

# COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS (CNMI) COMMUNICATIONS WORKSHOP

## COVERPAGE

The CNMI Communications Workshop was held in January 2013. The impetus for the training was to improve communication among resource management agencies and to aid partner resource management agencies to better communicate their campaigns and messages with the community.

A total of 25 people attended this training including participants from CNMI's natural resources agencies (Department of Lands and Natural Resources – Division of Fish and Wildlife, Forestry, Coastal Resources Management Office, and Division of Environmental Quality) as well as the Mariana Islands Nature Alliance, Northern Mariana College, and Division of Public Works. At the start of the training participants were given a preliminary survey asking 1) who are your primary audiences for communications, 2) how do you usually contact these audiences, 3) what is your biggest fear with public communication, and 4) what do you expect to gain from this workshop. Participants were also asked to prepare ahead of time for the workshop by thinking of a communications need they would have in the near future.

The workshop was held over the course of a single day with speakers who presented various communication and engagement techniques. These presentations included interactive opportunities to practice the skills discussed. The agenda and sample activities are included in this report.

One of the most positive outcomes of this event was an increase in cross-agency communication, both as a product of the training itself and as a product of the networking achieved by its attendants. Post-workshop feedback was overwhelmingly positive. One of the facilitators was so pleased with the outcome of the training that she held a duplicate event as a side meeting at the Pacific Islands Environmental Conference hosted by Guam EPA in the summer of 2013.

# Communications Workshop Report

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## *Evaluation of the 2013 Communications Workshop*

Prepared by: Kaitlin Mattos, Watershed Coordinator, DEQ

### **Preparation**

The idea for this workshop was conceived in summer 2012 when a variety of outreach activities were being conducted by the different natural resources partners but there were questions of whether the messages were actually making it through to their intended targets. Kaitlin Mattos (DEQ, Watershed Coordinator) and Nicole Schafer (CRM, Education and Outreach) began discussing ideas on how to conduct a workshop to help natural resources staff to better communicate their messages to different audiences. It was decided that a one-day workshop would be an ideal starting point. A short time commitment would encourage attendance and still get things done. Immediately, the idea was discussed to have future trainings for similar topics at later times if the first one was successful.

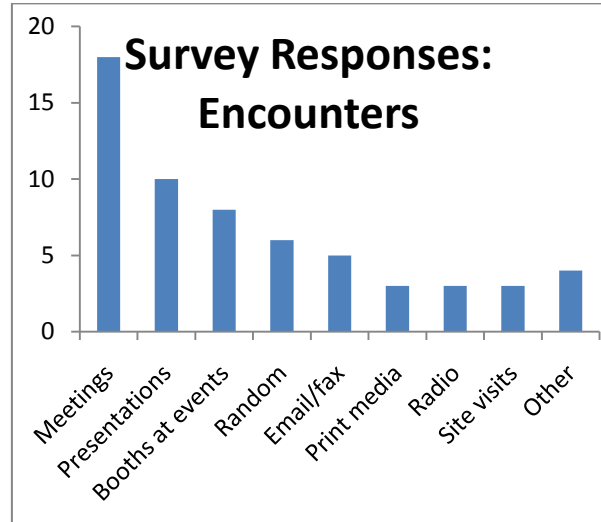
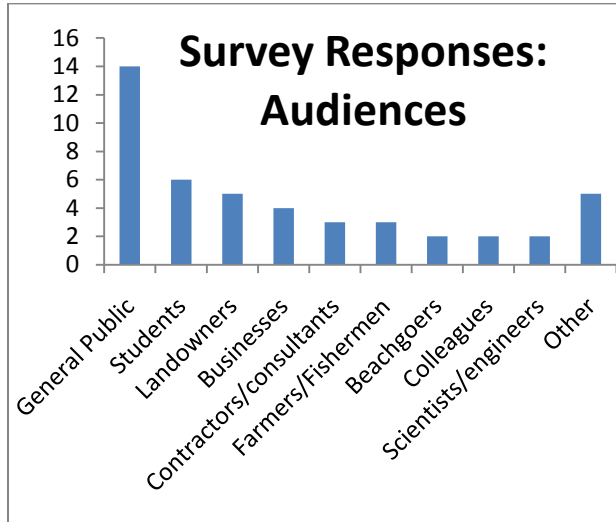
Tammy Jo Anderson-Taft (Guam EPA, Public Information Officer) was brought into the discussions as a presenter and expert in the field. Nicole drafted the attached scenario and agenda for the format of the workshop. Participants were given the scenario of communicating with a variety of different audiences by designing a sign, bringing people in, creating a headline, and presenting a 30-second and 3-minute speech. We set up the agenda so that the participants would hear a presentation about the skills they would need, and then they would complete each activity. We identified local professionals who would be able to present each section – Frankie Eliptico from NMC, Laila Boyer from Marianas Variety, Tammy Jo and Nicole all presented.

