

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN INDUSTRIAL HEARING CONSERVATIONIST: A TEMPLATE FOR SUCCESSFUL CAREER EDUCATION AND OUTREACH PRESENTATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Whether in a classroom setting or at a local community meeting, opportunities for providing descriptive and positive information about our professions to an audience unfamiliar with acoustics, noise control or hearing conservation often call for alternatives to technical demonstrations that illustrate principles of acoustics or noise control. More importantly, successful outreach presentations must convey images of our day-to-day activities and the challenges we address, many of which are non-technical. One successful approach to career outreach presentations makes use of a collection of photo slides featuring the speaker, his colleagues, customers and workplaces to vividly illustrate the specific job tasks, people and environment of the speaker's job or career. Against this fluid and multi-dimensional visual backdrop, an accompanying script addresses the main theme.

A comprehensive photo slide collection may be established gradually, often by making use of and adding to technical and personal slides already in the speaker's possession. Slide collections are portable, easily and quickly reconfigured for back-to-back or spontaneous engagements, and they are well suited to speaking opportunities where technical presentations or demonstrations are not practical or appropriate. A carefully chosen sequence of photo slides minimizes the need for speaker's notes, as each photo itself provides a visual prompt. Although photo slide presentations are appropriate to a variety of outreach and professional settings, the specific illustrative and explanatory material presented here illustrates their application in career education outreach activities, using industrial hearing conservation as an example.

KEY ELEMENTS OF CAREER AND ROLE-MODELING PRESENTATIONS

What distinguishes a career education or role-modeling presentation from a technical or hands-on demonstration is that in a role-modeling presentation, technical subject matter is of secondary importance and serves primarily as a vehicle for illustrating the various facets of the job or career. In turn, discussion of job tasks or activities provides a context in which more complex

and subtle career issues are clearly illuminated. Four general categories of information form the cornerstones of a comprehensive career outreach presentation. The technique of accompanying a spoken script with a large number of rapidly changing photo slides allows the speaker to simultaneously communicate information from more than one category, thus including more information in the presentation.

Specific job tasks and activities. The foundation of a comprehensive career education outreach or role-modeling presentation is the discussion of the speaker's job tasks or activities, such as conducting noise surveys, counseling employees with hearing loss, developing noise control designs, and conducting hearing conservation training classes. Everyday activities, like attending meetings, visiting project sites, writing reports and mentoring students are usually mentioned as well.

Knowledge and skills required for the job and how to obtain them. A list of academic subject areas that must be mastered in high school and college (math, science, computers, reading and writing) is most meaningful when presented in the context of how those skills are used on and off the job. Likewise, examples of extracurricular activities that provide hands-on exposure to various fields as well as opportunities to develop leadership, planning, teamwork, and public speaking skills are easily paired with worklife examples that illustrate the importance of those skills.

Non-technical traits that support success. Although the concepts of punctuality, responsibility, initiative, neatness, and integrity, for example, may be discussed independently, the importance of these traits is best illustrated in the context of various on-the-job scenarios. Making the connection between the environments of school and work increases the relevance of this message.

Subtle themes that may be unspoken. Projecting a photo slide montage to accompany a spoken script allows the presenter to convey multiple messages, some of which may be entirely unspoken. This technique works especially well for mixed audiences (e.g., parents and children, or technical and non-technical). It is also effective in provoking thoughts about an issue while not necessarily sending a specific message. Concepts like gender roles and relationships in the workplace, balancing home and work responsibilities, and workforce diversity are examples of themes that are appropriately addressed and clearly communicated with photos.

USING PHOTOS TO ILLUSTRATE MULTIPLE THEMES

Photo slides without text, captions, or numerical data are extremely versatile. A single photo or group of photos communicates entirely different messages when accompanied by a different script or when grouped differently. Keeping in mind the following objectives as you acquire photos will enhance the versatility of your collection as it evolves to meet your changing requirements.

Include people where possible. Photos that include people, particularly groups of people, send messages about those people and the relationships between them, even if the script does not specifically address any of those issues. Photos of people are entertaining and hold an

audience's interest, especially when they are used to establish connections to photos of industrial facilities and equipment. Young audiences need to see more people photos, and they react especially well to photos of other children their age.

