

How to present your research

Getting funding and gathering data is all very well, but great researchers should be great communicators as well.

STEPHEN WHITE has some tips.

MAYBE you're just starting out in academia, or maybe you're one of the great researchers. Maybe your journal articles are the stuff of legend – clear, concise and full of visionary thinking. But when you stand at the front of a conference hall, do eyes glaze over and people dutifully file out after an hour having learnt precisely nothing? Then read on...

THE FIVE WS

WHAT is the purpose of your presentation and what do you have to say to achieve it?

WHO is the audience, and how much do you know about them? Find out about their interests and use them in your talk – the closer (psychologically) you can get to your audience then the better it will be.

WHY are you giving a presentation or talk rather than using another form of communication? Would a written report be better?

WHEN are you giving your talk? Beginning of the day, end of the day, straight after lunch, just before lunch – all these spots will have effects on your audience's attention and therefore on how you go about giving your talk. Agree in advance exactly when you will finish, tell your audience, and stick to it.

WHERE are you going to give your talk? Small or big room, flat or tiered? Does the venue have the equipment that you need?

1. The road to effective dissemination of your work starts with realising you are communicating for your audience and not for you.
2. Giving a talk is not a science, it is a craft skill that improves with practice, with learning from the last time you did it, and with getting feedback.
3. The shorter the talk, the more you need to prepare. As Abraham Lincoln said, a 10-minute talk would take him a day to prepare; 30 minutes, maybe half a day; two hours, 'I'm ready now'.
4. If you are enthusiastic, know your subject and know your audience, you're half way there.
5. Consider the 'Five Ws' (see box) – What, Who, Why, When, Where.
6. Rehearse out loud (if you do it in your head it will take twice as long when you come to do it live), preferably to someone else. Ask them to tell you what the purpose of the talk was – and don't be surprised or defensive about any answers that you might get.
7. Use the primacy/recency effect. The beginning of your talk has to grab the

audience's attention – if you haven't got them in the first minute then they are probably lost for the rest of the talk. If you hear a speaker start a talk with an apology or 'first slide please', walk out – it will be a poor talk. And at the end, your summary/recommendations have to be strong – your audience should be in no doubt that you have finished and finished on a high. 'I think I've finished' is NOT a good way to end. Also, use signposts and running summaries throughout to create lots of small primacy/recency effects.

8. Using visual aids will increase your audience's retention of the information. But make sure the visual channel is integrated with what you are saying – only have a 'visual' up if it is what you are currently talking about, and switch off the machine when you want the audience to attend to you.
9. Test out your font size in a similar room, not on a computer screen 12 inches away. Serif typefaces (with the little flourishes) are more readable than sans serif.
10. Use visual aids to deal with 'noise' in the system: loss of attention, tiredness, boredom, micro sleeps, losing the thread, failure to understand key points. Keep It Short and Simple (KISS) – all visuals should conform to the twin virtues of 'clarity and simplicity'.

■ *Stephen White is the Society's Publications and Communications Directorate Manager.*

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The gifted in their productive years (Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, £23,500)

Professor Joan Freeman (School of Lifelong Learning and Education, Middlesex University, j.freeman@mdx.ac.uk)

Work to be completed by March 2004. Continuation of a longitudinal study, initially comparing otherwise-matched

recognised gifted, non-recognised gifted and random children ($N = 210$, aged 5–14). Indications of later success were motivation, means and mature metacognition. Emotional problems unrelated to gifts. Investigation into interactive effects of potential, home and educational circumstances on work and contentment.

If you would like your recently funded research to feature in this column, contact Lisa Morrison on lismor@bps.org.uk with the funding body, amount awarded, period of funding, title, contact details and a clear summary of the project in under 50 words.

EYSENCK AWARD

A FIFTH annual award of £1000 will be made by the H.J. Eysenck Memorial Fund in 2004. The fund was set up to support research in personality and individual differences in psychology. Deadline for applications is 31 January 2004.

□ For further information call 020 7733 8129 or e-mail evans.eysenck@virgin.net.

Extraordinary events in Aberdeen

A RESEARCH team from the University of Aberdeen, in collaboration with the University of Sussex, has received over £55,000 from the Leverhulme Trust towards a new type of laboratory-based study into how we remember extraordinary events.

Previous research conducted at Aberdeen has found that one person's memory becomes similar to another's following their discussion of a mutually experienced event. The person who responds first during a discussion is most likely to influence the memory of another witness.

The new project is run by Dr Amina Memon and Fiona Gabbert (University of Aberdeen), with Dr Dan Wright (University of Sussex) as a collaborator. Dr Memon said: 'When people discuss an event, what one person says can readily be incorporated into another person's memory

report. This new grant will allow us to explore this further and develop a model of eyewitness conformity to identify how this process of influence occurs, and who is most susceptible. We will also examine what it is about a person that makes them respond first in a discussion. A battery of individual difference measures and personality tests will be administered.'

