Developing and Delivering Media Messages

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Morning Agenda:
Developing and Delivering Messages

• Identify media and audience
• Developing your message
  – Message triangle
  – Message enhancements
• Delivering your message
  – Stay on message
  – Handling provocative questions
  – “Gotcha” to message (AATT)

Developing Media Messages

Communicating Scientists:
Valuable Assets

• Research-based knowledge can inform public debate - legislative and regulatory
• Effective communication engages sponsor support and is a component of successful outreach
• Clear communication to public audiences helps scientists steward their research areas
• Communicating research in simple terms is a skill (not a stigma)
Identify Media

- Who is the reporter? What media outlet or organization do they represent?
- Do your due diligence; read stories by your interviewer or view clips of the show
- What is the format?
- How long is the interview?
- Is the interview live, or will it be taped for later broadcast?

Identify Audience

- The audience is not: students in a classroom, members of a panel, attendees of a poster session.
- Your interviewer is not your audience.
- Who is your intended audience? What do you know, or can you find out, about them?
- What language, information, and ideas connect with your audience?
  *Hey, Neighbor Exercise*

Developing Messages

Scientific/Scholarly Communication

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Communicating with the Media

Developing Your Message Triangle

Messages developed with this tool can be used to create “elevator speeches,” develop an outline for a public talk, or provide targeted messages in media interviews.

- Identify your message
- Establish your goal
- Develop three talking points
- Enhance your message
- Prepare for questions
Use a Message Triangle

- Set a goal for this interview
- Develop a short message to help you achieve that goal
- Develop three talking points in support of your goal
  - Consider problem-solution-benefit structure
- Talking points are supported by details and message enhancements

Message: Insert your two-sentence message here:

Talking Point:
- Detail:
- Detail:
- Message Enhancer:

Talking Point:
- Detail:
- Detail:
- Message Enhancer:

Talking Point:
- Detail:
- Detail:
- Message Enhancer:

Talking Point: Products
- Proteins from local farms, free-range
- Produce from JBO, a 150-acre organic farm located in the city limits of Austin
- Enhancement: Grew up eating food from my parent's gardens (set the stage)

Message: The food I cook is the result of great products, mindful preparation, and personal passion.

Talking Point: Preparation
- I'm "particular," and pay attention to detail
- Practice and test menus with staff and "regulars"
- Enhancement: We eat first with our eyes

Talking Point: Passion
- I love to cook for others: my family, my friends, my clients
- Eating food with others can create connections and lifelong memories
- Enhancement: Favorite saying on food delivery truck: Cook food; serve love

Message Enhancements

- Examples: Be specific; avoid jargon
- Analogies: Simplify complex ideas
- The Three Cs
  - Colorful words
  - Clichés
  - Contemporary References
- Personal Experience/Story of the Quest
A scientifically literate society is equipped to manage change:

- Policy makers more capable of making informed decisions
- Knowledgeable media transmit information to the public
- Scientists inspire next-gen scientists

Personal story: I was inspired to study astrophysics because I watched Carl Sagan's Cosmos when I was a kid.

Scientists must learn new communication skills:

- Good communication skills are a professional necessity
- These skills can be learned
- Lead with the most important information
- Use clear language; don’t be afraid of accuracy and catch phrases
- Use examples and visuals
- Contemporary reference: Don’t let your interview show up on a social media cringe-worthy list

Writing Exercise: Developing Your Message Triangle

- Establish your goal
- Identify your message
- Develop three talking points – Consider problem-solution-benefit structure
- Use message enhancements
- AND: prepare for provocative or difficult questions

Delivering Media Messages

You have more control than you think!

Stay on Message

- Write down your talking points; know them cold; practice delivering them
- Avoid jargon!
- Don’t be afraid to sound like a broken record
- Your audience benefits when you stay on message
- Do not assume that your interviewer is scientifically literate
Handling Provocative Questions

• You are the expert
• “No comment” doesn’t cut it; prepare for provocative or difficult questions
• Be politely assertive
• Be prepared to calmly correct mistakes
• Think AATT (see below)

“Gotcha” to Message: AATT

• Anticipate difficult questions ahead of time
• Acknowledge the question
• Transition to your…
• Talking Points

Partner Exercise: Interview Practice

• Pair up. Take turns interviewing and being interviewed.
• Interviewer asks an open-ended question about scientist’s research.
• After a brief answer, the interviewer experiments with asking a provocative or off-point question.
• Scientist practices acknowledging the question and transitioning to a talking point.

Afternoon Agenda: Interview Practice

• Techniques for on-air interviews
• Mock interview
• Practice interviews in groups
• Debrief with entire class
• Wrap-up and final questions
Techniques for On-Air Interviews

• Smile: positive attitude, accessible, engaging
• Look straight into the camera/interviewer; don’t look up, down, or to side
• Keep your hand gestures in the box (not at face; not off camera)
• Posture: lean toward camera (engaged)
• Plant yourself, no movement/swivel
• Voice: expressive, animated

Dressing/Grooming for TV

• If nothing else, comb your hair!
• Dressing:
  – No white
  – No patterns, including herringbone, stripes
  – Best choices: pale blue, neutral shades
  – Conservative jewelry
• Say “yes” to make-up
  – Keep it light, natural-looking

Practice Interviews

• Create groups; assign roles
  – Interviewer
  – Interviewee
  – Camera Operator
  – Reviewer/critic
  – Observer/Timekeeper
• Conduct two-minute interviews
• Debrief
• Switch roles until all participants have been interviewed

“Best of” Interviews

• Each group selects its “best” interview
  – It may be the most successful
  – Or, it can be an example of a “lesson learned”
• Each group shares their interview with the class
• Review and provide feedback
• Wrap up and final questions....
For more information

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