Ambiguous poses produce multi-use photos. Depending on the intended audience and the context in which they are used, ambiguous poses may be used to communicate a variety of ideas. For instance, a photo of a female intern measuring the noise level of a jackhammer at a construction site can illustrate the proper use of a sound level meter, labeling of high-noise power tools, wearing hearing protection, mentoring of students, internship opportunities, construction noise sources, gender issues in the workplace, and opportunities for women. A photo of two children and a parent reading together on a sofa can be used to convey the importance of being able to read well for professional success and personal enjoyment, as an example of an activity that can be disrupted by community noise sources, and to communicate messages about balancing multiple roles.

Maintain a list of needed photos. Some of the themes you may wish to address will be best conveyed with photos that require specific activities, people, weather, or locations. Keeping a reminder list of needed photos will help you acquire these over time. Also, scheduling an occasional photo shoot, either on your own or to document a professional project, will gradually build your collection.

Look at old photos in a new light. As your presentation needs change and you are looking for photos that may be used to express new ideas, review the slides in your collection to assess possibilities for using them in the new context. Don't ever discard old slides, and take advantage of any photo slide collections that you are able to acquire inexpensively or for free, even if their potential use is not obvious. Likewise, ordering duplicate slides will allow you to use a photo more than once in the same presentation.

ORGANIZING AND CATALOGING YOUR PHOTO SLIDE COLLECTION

An effective slide cataloging system allows a speaker to quickly and easily develop, prepare, and reconfigure presentations for a variety of audiences and events. Computer database and spreadsheet applications are well suited to this purpose; combined with numerical slide storage, they form the basis of a suggested system.

Number each slide. Assign numbers to slides, in the order in which they are added to the collection. The numbers should be added to the slides in a consistent manner, preferably such that they are right side up when the slide is positioned in the tray. Adding a dot to the upper, outside corner of the slide (when placed in the projector tray) will aid in quick and accurate placement of slides in the tray.

Create a short title for each slide. If the speaker is reasonably familiar with the slides in the collection, a description of around five words should be sufficient to bring to mind most of the images, yet short enough to serve as an effective prompt when preparing for the presentation.

Create an electronic catalog of slide numbers and descriptions. Using either a spreadsheet or database application, create a catalog with columns or fields for slide number and slide title. In some spreadsheet applications, each file (workbook) contains multiple worksheets. The catalog can be located on one worksheet of the workbook; each presentation is created on a new worksheet. New slides need only be added to the catalog worksheet to be available for use on presentation worksheets.

Use spreadsheet functions to create and customize presentations easily. On presentation worksheets, spreadsheet lookup functions programmed into the slide title field will copy slide titles automatically from the catalog worksheet when the slide number is entered. To develop a new presentation, create a skeletal outline of key slides on the worksheet. Then insert additional slides (rows) between them to fill out the presentation. Finding an image that conveys a particular idea is easily accomplished by electronically searching the slide titles or by visually scanning the slide pocket pages.

Once the workbook contains at least one presentation worksheet, the creation of subsequent presentations becomes much easier because entire presentations or sections may be copied from one worksheet to another and used as a starting point for the new presentation. Naming each completed worksheet allows the speaker to develop new versions that match the special interests and needs of each audience. A printed copy of the completed presentation worksheet may be used as a set of speaker's notes.

Store the slides in an organized manner. If the slides are stored in numerical order in plastic slide pocket sheets (20 to a page), the sheets may be kept in three-ring binders. Single slides can be removed and replaced into their pockets easily without disturbing the others, and the sheets may be held up to the light to quickly scan for a desired image. Once a presentation has been developed on the worksheet, the slides may be quickly retrieved from the slide pocket binders by sorting the worksheet so that the slide titles are listed in numerical order. Sorting the slides themselves into sequential order will facilitate their placement into projector trays and later, back into the binders.

SUMMARY

Educational and community outreach presentations can provide a noise control engineer with rewarding and challenging opportunities for growth as a speaker while inspiring, educating, and persuading audiences. In contrast to technical or hands-on demonstrations that illustrate technical principles, successful career or role-modeling presentations convey visual images of the activities, people, environment and challenges of the speaker's career. A well-organized collection of photo slides is a relatively inexpensive, portable, and versatile tool that allows the speaker to easily prepare and deliver entertaining, informative and customized presentations that fit the specific interests and technical level of each audience.