

The 10 traps researchers fall into when talking to non-technical audiences

The biggest common mistakes to avoid while spreading your ideas far and wide.

Researchers spend years of their lives investigating and experimenting their fields of expertise. This commitment to pushing the boundaries of knowledge is often arduous, lonely and difficult. **The best ideas of tomorrow** are being conducted today by practitioner-scientists in labs, institutes, universities, business schools. '*Publish or perish*' is a common academic maxim and while publishing articles in academic journals is an essential step to receive funding and peer recognition, it's not the end of the journey.

Today is a **perfect time for researchers to cross over into the non-academic world**. Superstar authors, like Dan Pink and Malcolm Gladwell, have global best sellers based on the work of lesser-known researchers. The impact of TEDx events globally **has made technical knowledge more accessible and stimulated a thirst for more insights** among young, educated and globally minded audiences.

Researchers have a fantastic opportunity to spread ideas to reach a wider audience. Publishers, clients, sponsors and peers are impressed by a thought leader who has the ability to build, reach and maintain a platform of interested followers. The problem is many researchers fail because they fall into ten common traps.

1. You know too much so you say too much

Don't go into download mode! You're an expert in your field and enjoy talking about your subject. You could speak for hours on your years of research. We've all been in the audience listening to a speaker who starts with promise but then overwhelms and grinds the audience into complete boredom by talking too long.

2. You talk over people's heads

Don't assume a general audience knows your topic. As a thought leader, you can talk about the minutiae but don't be the intellectual genius who makes the audience feel insignificant and inferior by speaking down to them. Public forums are great for big picture ideas, less so for details. Relate to your audience.

3. You use technical jargon

You are fluent in a different language to your audience - your technical language! Cut out jargon and acronyms to spread your ideas among a lay audience. Like a Steve Job's keynote, the best presentations are inclusive experiences and the language you use must invite people in for a conversation not block them out.

4. You give too much information

You've been living and breathing your research for so long, It's hard to step away from it. Don't overwhelm the audience with too many small details. Tell them the outcomes and why your research is important for them to know. Background information gets quickly forgotten and triggers people to take out their phones.

5. You don't know how to make a memorable message

Research shows that information often makes a talk heavy, dull and boring. When the message is not clear, nobody remembers what you said. The best researchers are using the fundamentals of good content marketing to ensure their ideas are transferred into memorable soundbites and messages. It cannot persuade

6. You fail to make an impression on the audience

Impact sticks while information does not. In a short talk, you'll only have limited time to convey your main points before the audience forms their opinions. While your content reaches 10% of the audience, you'll reach the other 90% with a human connection. Show your excitement by speaking the language of story and emotion.

7. You make your audience think too much

A public presentation is a place to share ideas, not make people think. But surely, the purpose of research is to make people think! True. However, in a public presentation, people can't think deeply and listen at the same time. Use simple, digestible ideas and instead use workshops for deeper dives into your research.

8. You struggle to find a conversational tone

Don't dump data on your audience. The best public presentations are engaging. But many academic researchers lecture at their audience. The more people feel involved, the more likely they are to remember your message. Involve your audience with questions, ask them to interact with your ideas and each other.

9. You assume that the audience is not interested in you

Technical professionals are shy to reveal personal information. But people must care about the messenger before the message. Best distinguish yourself from other researchers with your personal journey story. Share your passion, struggles and key moments of truth. You'll be more likeable and increase your ability to influence.

10. You overwhelm the audience with your greatness

Make the talk about them not you. While the audience does care about your credibility, there's a limit to how much self-interest and ego they can tolerate. Keep the focus on why your ideas are important and how they can help. Your intention is on making a difference by adding real value through your expertise.

Conclusion

Now you know the ten most common traps, how many do you fall into? The good news is that all of these mistakes are easily remedied with due care, focus and attention. With a few small adjustments, you can take years of research and package it into a short, digestible talk that engages the senses and makes a memorable human to human connection. The most successful researchers don't always have the best ideas. They've perfected the art of speaking in a way that everyone can understand.

About Warwick John Fahy

I absolutely love working with researchers, thought leaders and analysts to create short engaging talks that effectively express your disruptive ideas.

These engaging, evergreen public talks are used to radiate your research in the public arena to help you secure funding, attract clients, media and publishers. I've helped researchers from all around the world including from US, Mexico, UAE, UK, Spain, Switzerland and China.

“I'm interested to spread my disruptive ideas far and wide. What now?”

Take a look at our solution to help researchers take advantage of every speaking opportunity - The Spreading Disruptive Ideas Program. I work globally but I don't work with everyone - I'm very clear on how I can add the most value to researchers who are also practitioners. To see whether I'm the right person to help you, I invite you to:

1. **Read the program outline** at [here](#).
2. **Answer the Four Key Questions** to qualify for the program [here](#).
3. **Book a Strategy Session** and we'll discuss how to get the most from the program based on your research and objectives.

“You've dedicated your life to climbing to the top of Everest. It would be a shame not to plant a flag at the summit”