

Globalized trade in food means more choice for consumers. However, globalisation also has the potential to threaten human health. By bringing together scientists from around the globe the EU funded project MoniQA (**M**onitoring and **Q**uality **A**ssurance in the Food Supply Chain) helps food manufacturers, retail outlets and regulatory bodies to cope with the challenges posed by a globalised food economy.

Through MoniQA Food Scientist Training workshops (MoniQA FST) we develop the research management and communication skills of scientists participating in the project. This factsheet provides some helpful advice on key presentation skills.

Questions you might like to think about

- Why are you doing this?
- Who are you talking to? Your peer group, other professionals, the media or consumers?
- What is it you want to say?
- When should you be doing this? Not just what time but at what point in a project?
- How might you best communicate the information? Press release, journal, website or other channels...
- Do you need some help?

Socio-economic impact assessment will enhance the effectiveness and the efficiency of new food quality and safety regulations addresses the melamine crisis and other emerging issues in food safety.

Public speaking ground rules I

The first rule for public speaking is **never to give the same presentation twice**. When speaking in public, several factors need to be considered. The most important of these are:

- **Occasion:** who is your audience? Are you applying for a grant, speaking at a scientific conference, talking to the press etc?
- **Goal:** what do you want to achieve? Are try to gain the attention of the press, convincing a funding agency to spend money or informing your peers?
- **Topic:** what is your message? Because this determines the content of your presentation.

You also need to take into account that in a presentation you are talking to people, which limits the potential for interaction and feedback.

Long preparation, short presentation – when designing your presentation think about the **audience** you are going to talk to (e.g. numbers, age, profession), and whether this is a public event or a closed session. Do not read your presentation, but rather use small cards with key words.

The structure of your presentation should be:

- **Beginning** – tell them what you are going to say
- **Middle** – presentation of your information
- **End** – tell them what you have told them, briefly

Do not be afraid to repeat yourself, but keep it interesting

Public speaking ground rules II

Tables, schematics and images are a good idea but **make sure your visual elements have an obvious message**. The text must be legible and the image clear.

Timing is important: ensure your presentation is to time when you are rehearsing; running over is inconsiderate of both your audience and other speakers.

Finally, check the **logistics** (time, location, late changes, room-size, lighting etc.) and the **tools** available (beamer, flip-chart, overhead projector, handouts, audio and video etc.); think about which of these you need and how.

Obtaining and **keeping the attention of your audience** can be achieved by outlining benefits, linking your talk to current events or even asking questions within a small group.

REMEMBER

- Have a clear message
- Allow the audience to follow your line of thinking
- Ensure your slides can be read from the back
- Keep it short, keep it simple
- Leave room for questions
- Be on time and keep to time
- Don't be thrown off by technical problems

Hints for posters

- Check the dimension of the poster boards; think about your audience and your message
- The title should be short whilst including all relevant key words; avoid acronyms and jargon
- Explain why the work was done, and link this with your key findings and future work
- Use large text/ font size, bright colours and heavy lines and clear figures/ images
- Keep references short (Other et. al., 2009 J. Results 1(1):1-10) and acknowledge copyright
- Include your contact details, provide A4 copies of your poster, and proof check your text
- Be available during poster sessions, as you never know who might visit and offer to help

PowerPoint – a powerful tool if used correctly

- Emphasise your key points but avoid complex sentences and the use of jargon and slang
- Text should be a minimum of 24-point in the body of the slide; 36-40 for titles and headers
- 6-8 lines per slide; eliminate unnecessary words, round-off numbers, use symbols (% not percent)
- Incorporate large and clear images/ diagrams/ figures that complement or replace text
- Use sans serif fonts (no tails); write in sentence case; only use capitals for emphasis; bold, italic and underlined text are hard to read
- Employ colour with purpose, not for decoration, and ensure text contrasts background colour
- Be selective with punctuation, and use sound and animation where they add value
- Proof check your slides, put references at the bottom of the slide, include acknowledgements
- Rehearse; enjoy yourself and be enthusiastic; and if you are speaking a second language, don't worry about small mistakes!

More from MoniQA

- An overview of upcoming training, and a review of past events is available at:
<http://www.moniqa.org/MoniQAFST>
- More MoniQA Factsheets can be downloaded from
<http://www.moniqa.org/factsheets>

Scientific posters – the good and the bad

Posters introduce specific areas of work, and they should be eye-catching and thought-provoking. Every poster should include acknowledgements, after all someone paid for the research so it is only polite to say thank you, but posters can only be recorded as dissemination if they include the logo or contract number.

The aims and the conclusions need to be clear and brief, and related to one another. Talking about future work helps the reader to understand how this work fits into the larger problem.

Figures must be sensible, necessary, legible, and appropriate! Low quality images or complex diagrams do not help understanding but, where necessary, a brief explanatory note will ensure the key points are understood.

Most scientist do not need to see a mouse pinned out for dissection to know what was done, and the public will not understand more about the research process, including the necessary use of animals, if the images used appeal to directly to their existing misconceptions. Similarly, whilst there is a place for images of sickness and disability in society, if these photographs are not contributing to understanding, they are taking up valuable space that might be better used for science.

Abstracts are an invitation to visit a poster, but changing the title and or authors between submission and presentation confuses people. It is equally disappointing to discover the abstract is now available in large print without any additional information; the abstracts should entice the reader, and the poster satisfy curiosity and tempt further exploration, which means the language needs to be to the point and free of jargon.

It is difficult to be creative with science and house-rules on formatting, but an element of fun or individuality can be introduced not only to attract attention but to keep it.

For further information please visit our website:

www.moniqa.org or contact moniqa@moniqa.org.

