



Confident Conversations: How to Talk about Food Science

Mindy Weinstein
IFT Director of Media Relations

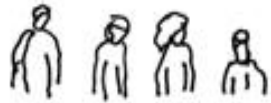
Poll Question

- **What is your biggest communications challenge?**
 - Experiencing malice from anti-food industry
 - Translating complex topics in a meaningful way
 - Being accused of having bias because you work in big food
 - I don't have any communications challenges.

Today's Agenda

- **Why Communicate Science?**
- **Developing Your Message**
- **How to Spot Bad Science**
- **Do's and Don'ts of Difficult Conversations**
- **Social Media Tips**

Science communication



scientists

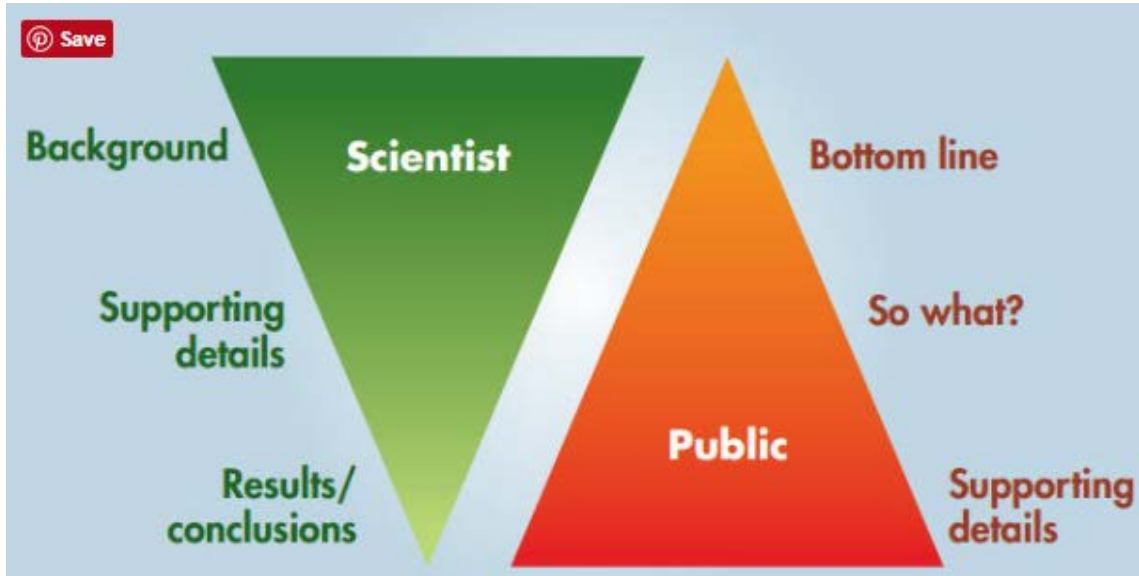


the public

Why Is There Such a Disconnect?

- **There is an all-time high interest in what we eat**
- **An all-time low understanding of what's in our food**
- **Widespread ignorance of what's good for us**
- **Misinformation further confounded by vested interest**
- **Influencers lack basics of food science & nutrition**
- **The quest continues for what's “honestly healthful”**

Scientists and the Public Have Different Communication Styles



Why communicate science?

- Increase awareness of your work
- Reach a wider audience
- Dispel myths and correct misinformation
- Help inspire future scientists (aka children)
- Challenge status quo
- Educate and create positive attitudes towards science and food



THE SCIENCE NEWS CYCLE

JORGE CHAM © 2009

Start Here



Your Research
Conclusion: **A is correlated with B ($p=0.56$)**, given C, assuming D and under E conditions.



...is translated by...

UNIVERSITY PR OFFICE
(YES, YOU HAVE ONE)
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
SCIENTISTS FIND POTENTIAL LINK BETWEEN A AND B (UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS).



...which is then picked up by...

NEWS WIRE ORGANIZATIONS
A CAUSES B, SAY SCIENTISTS.



...who are read by ...

THE INTERNETS

[Scientists out to kill us again.](#)
POSTED BY RANDOM DUDE
Comments (377)
OMG! i kneeeew ttt!!
WTH???????



...then noticed by...

We saw it on a Blog!
A causes B all the time
What will this mean for Obama?
BREAKING NEWS BREAKING NEWS BREA

CNC Cable NEWS



...and caught on ...

