have mere moments to read it before your team performs. I am suggesting that all critical information your team knows about their story, their characters, their props, and all scored



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elements be clearly defined in the paperwork. Take the time to tell the appraisers what the team wants them to see to maximize the points they can receive. When describing your tale, tell the appraisers the beginning, the middle, and the end of the story. When describing a character, don't just say "Mike is the narrator." Instead, try "Our narrator is Mike. He's wearing the giant red hat and funny suspenders." The appraisers are all there to celebrate your team, we want nothing more that to give them as many points as possible, help us to do that with clear, and fully completed paperwork!