

Engage your Audience!

#scicomm session and competition for young researchers

The contest "Engage your Audience!" allows young researchers to present their research in front of their peers, using a simple and plain register. To do so, they will have only three minutes available! The contest will take place in the frame of the session "Engage your Audience! - #scicomm session and competition for young researchers" organized during the 7th FEMS Congress held in Valencia, Spain.

FULL SESSION PROGRAM (11 July 2017 - 13h00-15h00):

Session coordinator: Massimo Caine

13:00 - Welcome and introduction

13:05 - [Dr. Laura Bowater](#) - **Science Communication: seeking success and selling your story**

13:30 - 14:30 - "Engage your Audience!" contest

"My research in 3 minutes" presentations

- 4 presentations
- Break 10'
- 4 presentations

The jury meets at the end of the last presentation

14:30 - [Dr. James Redfern](#) - **Developing educational material from microbiology research: best practice**

14:50 - Prize awards (1st, 2nd, 3rd)

ADMISSION CRITERIA

In order to participate to the contest applicants should be pursuing their research as PhD student or postdoctoral research associate. Lecturers and Professors are not admitted to the contest.

Successful selected competitors will have their full congress registration fee waived.

INSCRIPTION AND SELECTION

The contest is open to 8 candidates. Enrollments are possible through on-line inscription and applicants will be required to submit:

- (i) A 200 words text describing applicant's research. The text is meant to be a lay summary of your research and therefore written with a broad-public register.
- (ii) A 1' video describing yourself and the subject of your research.

The deadline for submission is **15th April 2017**. Please find further information on the official FEMS Valencia 2017 website concerning the submission procedures.

GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPANTS

1. General Informations

Aims

“Engage your Audience!” contest is a competition for young researchers, PhD students and postDocs, aimed at developing their science communication attitude while improving their ability in synthetizing and outreaching their research. The participation to the contest will be a precious possibility for young researchers to express and present in simple words the driving force(s) of their scientific passion. Doing so, those who will participate will develop collateral communicative skills - a precious asset for their future professional development as scientist and science advocates.

Format

The participants to the contest will be asked to describe their research in a given time of three minutes in front of their peers and in front of a jury of selected professionals (see *Public and Jury*). There will be a single round of presentations and participants will be evaluated in the frame of the session (see *Evaluation criteria*).

Pre-selection

Due to time constraints a maximum of 8 presentations will be possible. In the case that more than 8 applications (visit the official FEMS Valencia 2017 website for further information concerning the submission format) will be received, a pre-selection based on the application material will be done. Applicants will be informed of the pre-selection decision in due time.

Public and Jury

The public participating to the contest will be heterogeneous. The attendants will be microbiologists with different backgrounds and scientists operating as professional science communicators. The Jury will be composed of 3 to 5 members. Scientists, scientists professionally engaged in science communication, scientific journalists and laypeople. The jury will meet and evaluate the presentation during the session. Furthermore, a clap-o-meter will indicate the audience engagement for each held presentation. Winners will be nominated at the end of the session.

2. Evaluation criteria

TALENT OF THE PARTICIPANT AND ENGAGEMENT

- Is the candidate showing the true speaker’s qualities: voice clear and confident, rhythm, fluid gestures, presence on the stage and interaction with the public?
- Is the candidate able to transmit his/her passion for the topic described? Does the candidate possess passion and human character while describing his/her successes and difficulties with humor?
- Is the candidate promoting audience’s engagement and curiosity?

OUTREACHING

- Is the candidate able to describe ideas and concepts with an accessible language?
- Are metaphors and examples used by the candidate consistently?
- Is the visual material used providing a plus-value to the outreaching of the subject?

STRUCTURE OF THE TALK

- Are the structure of the talk and the flow of ideas facilitating the comprehension of the subject?
- Is the candidate clearly explaining the pursued research?
- Are the different parts of the talk balanced (introduction, development, conclusion)?

3. Rules

TECHNICAL CONSTRAINTS

Chronometer

- The candidate will have three minutes (180") to present his/her research
- A chronometer will show the available time starting from 180 seconds to zero. The chronometer will be placed in front of the candidate.
- The greetings (in & out) to the audience will be considered as part of the available time.