4 LOCAL EYEWITLESS NEWS

WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT "A"... CAN KILL YOU! MORE AT 11...



...eventually making it to...



Where does bad science come from?

Find a Job | Amazon Videos | Feedback | Like 440k | Follow @MailOnline | Thursday, Oct

MailOnline

Home | U.K. Home | News | Sport | U.S. Showbiz | Femail | Health | Science | Money | Video

Health Home | Health Directory | Health Boards | Diets | MyDish Recipe Finder

Skipping breakfast to lose weight makes you fatter - and far more likely to raid the vending machine

- Skipping meals changes the way brain processes food
- Makes calorie-laden treats such as chocolate much more tempting

By FIONA MACRAE SCIENCE CORRESPONDENT IN NEW ORLEANS
PUBLISHED: 13:39 EST, 16 October 2012 | UPDATED: 19:12 EST, 16 October 2012

If you think skipping your morning tea and toast will help you lose a few pounds, you could be mistaken.

Researchers claim people who miss breakfast not only gain weight but also crave fatty and sugary foods, putting them at greater risk than losing weight.

Scientists at Imperial College London scanned the brains of 21 volunteers while they looked at pictures of different foods, such as salads and chocolate.

Media Outlet: UK Daily Mail

Source: Research presented at the Society for Neuroscience Annual Conference

The Scientific Facts:
Study did not look at vending machines or obesity

MailOnline

Home | U.K. Home | News | Sport | U.S. Showbiz | Femal | **Health** | Science | Money | Video

[Health Home](#) | [Health Directory](#) | [Health Boards](#) | [Diets](#) | [MyDish Recipe Finder](#)

Is your caffeine fix making you fat? Study shows five cups of coffee a day could cause obesity

- Previous studies showed that drinking coffee in moderation could lead to weight loss and cut risk of type 2 diabetes
- But new findings show chlorogenic acid found in coffee may lead to weight gain and insulin resistance if five or more cups are consumed

By EMILY PAYNE

PUBLISHED: 07:44 EST, 28 May 2013 | UPDATED: 08:48 EST, 28 May 2013

Wrong amount of coffee could kill you

LINDA CANN • PERTHNOW • MAY 27, 2013 8:59AM

SHARE | YOUR FRIENDS ACTIVITY

NEW! Discover news with your friends. Give it a try. To get going, simply connect with your favourite social network.

LOGIN

Ads By Google

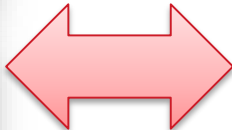
[YouSendIt is Now Hightail](#) [www.hightail.com](#)
Share Your Large Files & Folders. Start Your Free Trial Today!



New WA research has found that while one cup of coffee is good for your health, five cups of coffee can be harmful. Source: HeraldSun

DRINKING five coffees a day - even when decaffeinated - has been linked to obesity and chronic disease by WA researchers.

Media Outlets: UK Daily Mail & Perthnow.com
Source: Study published in *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*



Scientific Facts: A study of mice, involving substance found in coffee

- No significant weight gain
- Nobody died

The Press Is Having A Field Day



The Food Industry is Being Portrayed as the Bad Guy

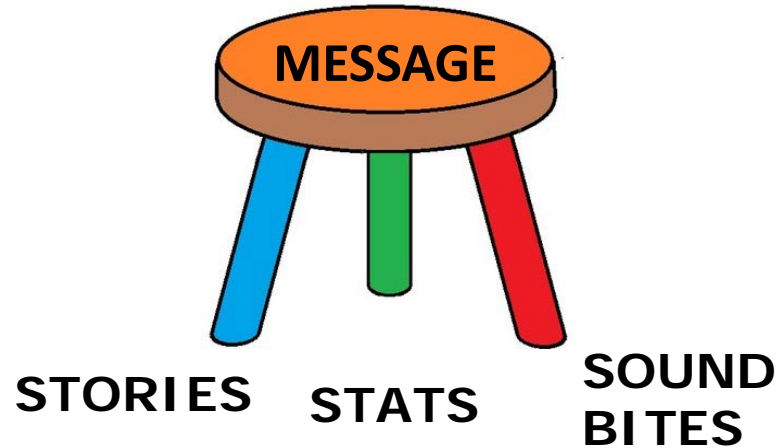


What is a message?

