DKS PUBLISHING

SCIENCE SPIN

SPEAKING SCIENCE: COMMUNICATIONS TRAINING FOR SCIENTISTS

ONE-DAY WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

AUDIENCE: STAFF SCIENTISTS BASED IN ACAMDEMIA, PUBLIC BODIES OR INDUSTRY & 4TH LEVEL STUDENTS, MSc & PhD CANDIDATES

PRESENTER: SEÁN DUKE CO-FOUNDER AND JOINT EDITOR OF SCIENCE SPIN MAGAZINE

Seán has 15 years experience as a science writer and editor. In addition to his role as an editor with Science Spin Sean presents Ireland's only regular TV science slot on Ireland AM, the TV3 breakfast morning show. He also is the creator and presenter of Ireland's only weekly radio science slot on 103.2 Dublin City FM.

Seán founded the Speaking Science initiative in 2008, in response to the need for scientists to develop better communication skills.

CONTENT:

This one-day module is divided into five parts, each of which is aimed at providing professional scientists with the practical, 'real world' communication skills that require in their daily work. The emphasis at all times is on interaction, discussion and activities.

PART ONE: WHY COMMUNICATE

The group will be encouraged to discuss why they believe that scientists in Ireland need to become better communicators.
Delegates will be asked to outline what kind of communicating they want to do, and how they go about that job at present.
The presenter will outline the case, as he sees it, for why scientists in Ireland today **MUST** be good communicators to be successful.
He will provide an overview of how scientists can start to identify their communication goals, and then to achieve those goals.

PART TWO: AVOIDING SCIENCE JARGON

One of the major barriers facing scientists in the bid to become better communicators is the vexed issue of scientific jargon.
Put simply, scientists speak a different language to the general public, and within each discipline there are lots of sub-languages.
Scientists use jargon on a daily basis with their colleagues, so it is important for them to become aware they speak a 'foreign' language. This unit will first of all seek to increase awareness among the group that they use jargon, and then to rectify that.

PART THREE: SCIENTIFIC WRITING SKILLS

Often scientists will state that they don't like writing, or that they are not good at writing, and put writing jobs on the 'long finger'.
However, this is not good enough, as scientists need to have some basic writing skills in order to become effective communicators.

Whether it is writing a press release, a grant proposal, or a research update, the ability to write clearly can impact on people's careers.
Here, the goal is to outline some basic rules for clear, effective writing and to assign tasks so that delegates can test new skills.

PART FOUR: ORAL SKILLS

Being an effective oral communicator is absolutely essential for any scientist that wishes to have a successful career.
The job of making oral presentations in public is an integral part of a scientist's life and it can take many forms.
For example, it might involve presenting new research findings to a scientific conference, or outlining the achievements of a research programme to a group of visiting, non-scientific decision makers.

But, whether scientists likes or dislikes oral presenting, or feel that they are good or bad at it, they must do it in order to succeed.

The task at hand, therefore, is to develop the skills to improve. Here, the presenter will ask delegates to perform oral presentation tasks, assess their performance, and outline ways to improve.

The idea is that the attendees will also learn from each other.

PART FIVE - TAILORING THE MESSAGE

For every full-time scientist, as well as 4th level student, based in Ireland today, it is vital to be able to 'tailor' key messages.
The tone, language and style of the communication must be matched with the needs of the audience it is intended to reach.

Whether, it is a scientist in charge of running a busy academic department, or a PhD working in the laboratory, all scientists from 4th level upwards, must learn how to reach important audiences.
For example, a PhD student might be detailed to present his research at an Open Day, which is aimed at the general public.
Or he might be asked to accompany a visiting group of secondary school students, curious to know what is like to work in a lab.
Both situations have unique communication challenges.
For the senior scientist, tailoring messages operates at a higher level, and might involve interacting with the media, for example.
It might also involving developing and communicating a research strategy to funding bodies, or speaking to venture capitalists.
Here, the goal will be to define a number of individual messages that delegates need to communicate in the ‘real world’ and to learn from the experience of the presenter to determine what works best.

ENDS.