Time keeper

- The timekeeper will be with the candidate on the stage in a way that he/she will be able to see him/her. When the candidate will be ready to start, an agreed signal will inform the timekeeper. A sound will inform the candidate that the chronometer has started - only then the candidate might start the talk.
- When 30 seconds will be left another sound will warn the candidate. A louder signal will warn the candidate when the time will be over. In the case that the candidate will not have finished the talk yet, he/she will have to choose: continuing the talk and be disqualified or stop the talk and being judged accordingly.

Interruption management

- The chronometer cannot be zeroed, except that in the case of major technical problems.
- In the case that a major technical problem will manifest (for example the microphone doesn't work, the slide doesn't appear, the starting sound don't work) the chronometer can be zeroed and started again once that the major problem will be fixed.
- The candidate is not authorized to interrupt the presentation and/or to zero the chronometer

ORAL PRESENTATION

- The talk must be done in English
- No accessories, except a paper sheet of notes will be allowed. No laser pointers, no disguise (e.g. clown masks, funny hats, fake mustaches) are permitted.
- Although not mandatory, the candidate is encouraged to interact with the public, posing question and engaging the audience.

VISUAL SUPPORT

- The presentation may be accompanied by a visual/slide.
- One single slide is allowed, without animations. The slide will be projected behind the stage.
- The texts on the slide must be in English
- The slides must be in Adobe acrobat format (.pdf) and ought to be sent to massimo.caine@unige.ch before 15th June 2017.
- The candidate must confirm that the used images are respecting the copyright of the author.
- No video or audio supports will be allowed.

4. Tips & Tricks

ORAL PRESENTATION

Plan

- Tell a story: prepare a beginning, a development and an ending. You may also use a circular structure: a presentation which starts from a precise point, then goes in different directions in order to develop the talk and finally return to its origin. If you are able to master this structure, you may definitely use it.
- Think about the hierarchy of the information: the audience doesn't need to know all the details of your experimental setups - their interest relies on the big picture of your research.

The Start

- Begin with a sentence, which will touch the audience: it may have a human and personal angle, a link with the actuality a received idea.
- Place your research among a broad context: it is very important to valorize the pertinence of your work in order that your audience may be engaged in listen to it.

The Ending

- Summarize your research within a broader frame: how your research will change the order of things?
- Think about a final sentence which will make the audience and the juries remember of you and of your presentation.

Choices of words and expressions

- Use short words and short sentences. This will produce a dynamic effect.
- Use action verbs: this will add vitality to your text. Don't use the passive form. Even though this form is widely used within the scientific texts, it makes the message much heavier than what your presentation needs. "It has been supposed" it is much longer than "we suppose" and, in 180 seconds, each unnecessary word is a waste of time!
- Avoid jargon, scientific termini and acronyms. Your audience may not know them and you risk losing their engagement. If you really cannot avoid using a jargon from your domain, then you must explain it. Likewise applies for the people that you mention or the concepts that you will present. Never suppose that the audience automatically know about what you are talking about.

- Differentiate the style of your sentences, posing, for example, questions and audience interactions.

Metaphors and humor

- Metaphors, comparisons and other style figures are interesting, however they shouldn't complicate the presentation: remain simple. You can make citations, but don't forget to mention the author of the citation (though remember the previous point).
- The humor: it allows to make a very serious subject more lively. Though, if you decide to use it, test and repeat very well your presentation so that you will be comfortable with it and your jokes will look spontaneous.

Human dimension and passion

- Examples and anecdotes: they allow to animate your presentation and to bring you closer to the audience. Even if the subject is extremely technical it surely possesses a link with the society (and therefore with your public and with the jury)
- Communicate your interests. If you devote years of your life to your research, it is something which passionate you. The audience must feel that you love what you do and understand why

Refine the message

- Define the central message: at the moment of the planning of your presentation keep on asking yourself which are the most important messages that you want to communicate
- Plan longer than three minutes and then start cutting your presentation down. The refining operations will let you focus on the most important part of your message.
- Don't lose time to introduce yourself or to acknowledge your coworkers. These are important seconds invested in communicating something that it is not your research.

Topics to avoid

- You have no idea of the beliefs of your audience or of the members of the jury nor of their values. It will be therefore important to avoid to make humor or to provide your opinion about political, religious or sexual subjects.