- A message is a one-sentence statement that incorporates two things:
 1. One of *your* most important points
 2. One of *your audience's* most important needs or values

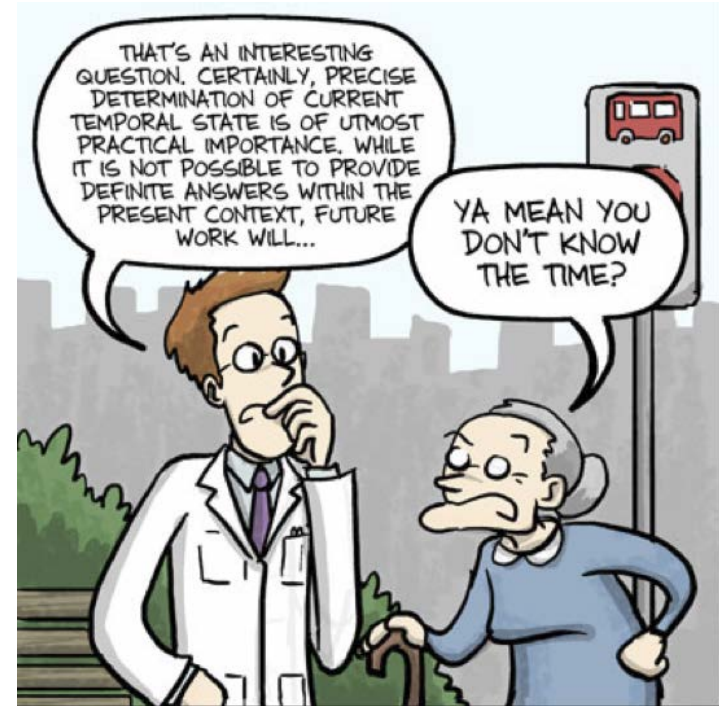
Message Supports

Different ways of reinforcing your key message



Communication Tips on Getting Your Message Across

- Use plain language
- Avoid jargon
- Be concise
- Pretend you're explaining this to your grandmother



Stories

Good stories bring abstract messages to life through tangible examples:

- **Personal experience**
- **Somebody else's experience**
- **Case studies**

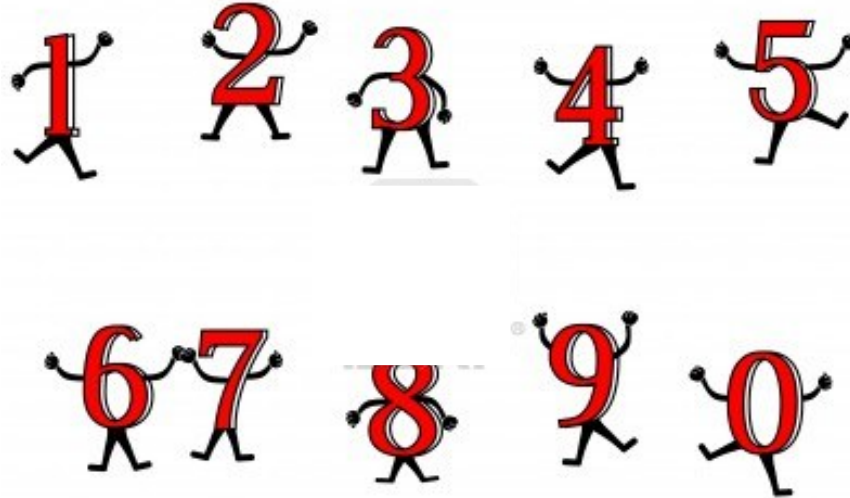
Stories

- **Don't bury the lead**
- **Get to the point**
- **Why?**
 - If you don't get it out fast, you might not get it out at all
 - If you don't grab their attention *immediately*, you may never get another chance
- **Start your answers with your lead. Then if you have time, add context by going back to the beginning and middle, ending your answer by restating the lead.**

Stories

- **“My family has to make the same decisions as yours, so here’s what we do when it comes to making healthy food choices.....”**
- **“When it comes to research, my family uses it to make decisions this way...”**

Statistics = Boring



Bring Numbers to Life!

Examples

One dairy cow needs 1 to 2 acres of pasture area.

“One dairy cow needs a pasture area of about the same size as 1 to 2 football fields.”

This study involved 20,000 participants.

“This study involved 20,000 participants which is equivalent to a packed basketball stadium at a Bulls game.”

