

Communication and Presentation Skills

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Overview

- **Introduction**
- **Audience: Marketing your research to your stakeholders**
- **Presentation skills**
- **Dissemination strategy**



Marketing your research to your stakeholders

- You've got your funding, you have your plan, you just want to get on with your work. No need to be telling anyone about what you are up to until it is all finished and you have something to say. Right? *Wrong!!!*
- **Research dissemination is much more than publications.** It should start right at the beginning of your project, and shouldn't finish until long after the project end.
- It is very important to **keep your stakeholders in the loop about your progress**, right from the start. They have offered you time, money, and belief in your research. It is very much in your interest to keep them in the loop about how you are getting on.



- Consider your **target audiences** and their viewpoints.

→ These might include the following:

- Funding bodies
 - Are they spending my money wisely and well?
 - Are they doing what they said?
 - Will they finish on time?
- General public
 - Are they going to find a cure?
 - Is this going to make my life better?



- Research participants
 - How are they using my information?
 - When are there going to be results?
 - Did what I do help anyone?
- Your colleagues in your institution
 - How does this work fit with the organization's strategy?
 - When will they be finished?
 - Is there anything relevant to my work?



Some easy ways to report to your stakeholders:

Email a Newsletter: Set up a **template that makes it easy** to send out a quarterly email newsletter. Focus on the following:

- What your project is about
- Why it matters
- What you are doing now
- What you are doing next



Talk About Your Work on Social Media

- Post regularly on social media. It's cheap, easy, and gets an immediate response.

Visit Your Stakeholders

- Take every opportunity to address your corporate sponsor.
- For your talk **use slides with few words and lots of images.**
- Remind them why you are doing what you are doing. Thank them and remind them that they are helping you make a difference



Have Stakeholders Visit You

- Also take opportunities to invite your stakeholders to your workplace.
- A 30 minute tour around a laboratory is worth every bit of time “wasted” as your stakeholders get to feel a sense of ownership.
- Never underestimate how much this matters, especially if you find later on that your project needs more time or money.

Keep Your Website Updated

- Setting up a project website.
 - Remember to upload your newsletters and copies of or links to your social media to the website.
 - Include photographs of the site visits.
- All these methods contribute to making your project alive, real, and relevant.



Presentation: Some good practices

The two most important things to keep in mind when you are presenting are that:

- these are *people* who will be listening to you at your presentation and
- you are likely to know, and probably care, way more about your topic than they do.

→ This means that you need to think about the makeup of your audience and tailor your presentation so that it piques their interest and they pay attention.



Adapt your presentation to your audience so that it piques their interest and they pay attention



Image Credit: People sleeping during a seminar by sirtravelalot/Shutterstock

When preparing the presentation, do the following:

- Set **clear objectives**—what is the purpose of this presentation? Passing on knowledge? Looking for a decision? Changing an opinion?
- **Speak their language**—avoid jargon if they are not going to understand it.
- The **opening** is when you can grab their attention. Preview what you are going to say to let them know what's in it for them and engage their attention.
- Have **key messages and an organized closing**. Your audience is likely to remember **only three key things**. Work out what they are, feature them, and repeat them in closing with a call to action.
- Follow **the 6-6-6 rule**. If you must use words, no more than 6 words per bullet point, no more than 6 bullet points per slide, no more than 6 minutes on a slide.



Also ask for feedback as part of the preparation.

- Practice your presentation with colleagues and ask if there is anything you could do better.
- You could also film yourself. Watching yourself can give a good indication of how you are doing.



The Three Minute 180s Thesis

- A great way to practice your presentation skills is with the Three Minute Thesis. What an impossible task, you think! How to distill three or four years of work into three minutes? It is a fabulous concept which has helped train researchers all over the world to talk coherently, and succinctly, about their work. When you get this right, you have really nailed it.



POWERPOINT PROJECT EVALUATION RUBRIC

Scoring:

- 1 Poor, many requirements not met
- 2 Fair, some requirements met
- 3 Good, meets most or all expectations
- 4 Outstanding, exceeds expectations

CONTENT	SCORE	COMMENTS
The presentation meets the information requirements of the assignment.		
Information is presented in logical sequence/structure.		
Information on slides reflects understanding and effective summarization. Information has not simply been copied and pasted from another source.		
There is not too much text on a slide. Each slide contains a limited number of talking points as opposed to complete paragraphs or lengthy sentences.		
Presentation is free of spelling and grammatical errors.		



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PRESENTATION		
Presenter was familiar with the material and did not read from slides or rely on notes. It is evident that the presentation was rehearsed.		
Presenter spoke clearly and slowly enough to be heard by the audience.		
Presenter showed enthusiasm for the subject matter and encouraged audience interest.		
Presenter made eye contact with audience.		



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DESIGN		
Slides display elements of effective design. Fonts, colors, backgrounds, etc. are effective, consistent and appropriate to the topic and audience.		
Animations and/or sounds have been used to emphasize important points. They do not distract from the content.		
Text is clear and easy for the audience to see.		



International Publication

Choosing a Journal

- Getting your paper published can **take much longer** than it took to actually do the work. You can expedite the process by doing some thoughtful homework first. **Choosing the correct journal** to approach **can save a lot of wasted time** because while you are waiting for a response your hands are tied.
- You are likely to be publishing jointly with a number of others, and you may all have a different view on which journal to approach first. You will be certain to agree that **the higher the impact factor the better, but simply because everyone wants exactly that, the competition will be stiffer.**



When choosing your target journal(s), (it is a good idea to have more than one as you might well be rejected by the higher ranking publications), consider the following:

- Is your field one of **particular interest to that journal**? If yes, is there a time of year (and therefore issue) when they publish on your particular topic?
- When you conducted your literature review, was there one journal or group of journals that frequently **included related work**?



