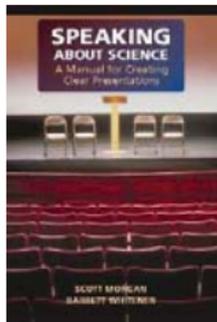


Speaking about science

TELL THEM WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO TELL THEM; tell them; then tell them what you told them. Though engrained in many of us, this mantra for giving presentations, scientific or otherwise, is faulty. Namely, it is not good storytelling (and it does not reflect the actual research process). This structure reveals the ending too early and can result in a presentation that does not engage audiences. Moreover, effective presentations are not spoken versions of a paper or report. They require preparation that pinpoints the take-home message. According to Morgan and Whitener's book, *Speaking About Science: A Manual for Creating Clear Presentations*, "all data for the talk should be selected with this goal [i.e., the take-home message] in mind. All images should be designed around it." Also, the message needs to be properly placed: not too soon but not as the "exit line" either. Morgan and Whitener encourage potential presenters to ask themselves, "What do I have to show the audience? What are my best data?" *Speaking About Science* also tells readers how to select slides and estimate the appropriate number for a given presentation time (i.e., the "two-minutes-a-slide rule"), "hook" an audience from the start, craft titles that attract attention, and increase the odds of having a successful question-and-answer period.

According to the publisher's description, "the book features step-by-step instruction for creating clear and compelling presentations—from structuring a talk to developing effective PowerPoint slides." It also presents useful techniques for delivery before an audience, as well as how to prepare for a job interview and various types of media interviews (see Nisbet and Mooney 2007, summarized below, about framing science issues). Additionally, readers will learn how to prepare a poster and conduct a useful poster session. The one drawback of the book is that the examples are directed at the medical profession, so examples may not be useful for most resource managers. Nevertheless, the image design (see Dennison et al. 2007, summarized below, for effective ways to communicate complicated data to diverse audiences), text, and step-wise method are intelligible and unambiguous. So before giving your next presentation for the George Wright Society biennial conference, consider consulting *Speaking About Science* as you prepare.



Reference

Morgan, S., and B. Whitener. 2006. *Speaking about science: A manual for creating clear presentations*. Cambridge University Press, New York, USA.

—Katie KellerLynn

