

Talking Science Workshops

Boosting science communication between scientists and beyond

A project by Janina Linnik, Oskari Vinko, Sabrina Di Fulvio / Science Slam Club Basel



These days remind us how important it is to be an ambassador for science and facts. Scientists have to learn to communicate better.

Janina Linnik
D-BSSE ETH Zurich, PhD student

Students and scientists from different fields learn how to communicate effectively and how to avoid misunderstandings when talking to non-experts.

The aim of the workshop is to train scientists to communicate their science clearly and effectively. Misunderstandings on scientific topics are ubiquitous, especially when communicated to non-scientists or the media, and can have serious consequences. Many contemporary problems (e.g. in health and environment) require an interdisciplinary research team, which poses additional communication challenges for scientists. Science communication, however, is usually not part of the curriculum. Our workshop fills this gap: students and researchers of all disciplines learn about the most common pitfalls when talking to non-experts, how to structure a talk, how to engage the audience, and finally practice their communication skills in exercises.

Methodology, Steps of Implementation and Approach

We organized the Talking Science workshops five times between February and September 2017. The workshop was advertised through various department administrations, student mailing lists, the Science Slam Basel homepage and facebook. The workshop lasts 3.5 hours and is highly interactive: after a short introduction, we use hands-on exercises and feedback from both peers and lecturers to teach the techniques and apply the skills learned in the lessons.

During the year, the workshop constantly developed, e.g. we integrated feedback from participants, we optimized the schedule and identified the optimal number of participants. The workshop was evaluated by participants during the THINK FURTHER weeks in May, and by Gaby Rockmann-Partridge, a professional communication trainer, in September.

Results and Impact

- In total, we had 67 participants from 2 universities (University of Basel, ETH Zurich) and 15 departments: Dept. Biomedicine, Biocenter, University Hospital Basel, Friedrich Miescher Inst., Swiss Tropical and Public Health Inst., Zoological Inst., Dept. Environm. Sciences, Dept. Environm. Microbiology, Dept. of Chemistry, Swiss Nanoscience Inst., Dept. of Biosystems Science and Engineering, Dept. of Information Technology and Electrical Engineering, Dept. of Physics, Dept. of Arts, Media and Philosophy, Dept. of Social Sciences.

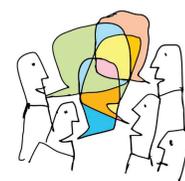
Reflection and highlights of the project / Look into the future

We received a very positive feedback and the next Talking Science workshops are already scheduled:

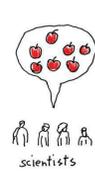
We will offer a workshop during the Department Biomedicine Career Day on November 21st.

In Spring 2018, our workshop will be integrated in the Transferable Skills program of the graduate school of the University of Basel. We will extend the workshop to a two half-days workshop (3.5h + 4h). The workshop will cover one additional topic (on how to handle unexpected situations) and include two more exercise sessions.

What is it?



Discussions between scientists



Send a clear message to non-scientists

We focus on two aspects: communication between scientists from different fields and communication with the general public. The workshops took place in the evening from 5pm - 8.30pm.



In exercises, the participants receive peer-to-peer feedback and learn how to improve their talk and their communication skills. Surprising for many participants: giving excellent feedback is almost as difficult as giving excellent talks.



During the workshops, there was enough time for discussions, which were often continued during the breaks.

Kontakt

Janina Linnik
Science Slam Club Basel e.V.
scienceslam.unibas.ch
janina.linnik@bsse.ethz.ch

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