What is a sound bite?

A sound bite is a short sentence or phrase that expresses one of your messages in a memorable way.

- “Better product development means less hungry kids.”
- “Cooking meat without a thermometer is like driving without a seatbelt.”
- “When in doubt, throw it out.”

Flagging

- This is a way to draw attention to your key messages:
 - The most important thing...
 - The three things to remember...
 - The bottom line...



A ROUGH GUIDE TO SPOTTING

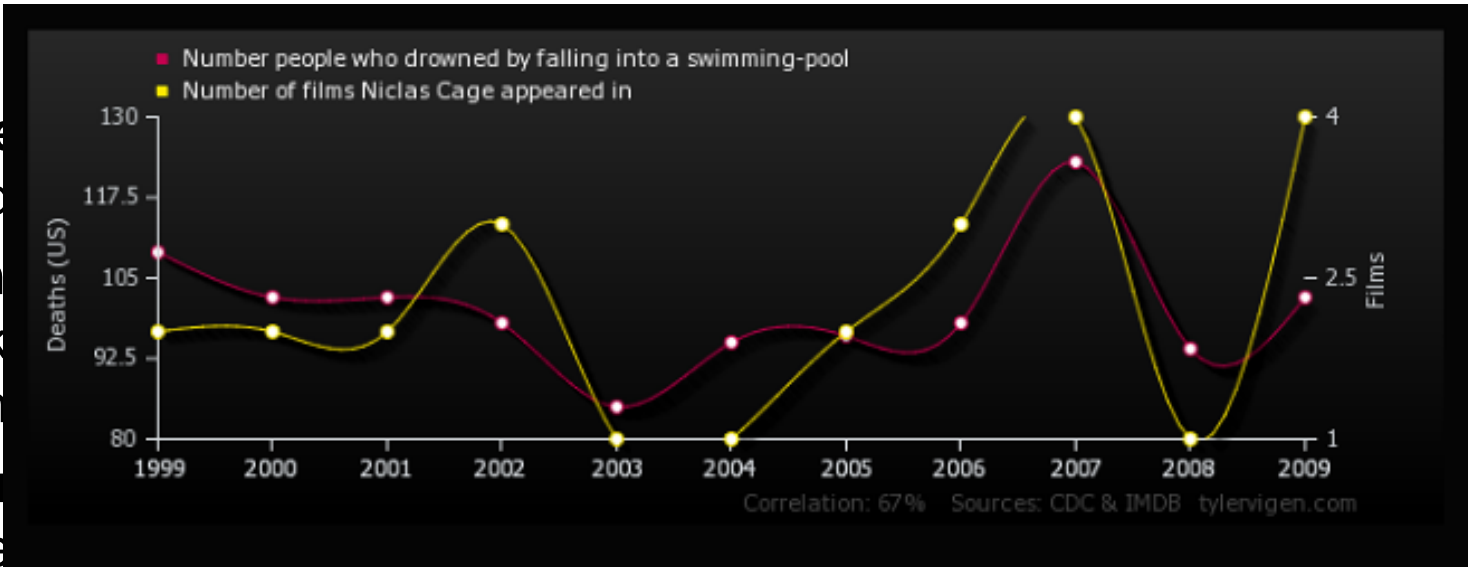
• BAD SCIENCE •

- **Sensationalized headlines:** Behind sensationalized headlines are often sensationalized stories. Be wary.
- **Conflict of interests:** Who funded the research in question?
- **Unreplicable results:** If one lab discovers something once, it's sort of interesting. If someone else can replicate it, then it is far more real.

