



Presentation Tips to Help You Have a Successful Field Day

It's All About the **AUDIENCE**, the **MESSAGE** and **YOU**

Hosting a field day is like having a conversation with your neighbor about your farming practices. You are the expert about your farm and have a story to tell about what you do. Having a passion for what you do and speaking from the heart will emotionally connect you to your audience.

When first gathering your thoughts about hosting and presenting at your field day, consider Practical Farmers' values: welcoming everyone; creativity, collaboration and community; viable farms now and for future generations; stewardship and ecology. Considering why these values are important to you will set you on the right path to starting the conversation you will have with your audience.

The following tips will help guide you as you prepare the rest of the "conversation" you'll host during your field day.

1. It's All About the Audience: CONNECTING WITH YOUR MATERIAL AND BEING INTENTIONAL THROUGH PREPARATION

a). **Who is your audience and what is the purpose and topic of your presentation?** It's all about the audience. At a field day, your audience is a voluntary one: Guests came because they wanted to learn something from you. Because Practical Farmers welcomes everyone, your audience could comprise a wide background. Be careful when using jargon or slang that may not be recognized by all. Ultimately, what's in it for the audience? Keep them in the know!

b). **What is the intended outcome?** What do you want the audience to do with the information you share? Remember, you are serving as an example, not a model. Genuinely sharing your experience (what went well, what didn't) will help attendees form their own conclusions about how your example might apply to them. Examples of wording from PFI member Russ Brandes, who has hosted field days, include: "This is what I do on my farm. It's not the right way, just my way. Other farms have different soils and different circumstances."

c). **What's your timeframe?** How long do you have to present and get your point(s) across? This will guide the amount of information you share. If time is short, you may need to determine and present essential information only. Respect your audience's time: stay on schedule, end on time.

d). **Can you provide a visual aid?** Field day attendees routinely tell us they appreciate it when hosts provide a handout during the field day. These handouts typically outline the day's topics and can list dates of field operations, seeding or stocking rates, on-farm research trial results, photos from other times during the year, etc. But remember: The handout or visual aid is secondary to you. Link the visual aid to your talk, but avoid reading everything on it. If you share a draft of the handout with Practical Farmers staff early enough, we can provide feedback and print copies for the field day. Begin working on this two to three weeks prior to the field day.

2. It's All About the Message: DEVELOPING YOUR STORY AND KNOWING YOUR MATERIAL THROUGH PRACTICE

a). **What's your objective?** Repeat this to yourself; know this! It's all about the message.

b). **Develop structure.** Always know your first and last lines, and your structure in between. Craft a story: Think about the fundamental elements of a story: conflict and resolution. Or, perhaps more appropriately for field days: challenges, problems and solutions.

I. Introduction (10-15% of talk) – Strategize and organize: **HAVE** a hook!

Hook: Grab the audience's attention. The hook must link to your topic and tone.

Apply authority: Show your credibility. Why you are qualified to speak? (*Tip: you are!*)

Verify rationale and purpose: What's your talk about? What's in it for the audience?

Establish main points: Clearly list your two to five main points. Keep the audience in the know!

(Tip: Avoid starting with "Hi, my name is," or "Today I am going to talk about..." Instead, use a visual image, anecdote, quote or rhetorical question to hook your audience.)

(Flip over →)



II. Body (75% of talk) – Identify and discuss two to five simple and discrete main points. These main points can be the challenges or problems you faced and the practices you used to attempt solutions.

A). Main Point 1 – (perhaps location #1 at a field day)

- a). Sub-point 1
- b). Sub-point 2

B). Main Point 2 – (perhaps location #2 at a field day, e.g., a different field)

- a). Sub-point 1
- b). Sub-point 2

C). Etc.

D). Etc.

III. Conclusion (5 – 10% of talk) – Signal it's the end of your talk; end with a strong idea. **RAP** it up!

Restate your points: Remind us of your main points.

Acknowledge rationale and purpose: Remind your audience the importance of the topic. Why are they there?

Powerful Pow!: End as powerfully as you began. Many fail to end presentations; they trail off or end abruptly. Instead, end meaningfully and intentionally. Your last lines can influence people to think or do something differently. *(Tip: Be creative here and end with a poignant thought that will resonate with your audience. No one in your audience will walk away saying, "My, I'll never forget how the speaker said, 'Thank you,' at the end." Do better than "Thank you"!)*

c). Word choice is important. Use terms like "we," "us" and "you" throughout your presentation to tell your story and connect with the audience.

d). Use repetition in your speech. Repeat key phrases, words or concepts throughout to highlight your main message. This adds a memorable cadence and rhythm to your talk.

e). Use signposts and transition phrases. Be the road map or GPS unit for your audience as you guide them through your message. Use phrases like "most importantly," "keep this in mind," "the key takeaway is..." etc., to underscore topics and to transition to other points.

f). Practice saying the words out loud. It can be difficult to practice all of a field day presentation, especially if you are the host. Focus on knowing by heart the hook, your main points and your powerful ending. Focus on your meaning and what you are saying – this will set you up for a smooth and confident delivery so that the message becomes a story you are telling; a conversation you are having with the audience.

3. It's All About You: INCREASING YOUR AUTHENTICITY BY BEING PRESENT

a). Trust yourself and the reason you are speaking. It's all about you. Be yourself. Know what the audience is expecting to hear from you and that you are qualified to speak. Consider what Practical Farmers co-founder Dick Thompson once wrote: "Talk about facts, let somebody else do the editorials. These are the results from my farm; leave it to the audience to decide what fits their farm."

b). You are in charge of the tone and your emotions. Your attitude (positive or negative) has an influence on your audience. Likewise, your body language is also very telling. Don't be afraid to "own the room." Have a "forward" presence by making eye contact with the audience and standing and speaking with confidence.

c). Set your intentions. Think confidently, have fun, be present and clear your mind of any negative talk. It's all a mindset. We are what we think. Engaging speakers are interesting; on-topic; invested; trustworthy; humble; relatable.

Remember, think about your presentation as a conversation with a neighbor. Be engaging and audience-centered. It's all about the audience – put yourself in their shoes (we've all been part of an audience) and think of what your audience needs and wants. It's all about the message – know your objective(s) for the day and share your information in a trustworthy manner as a story. It's all about you – you are in charge of your feelings and setting the tone for the field day. Relax, envision success and then deliver!

The information provided here is summarized from the booklet, "Emotionally Connected, Intellectually Charged: How Your Speaker Style Gets You There," prepared for Practical Farmers of Iowa by lifetime member Tina Bakehouse. To request a full copy of this 20-page booklet, contact the PFI office at (515) 232-5661 or info@practicalfarmers.org.