THE SLIDE

Text

- State the title of your research in a catchy and understandable way. You may provide the technical title of your research to the presenter whom will introduce you.
- Keep it short. The majority of the information will come from your oral presentation and you don't want to distract your audience with the text
- Even if you have the possibility to bring with you some notes, use them more as a memento rather than start reading them. If you fix your eyes on the notes, you will lose the contact with the audience, risking to lose their engagement too.

Layout

- The slide resembles to a decoration for a theater scene. You should report on it only the elements that are pertinent to your presentation and which illustrate your message and/or that reinforce it;
- You may decide to add images - but remember that video/animation/sounds are not allowed;

- Don't forget to consider how to integrate your slide within your presentation. If you are not integrating the slide within your presentation and/or if the link with the slide is not clear, then....why using a slide?

Aesthetical considerations

- Use images with a good resolution and with a proper size. The audience at the bottom of the room should be able to see it without difficulties
- Be careful about using too intense colors which may distract the public

ATTITUDE

Voice and language

- Your voice must be loud and clear. Clarify your voice before entering the stage - some warm beverage and a little bit of honey will do more than what you may think.
- Exercise your presentation so that your voice will not tremble once you will be on the stage.
- Speak loud and don't bite your words. Even the people sitting at the bottom of the room must be able to clearly hear you.
- Rhythm. Your "talking pace" must be constant, not too fast, not too slow. Breath regularly - don't go in apnea.
- Language tics. Try not to repeat the same word or the same expression several times. The best exercise that you may do to avoid them is to register yourself while exercising - re-watch again your presentation to spot the tics and thus eliminate them.
- Believe in what you say - if you are convinced about what you are saying, you will have more chances to convince the audience as well

Non verbal language

- Movements: don't remain completely stuck, with your hands in the pockets (that's not very natural). At the same time don't gesticulate too much. The gestures must remain natural and support your presentation while you speak. Particularly use the gestures to evidence important aspects of your focus and to stimulate the attention of your public.
- Eye contact: while presenting, look frankly in the eyes each member of the jury. Try to do the same for your audience. Such attitude makes your presentation much more personal.
- Smile and enjoy yourself. If you are happy to be there on the stage, the audience will be happy to listen to you.

Accessories and clothing

- Dress yourself in a professional way, disguise is forbidden. Use clothes that make you feel comfortable and that you would be using for a conference
- Using jewelry, earring, and bracelets are not forbidden, however some of them (e.g. clanging bracelets) may distract your audience from your presentation.

TECHNICAL MATERIAL

Microphone

- Never touch the microphone nor allow your clothes to enter in contact with it - it will produce very annoying sounds

- Consider your microphone always on. Once on the stage don't pronounce anything that is not related to your presentation.
- Test it - if it is a hands-microphone check how do you feel when using it. Be comfortable with it so that it will not distract you when making the presentation.

Chronometer

- See the second passing by it may be stressful - however the chronometer is a precious indicator for your presentation. Don't look at it every moment, but set some time-milestones during your presentation in order to know weather you are respecting your time-schedule or not.
- Remember that if you will exceed the time limit you will be disqualified. If you will realize the risk of exceeding the time, consider of interrupting your presentation in order to remain in competition.

Text

- Even if you know your presentation by heart, a notes paper sheet may save your presentation in the case of memory lapses. If you are using it, before entering the scene decide where you prefer to keep it - your pocket, in your hands, on the lectern...the decision is up to you.

FURTHER SUGGESTIONS

Training

- You may know your talk by heart, but be careful that the presentation remains lively - behave as a comedian who interprets the part. In the case a memory lapse occurs, be ready to recover without being blocked by the situation.
- Alternatively to learn the talk by heart you may decide instead to prepare your talk based on a detailed plan that you will follow.
- Test your presentation loud, several times. You will spot the part of your presentation where you feel less comfortable. In general, this is an indication that the presentation needs to be modified.
- Present your talk to member of your family, friends, colleagues in order to collect constructive feedback: which are your strength and which are your weaknesses.

CONCLUSIONS

It is possible that during your presentation you will not fulfill neither all the criteria nor all the suggestions reported within this document. Such presentations are a very personal exercise which takes in account your creativity, your talent and your developing communication skills. Nevertheless keep always in mind the passion that is driving your research and don't forget to enjoy communicating it.

Good luck in sharing your passion!

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