

## **SPEAKING SCIENCE: COMMUNICATIONS TRAINING FOR SCIENTISTS**

**ONE-DAY WORKSHOP PROGRAMME**

**AUDIENCE:** STAFF SCIENTISTS BASED IN ACADEMIA,  
PUBLIC BODIES OR INDUSTRY

**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 a scientist likes or dislikes oral presenting, or feels that they are good or bad at it, there is always room 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 delegates will also learn from each other.

## **PART FIVE: CONTROLLING THE MESSAGE**

These days, scientists can no longer sit in glorious isolation from the mainstream media, and, by extension, the general public.

The funding bodies demand that scientists in Ireland communicate the value of their research to their paymasters, the public.

However, for many scientists, dealing with the media is a frightening prospect, one where they feel they have little control.

The fear often expressed by scientists is that journalists will fail to understand their work, misrepresent them, or get facts wrong.

These fears are understandable given that most journalists in Ireland have little or no scientific training or understanding.

This unit will help delegates to get over those fears, and to learn how to take control of their interactions with the media.

This control is achievable, and the presenter will provide practical tips and insights into how best such control can be achieved.

**ENDS.**