The study will run until March 2005. The team hopes to recruit volunteers from the university community during term-time, and from the general public during the holidays. Anybody who is interested in taking part in the study in Aberdeen should contact Fiona Gabbert, research assistant on the project, on 01224 274390 or e-mail: fgabbert@abdn.ac.uk. For more information on the Aberdeen Eyewitness Research Group go to www.psyac.abdn.ac.uk/eyewitne.htm.

RESEARCH REQUESTS

■ MY PhD research is looking at people's **reactions to 360 degree feedback**. It's a qualitative study to explore attitudes and feelings about the approach, aiming to define the conditions in which it works particularly well. I am looking for people to interview. These people should have had experience of 360 degree feedback within the last year. The interviews can be either face to face or by telephone.

Phil Morison

Howard Associates Ltd

E-mail: pm5@brighton.ac.uk

■ MY PhD with the University of York focuses on the **assessment and treatment of victims of crime**. The research is funded by the National Probation Service in London and aims to improve services for victims of crime.

Following a pilot survey of 50 victims of crime, I have developed a questionnaire consisting of a set of statements that respondents are asked to indicate how much they agree or disagree with. I intend to distribute this questionnaire to over 500 victims of crime. The data collected will inform an assessment tool that will aim to help criminal justice agencies assess and support victims of crime.

If you have ever been a victim of crime and would like to take part in this research, please do get in touch with me.

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FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

listed by deadline

14 July 2003

BBSRC. Responsive research grants. Tel: 01793 413200; e-mail: research-grant.applications@bbsrc.ac.uk; website: www.bbsrc.ac.uk

National Alliance Research Schizophrenia and Depression. Young Investigator Award. Contact: Audra Moran. Tel: 00 1 516 829 0091; website: www.whsource.com/narsad.html

16 July 2003

Wellcome Trust. Advanced fellowships. Contact: Rebecca Christou, Grants Information Office. Tel: 020 7611 8888; website: www.wellcome.ac.uk

18 July 2003

Cancer Research UK. Clinical trials grants. Contact: Dr Lynn Turner. Tel: 020 7317 5178; e-mail: scientific@cancer.org.uk; website: www.cancer.org.uk

31 July 2003

NERC. Studentships. Contact: Dr J.H. Baker. Tel: 01793 411564; website: www.nerc.ac.uk

1 August 2003

Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation. Research grants for research on problems of violence, aggression and dominance. Contact: Program Officer. Tel: 00 1 212 644 4907; website: www.hfg.org

Nuffield Foundation. Project grants – outline applications. Contact: Anthony Tomei, Helen Quigley or Sharon Whitherspoon. Tel: 020 7631 0566; website: www.nuffieldfoundation.org

Wellcome Trust. Research project grants and short-term fellowships (full applications). Contact: Grants Section. Tel: 020 7611 8145; e-mail: biomedicalethics@wellcome.ac.uk; website: www.wellcome.ac.uk

Research Into Ageing. Small incontinence research awards. Tel: 020 7843 1550; e-mail: ria@ageing.org

Cancer Research UK. Population and behavioural sciences research projects/programme grants. Contact: Dr Lynn Turner. Tel: 020 7317 5178; website: www.cancer.org.uk

15 August 2003

British Occupational Health Research Foundation. Research award. Contact: Brian Kazer. Tel: 020 7317 5898; e-mail: admin@bohrf.org.uk; website: www.bohrf.org.uk

18 August 2003

BUPA Foundation. Project grants. Contact: Lee Saunders. Tel: 020 7656 2591; e-mail: saundersl@bupa.com; website: www.bupafoundation.org/html/funding/general.html

1 September 2003

Leverhulme Trust. Pilot project grants. Contact: S. Herd. Tel: 020 7822 6892; e-mail: sherd@leverhulme.org.uk; website: www.leverhulme.org.uk

National Institutes for Health. Improve diet and physical activity assessment research. Contact: Extramural Outreach and Information Resources Office. Tel: 00 1 301 435 0714; fax: 00 1 301 480 8443; e-mail: grantsinfo@nih.gov

5 September 2003

Alcohol Education and Research Council. Research grants. Contact: Andrea Tilouche. Tel: 020 7217 8028; e-mail: andrea.tilouche@aerc.org.uk

19 September 2003

Association for the Study of Obesity. Student researcher award and young researcher award. Contact: C. Hawkins. Tel: 020 8503 2042; e-mail: cahawkins@compuserve.com

30 September 2003

British Academy. Small research grants. Contact: Grants Department. Tel: 020 7969 5200; website: www.britac.ac.uk

open date schemes

See January and May issues.

A searchable database containing full details of the various national and international funding opportunities for psychologists can be found on the Society's website at www.bps.org.uk/careers/funding.cfm

If you are a grant-awarding body, please e-mail Lisa Morrison (lismor@bps.org.uk) with details of your scheme for inclusion in this column.

Like all sections of *The Psychologist*, 'Supporting research' depends on your contributions. E-mail Lisa Morrison on lismor@bps.org.uk with your tips, questions, work in progress – anything related to the research process that you think would be of interest to our wide audience.