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Karin Jonsell
Science coordinator
Bolin Centre for Climate Research

Some guidance for a successful presentation

Homing the message

- *Get the message through*
 - You want to convey a message. But, if you don't do a well-made presentation the message will not reach the audience and all your hard work will be wasted.
- *Experts vs. non-experts*
 - You are an expert in your particular field, but not everyone is. Not common people, nor your friends or all people at your department. Not even all at the conferences you attend.
 - To present your research to experts and non-experts are completely different.
 - What to say to fellow experts in your field:
 - Every detail
 - All doubts
 - Every aspect of the scientific process
 - Conclude: "We need to investigate more to be able to be sure..."
 - What to say to non-experts:
 - The most important things
 - What you are reasonably sure of
 - Very little about the scientific process
 - Conclude: "We have seen X and this means that..."
- *Better safe than sorry*
 - Think of your presentation as you tossing a ball to somebody.
 - Ideally you throw it into their outstretched hands.
 - But, if the presentation is made on a too high level, the ball soars over the head and the person has no chance of catching it.
 - If the presentation is on a too low level, the ball will roll on the ground. The message is easy to catch, but it is not optimal.
 - It is much better to aim on a too low level than a too high.
 - The non-experts in the audience will feel included and understand your message.
 - The fellow experts in the field will appreciate a well-made presentation with the topic explained properly and the results put in perspective.

Think before acting

- *What situation is it?*
 - What does the audience expect?
- *What level is appropriate?*
 - What language and level is appropriate to the background of the audience?
- *What is the purpose?*
 - What do you want to accomplish: Create interest, alarm, joy, action, ...?

A working strategy

- *Perspective is necessary*
 - It is necessary to put your message in perspective, i.e. to relate the wider topic, explain why you have done the things you are presenting and what consequences your findings have. Otherwise the presentation feels depressingly disconnected and dull.
- *What's in it for me?*
 - Identify the bits interesting for the audience. The audience intercept the things that concern or interest them intellectually and emotionally.
- *The red thread*
 - The purpose of the presentation should be imprinted throughout.
 - The presentation has to have a logical structure and all transitions must feel natural. The presentation should feel coherent like a smooth motorway from start to finish.
 - You save precious time by making the structure first. To just cut-and-paste from old presentations is seldom a good idea.
 - Remove all unnecessary information. No side tracks if it isn't a deliberate part of the dramaturgy.
- *The message must be clear*
 - One can hardly be over-explicit regarding the message.
 - Formulate your elevator pitch, i.e. what you would like to say summarised in a few sentences.
 - It sums up the unique aspects of what you do and phrases it in a way that excites others.
 - It answer the key questions what, when, how, why, whom in a direct way and with a simple language.
 - It tells it in the short time span of an elevator ride (5-30 s).
 - Think one-liners throughout the talk, i.e. catchy phrases that capture the important points and are easy to remember.
 - If it's a written presentation, the most important conclusions form the introduction.
 - If it's an oral presentation, all conclusions must also be written on the slides.
 - All conclusions should be summarised last in the presentation.
 - If it's an oral presentation, put your contact details under and let this page stay visible during questioning time.
- *Be professional, but not boring*
 - Have a catchy title, but make sure it covers the material in the presentation.
 - Let it show that you are happy to be there and enthusiastic about the subject!
 - Surprise, dramatize and take advice of great rhetoricians.
 - Humour breaks barriers, but keep to accepted areas.
 - Illustrate your subject with examples and analogies. A history is engaging and stays with the audience much easier than a bunch of facts.
 - If the situation permits it, engage the audience with questions.

Some practical advice

- *Introduce yourself*
 - Your name and affiliation should come first. If it is an oral presentation, tell a bit about yourself before you dive into the topic.
 - Name and contact details should be visible under the summary of your conclusions.
- *The template simplifies life*
 - Use the template of your organisation. It makes life easy as it has predefined fonts, font sizes, colours, and logos, which make the presentation readable, consistent and stylish.

The sender is also crystal clear which is important for the reputation of both you and your organisation.

- *Clarity provides focus on the content*
 - Use a font size large enough to make the text easy to read. Use only a few font sizes with a clear discrepancy between them. Do not use capitals only.
 - Use colours from your organisation's colour profile as first options, also for tables and graphs. Please have in mind that some people cannot distinguish between red and green.
 - Make your images and diagrams big and with appropriate resolution (72 dpi for the web, 100 dpi for power point and 300 dpi for printed material).
 - Avoid abbreviations, but if you have to use them define them at least once.
 - Speak clearly and not too fast. Pauses are necessary for the message to be able to sink in.

- *A picture is worth a thousand words*
 - Make use of images and diagrams which illustrate the most important issues. This makes the presentation more varied and easier to capture.
 - Choose images carefully. Suggestive images or images with unexpected angles tickle the imagination, but they must be relevant.
 - Please make sure that you have permission to use a particular image in your presentation and write the acknowledgement in a small font size on the slide.
 - It is even better to have illustrating films or animations, but make sure you have permission to use them.

- *Don't overload the mind*
 - Think minimalistic. The fewer objects on a page, the more attention each item will get. Use clean and uncomplicated images and diagrams that clearly show what you would like to say. Mark interesting things with arrows. Group items that belong together on a poster and make sure that the poster is airy.
 - Use bullet points whenever possible and make use of the indented sub-bullets to get structure and clarity.
 - The audience have difficulties grasping the material if the body of text is too big. This is especially true for posters. If you have to have a lot of text, write the main message with a large font size and explanations in a smaller font size.

- *Show and tell*
 - Let the lines and images pop up as you talk at an oral presentation with power point. Then the audience listen more actively to what you say instead of reading ahead.
 - Use body language at an oral presentation and point with your hand if possible.

- *Constraint is very important*
 - Use a relevant amount of material. It is better to have more material in additional printed articles alongside the poster or some additional pages in the power point if there is plenty of time during an oral presentation.
 - The pace should be comfortable and the audience have enough time to grasp the material on all pages in a power point presentation. Otherwise the audience lose interest.
 - Show the audience respect by keeping the time. Nobody likes a time thief.

- *Murphy's laws*
 - "If anything can go wrong it will, and at the worst possible time."
 - Practice! Test the presentation on others to get feedback.
 - Check in advance that the technical bit is functioning with computer connections, projector, internet, audio, printer for posters, etc.
 - Make the presentation available in several ways, both for safety reasons and to make it available more easily.
 - Always have a short version of your presentation ready if the allocated time as to be shortened.

- *Be professional*
 - Start making your presentation well in advance and practise it. Being well prepared with a coherent presentation is the best way to calm fluttering nerves.
 - To be professional is not to talk gibberish and look like Einstein, but is reflected in how well the presentation is adapted to the situation, the audience and the purpose.
... in short: If the message has had the best conditions to reach the audience.

Good luck & have fun!
Karin Jonsell

Some specials for the Bolin Centre for Climate Research

- *The power point template*
 - Please use the provided template named *BolinCentre_PPT-template.pptx*.
 - You can retrieve it from the science coordinator.
 - The fonts are pre-set to Verdana in the following sizes:
 - Title page: 44 pt and 20 pt.
 - Please do not use a too long (and boring) title that is forcing the font to be greatly reduced.
 - Normal pages: 26 pt for titles and 20 for normal text. If you would like to have larger text please use 26 pt and 14 pt for smaller text.
 - Please note that if you add a new text box, the default is wrong (Calibri 18 pt). Please change the text to Verdana 20 pt.
- Stockholm University has a central archive for free images.
 - Please visit www.su.se/mediabank