A ROUGH GUIDE TO SPOTTING

• BAD SCIENCE •

- Spe
- and
- Sm
- to k
- can
- Cor
- doe



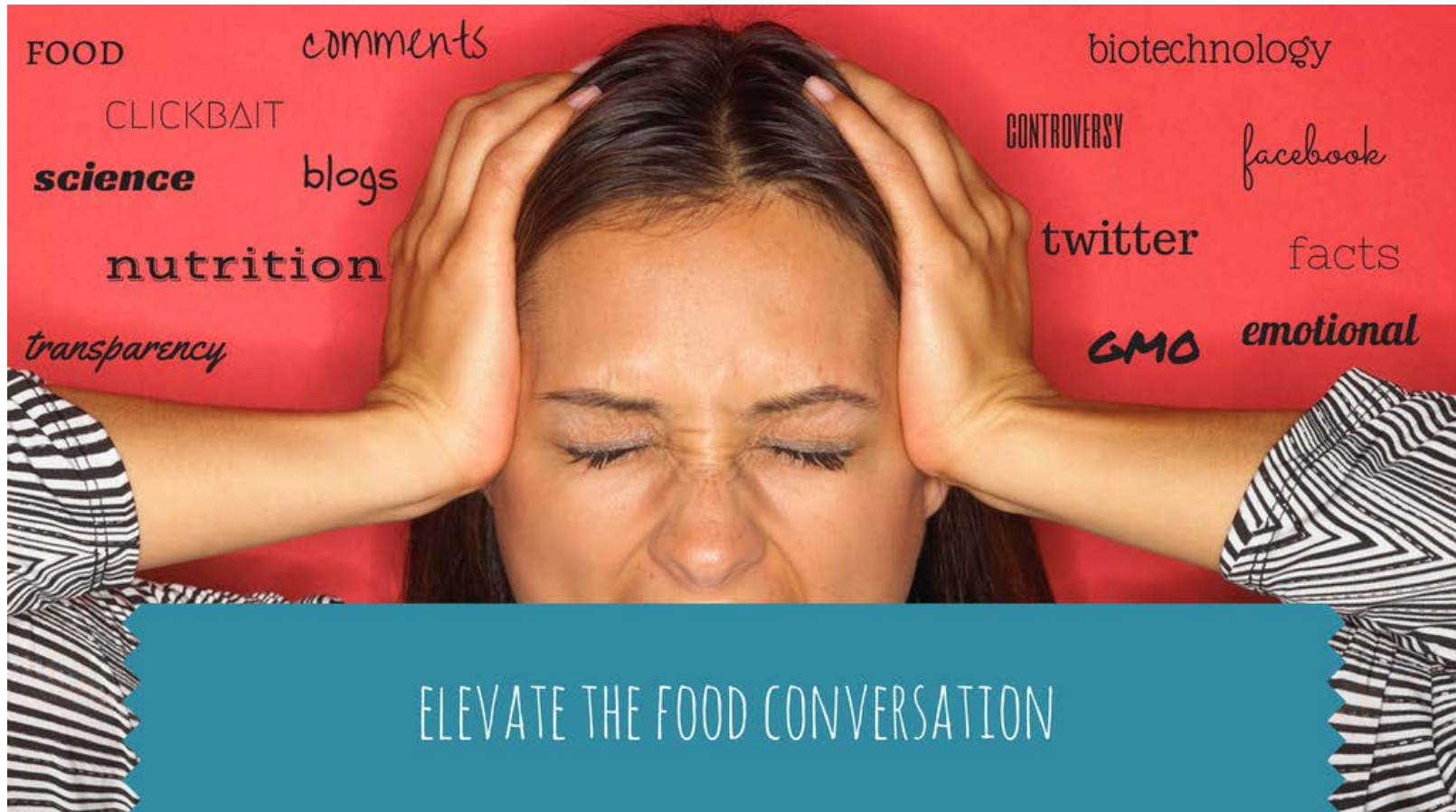
d"
roup
ed

A ROUGH GUIDE TO SPOTTING

• BAD SCIENCE •

- **Unrepresentative samples:** One cultural group can't tell you about all of humanity. This is just one example, but it's a pervasive issue.
- **No control group used:** Were the results tested against a control group?

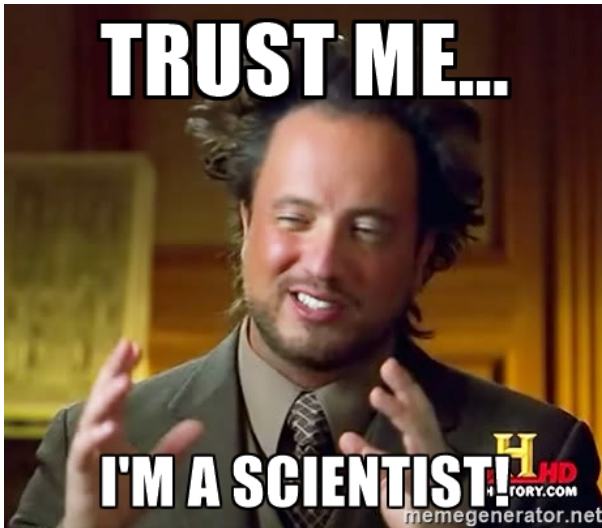
“I don’t want _____ in my food.”