- It is very rare for a paper to be accepted without the need for some changes.
- There are a number of possible situations you could be in:
 - The paper might be accepted subject to some minor/major alterations.
 - The paper might be rejected as not sufficiently novel or too preliminary.
 - The paper might be rejected because it is out of scope for the journal.
 - The editor or reviewers might feel that the work is plain wrong (this is particularly the case with papers which challenge the status quo).
- Read the reviewers' comments and the editor's response with care, and discuss your strategy with your team before you start your response.
- → In all cases, **benefit from comments**: Comments will come back from your reviewers, and your immediate response will probably be to feel they are unfair. Remember that these reviewers are looking at your paper with fresh eyes—and they are experts in your field.



Acknowledgments

- You should **acknowledge funding agencies** in your article or report. Acknowledgments can also include those who critically reviewed the drafts but who are not authors, as well as administrative staff who contributed to significant data entry or the preparation of other support material.
 - Do your very best **to avoid authorship disputes**. Collaborations, collaborating researchers should agree on the process of authorship and author order determinations at an early stage in the research project. This process should also be discussed with anyone who joins the group, **especially in international research collaboration**.
- You should keep a record of these discussions for later reference.



Promoting Your Publication

- As a first step, let your institute's media department know the paper is due and the approximate date it will be released. It is their job to promote your work. With your help, they will find the correct audience. Take the time to explain the subject to them, what is new and why it matters.
- Together, draft a short press release written in everyday language focusing on newsworthy aspects of your research project. **Remember to acknowledge your funding sources**, collaborators, and stakeholder relationships.
- Try to **attract media attention**



Promote on Social Media

- There are great opportunities for growing your reputation when you promote your paper on social media.
- Mention it on **Twitter**, including your institution's Twitter handle so they pick it up and share it.
- You are restricted with characters on Twitter, so mention it again, this time including your collaborating institutions' Twitter handles and a third time with your individual authors so they all pick it up and share it.
- Upload the paper, or its abstract, onto **LinkedIn**. Tag the individuals and institutions and share.
- Upload it onto **SlideShare**, remembering the keywords.
- Post it onto **Facebook** and include a link. Tag the authors and their institutions and share.
- Write about it on your **blog**, then tweet about the blog to get cross-fertilization.

Promote Online

- Don't forget to put your paper, or its abstract, onto your **personal Web profile** and on the **project website** and, of course, add it to your CV (including the electronic version on your Web profile).
- Upload it onto **ResearchGate**, **Academia.edu** and other academic social platforms where you have a profile.

Email Your Colleagues

- Let your colleagues know too. **Email your colleagues** from previous institutions, and your mentors, past and present, including a link to the paper on your personal profile page, project website, at its home journal or on an academic social platform.



Share Your Results

- Create an opportunity to **present internally or include this work in external presentations**. Now that you have published, you should make a plan for providing your stakeholder and end-user groups with access to—and appropriate explanation of—the results. If the audience is scientific, you might consider organizing a seminar or lecture. If your stakeholders are members of the general public, explain your results in a newsletter and distribute it promptly.

Present at Scientific Meetings

- Scientific meetings are, of course, a valuable way to disseminate and publish findings. Seek opportunities to present to your peers internally and at **conferences within your field**.



Thinking About Your Research Impact

- Research impact is as “the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy.” This can involve
 - “academic impact,”: understanding and advancing scientific, method, theory and application across and within disciplines
 - “economic and societal impact”: and its benefits to individuals, organizations and/or nations
- It is in your interests to document the scholarly impact of your research, to know who is citing your work, and to keep an eye on the consequences of your research. **Understanding your impact helps you confirm you are making the impact you want to be making and will allow you to demonstrate it to others.**
- **Work Out Your h-Index**



Work Out Your h-Index

- There are a number of academic social networks including **ResearchGate**, **Mendeley**, and **Academia.edu** which are dedicated to science and research and allow you to **connect, collaborate, and discover scientific publications, jobs, and conferences**. → They can provide you with in-depth statistics on who has been reading and citing your work.
 - You can demonstrate your scholarly impact by working out your “h-index,” essentially a measure of “whole career” citation volume, which provides a measure of a person’s **research impact**.
- The h-index is increasingly being used by universities as a measure of researcher impact, and **increases in h-index are being used in assessments for promotion**



- You can use a variety of citation analysis tools for calculating your h-index including **Web of Science, Google Scholar, and Scopus**
- Be warned that these sources index different journals and **may give you a very different h-index**. For this reason, it is important to always **quote your source database**.
- Another tool is “**Publish or Perish**”, a free software package that generates many impact statistics including h-index, g-index, total cites, average cites, etc.



Commercializing Your Research Findings

- Commercializing your research finding is a big step and you need to start planning early. It is easy to make a mistake which could accidentally make it impossible for you **to patent your invention**.
- Commercialization is the process of managing the **transfer of research knowledge** to the place where it becomes an application in the broad marketplace.
- The knowledge might be a research outcome or a skill; it might result in the development of a product, a technology, service or business, a community development program, or consulting activities.
- Commercialization will result in economic returns (perhaps sufficient to fund your continued research) or translation of your research into real products. Universities will aim for commercialization that benefits the common good.



Thank you!

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