DON'T: Lead With “I’m a Food Scientist.”

- Can blunt your argument if you’re affiliated with the industry.

DO: Emphasize **what** you’re defending, not **who** you are.



DON'T: Waive claims based on who said them

- By discounting a claim before it's explained you're not actively listening



DO: Emphasize the conflicting information not who said it.

DON'T: Assign a reading list

- You can't win an argument by assigning homework

DO: Share specific statistics, relevant information tidbits from credible sources.

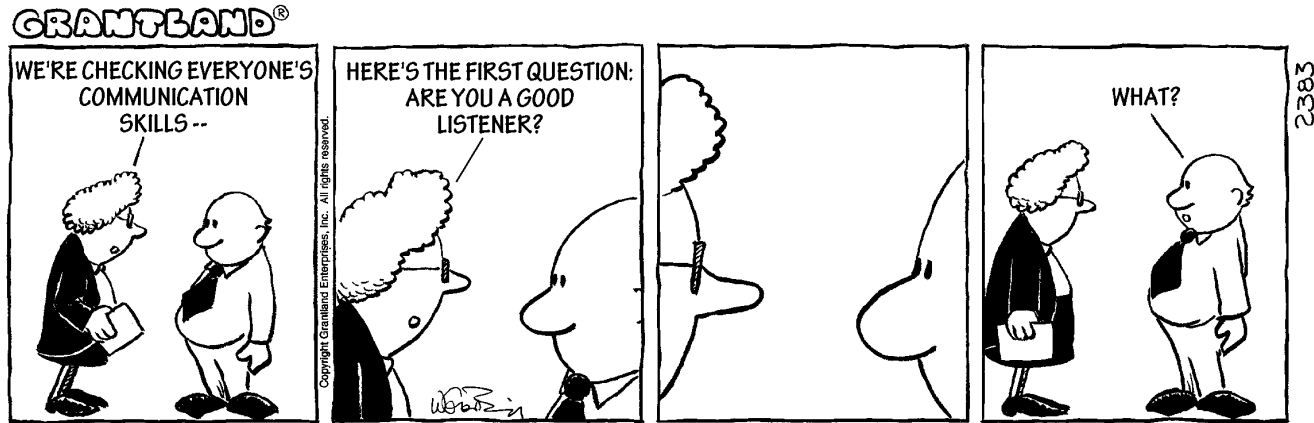
DO: Ask Questions First

- Seek to understand the other person's perspective
 - Even if it is crazy 😞
- Follow up with “What I hear you saying is...”



DO: Listen Actively

- Hone your listening skills by staying present
- Avoid getting distracted by finding fault in what the other person is saying




7 Strategies for Being a Better Listener

1. **Stop talking**
2. **Don't multitask: focus on the speaker**
3. **Ask questions to ensure you understand**
4. **Paraphrase back what you're hearing**
5. **Listen with an open mind, not for what you want to hear**
6. **Pay attention to what might not be said**
7. **Write it down**

Do: Watch Your Tone

- Tone accounts for 38 percent of how people interpret what you say
- Come across as genuine, gentle and relaxed



It's not **what**
you say.
It's **how** you
say it.

Do: Use “I” Statements

- “You” statements instantly put people on the defensive
- Frame statements with “I.”
 - “I think;” “I feel;” “I read;” “In my experience”



Do: Be Aware of Body Language

- 55 percent of communication is body language
- Brains are wired to pick up slight nuances in nonverbal signaling



Translating Body Language

- Arms crossed over the chest = defensive, disagreement
- Nail biting = stress, nervousness, insecurity
- Hand placed on the cheek = lost in thought, consideration.
- Tapping or drumming the fingers = impatience
- Head tilted to one side = listening keenly, interested
- Standing up straight, shoulders back = confidence



Communication Techniques

Bridging



- Transitioning from one topic to a subject you want to talk about (your message).
- Tell them what you know, not what you don't. Bridge to your message.

How to Get on the Bridge

- What I can tell you is...
- **The fact is...**
- What I recommend people do is...
- **Let me re-emphasize something I said earlier about...**
- That's why it's important to...
- **That's not my area of expertise, but what I can tell you is...**
- The real issue here is...

How to Answer Questions You Don't Know the Answer to

- Tell them what you know, not what you don't.

Q: Exactly how much BPA is in a can of soup?

A: What I can tell you is that the amount of BPA in food is far below what regulatory agencies consider safe. This is based on the review of hundreds of studies.

How to Answer Questions that Call for Speculation

- **Stick with the facts.**

Q: What's the bottom line, is it just better to eat organic, local fruits and vegetables?

A: Eating organic and local foods is simply a preference for some. According to the science -- just because it's organic doesn't mean it's healthier.

How to Answer Questions that Call for Your Personal Opinion

- **Make it clear that your views don't necessarily match your employers or vice versa.**

Q: What do you think of...

A: "Well, I'm not speaking on behalf of my organization, and what I believe is..."

Keeping Cool and Avoiding Miscommunication

- **If you don't want a statement quoted... don't make it**
- **Don't get frustrated or lose your cool**
- **Don't be sarcastic—no jokes!**
- **Don't repeat a negative question or facts**
- **If you don't know, say so—never say “No Comment”**
- **Nothing is off the record!**

End With Something Positive

- Refocus the energy toward something positive
 - “Would be happy to pass along any relevant article I come across.”
 - “Glad we had this discussion.”
 - “Always happy to chat with a fellow foodie.”



Social Media Tips

Your Social Media Strategy - Poll Question

What is your main goal?

- Engage with the media or popular online influencers to provide expertise for stories
- Share new research and information on food science
- Monitor conversations and sentiment on particular topics and correct misinformation
- Host regular discussions on food science developments
- Influence my target audience using social media





Your Social Media Profile

- **You only have a few words to make a first impression and entice people to follow, friend, like or subscribe.**
- **Include a professional photo or logo and provide information about your credentials (CFS), training, expertise, interests and/or role at your organization.**
- **Stand out from the others—need to be unique**

Be Sure to Disclose

- **If you are posting on behalf of an organization, be sure to comply with its social media policy**
- **Disclose any potential conflicts of interest upfront**
- **Be aware of the legal implications of any social media work you do**

How to Max Out Your Bio on Each Social Network

Social Channel	Name	Length	Best Practices
	Bio	160 Characters	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Populate URL and city in the Twitter profile• Consider including a call to action with a link to a landing page• Use the background image for more detailed contact info• Include keywords for SEO
	Short Description	Determined by Favorite Tiles 4 Tiles - 160 Chars 3 Tiles - 220 Chars 2 Tiles - 255 Chars	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add a link to your website or landing page in the short description• Include keywords for SEO
	Tagline	10 Words (Recommended but not enforced)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a short compelling summary of your business• Include keywords for SEO
	Introduction	No limit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add links to your blog and other social channels
	About Us	200 Characters Min 1500 Characters Max	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add a headline to the hero image at the top of the page to compensate for the About Us appearing below your posts• Include keywords for SEO• Reference other tabs to encourage exploration

Make Time for Social Media

- **Focus your efforts on just one or two platforms at first**
- **It takes time to build an effective social media presence**
- **Block off time on your calendar every day and make it a part of your daily routine**
- **Use tools to help you save time:**
 - Tweet Deck
 - HootSuite
 - Hubspot

Handling Controversial Topics

- **Answer the question professionally and courteously.**
- **Provide links and references.**
- **If there is still no resolution, agree to disagree.**
- **Some individuals just want to get a reaction out of you or discredit you. It's not a good use of your time to try and reason with them.**
- **Prevent rash posts in the heat of the moment: If your “buttons are getting pushed,” wait a couple of hours to respond or ask a friend to read your response and offer suggestions.**
- **Remember—posts cannot always be easily deleted.**

Ways to Communicate Food Science on Social Media

- **Connect and follow with media, colleagues and influencers of interest to you.**
- **Share blog posts, links to news and research articles, photos or anything else that helps identify you as a credible expert.**
- **Talk about what you are doing, such as attending events and conferences. Use the event hashtag.**
- **Host/participate in chats on Twitter or Facebook to “meet” new people and share your expertise.**
- **Write articles or commentaries on food science.**
- **Read other blogs and comment on them—compliment and share balanced information. Do more than just correct; encourage those who are doing a good job so they will keep doing it!**

Questions