For this initial workshop, we asked all of the natural resources agencies (DLNR – DFW and Forestry, CRM, DEQ) as well as MINA, NMC, and DPW to recommend 1-3 participants to attend. We expected to conduct more workshops on the same or similar topics in the future to accommodate more participants later. Participants were given a preliminary survey asking: 1) who are your primary audiences for communications for your job, 2) how do you usually contact these audiences, 3) what is your biggest fear with public communication, and 4) what do you expect to gain from this workshop. Participants were also asked to prepare ahead of time for the workshop by thinking of a communications need they would be having in the near future (i.e. explaining a new program, presenting at the Environmental Expo, etc.)

### **Workshop**

The workshop took place on January 31, 2013 from 8am-4pm at PIC in the annex room off of the dining area. Despite multiple attempts to cap the attendance at 20 participants, we ended up with 33 signed up by the morning of the workshop, although only 25 showed up and stayed all day. The number of participants ended up being perfect in terms of the amount of space and noise level in the room and the number of different partners and opinions for feedback after each activity. More participants would have made crowd management difficult; fewer would have significantly lowered the energy level in the

room. Participants were grouped into “cohorts” of people who would be working on similar projects/messages so that they could give each other feedback and reinforce their messages after the workshop – for example, pesticides (DEQ, DLNR), marine monitoring (DEQ), etc. Groups were 3-5 people each.



The workshop started with a presentation by Kaitlin Mattos about the objectives of the day and the survey responses. The majority of participants listed “general public” as their audience, but also broke that down into more specific groups such as contractors, landowners, businesses, etc. Most encounters were at meetings, presentations or booths at events. Fears were listed as nervousness, technical questions, language barriers and being ineffective, primarily. Goals for the workshop included being effective at communication, engaging the audience, gaining confidence and learning tips.

Tammy Jo then covered “Make Them Stop” and gave a variety of public speaking tips, which were practiced in pairs where partners demonstrated one correct way and one incorrect way of initiating a conversation. Frankie Eliptico was invited to speak about approaching different audiences and covered a lot of the same information as Tammy Jo, however the repetition was useful and the information was presented in a slightly different fashion, making both presentations worthwhile. Participants were then led through an activity brainstorming “no-no” words – words that should not be used when speaking with non-experts. The list was somewhat specific to different fields, but included a lot of words that individuals had not thought about before. For example, even words like “programmatic” or “watershed” were flagged as not appropriate for general audiences because there are simpler words that can be used instead.

The next presentation was by Tammy Jo about finding the bullet points for an audience and understanding what you will say if you only have 2 minutes to explain enough to grab their attention. Participants began to identify their bullet points and write a 2 minute speech and were given time over lunch to finish. After lunch all speeches were delivered in front of a panel of the facilitators and teachers with bells that rang every time the speaker said one of the “no-no” words. After the speech, speakers were given compliments and tips for improvement by the audience.

In the afternoon, Laila Boyer was invited to speak about talking to the press and coming up with headlines. Participants were asked to come up with and share a headline from the most memorable moment in their life, and then apply the same principles to their professional projects. Finally, Nicole Schafer gave a speech about the 30-second elevator pitch and how to deliver it. Participants were given time to write their own speech, then paired up speed-dating style to give the 30-second speech to a partner, hear their partner's speech, give feedback, and move to the next person. This session was chaotic and noisy, but participants quickly fell into the groove of getting a good hook for their audience and perfecting their speech.

At the end of the workshop, participants were given a chance to ask questions about anything that was skipped and most people expressed an interest in learning more about these topics. People agreed that it was a good workshop because of all of the activities, and that the use of practice to break up the speakers made it very useful. Participants were given certificates and a flash drive including presentations and tip sheets from the workshop.

## Evaluation

The organizers and colleagues had a chance to discuss the workshop immediately afterwards and all were happy with how well it went. It was agreed that the crowd size was good, although a slightly larger room would have been nice. However, the small size kept everyone alert and engaged. All speakers were appropriate, relevant and did really well. The need for future workshops covering the same topics, covering similar topics more in depth (e.g. finding the bullets or a 30sec speech) as well as additional outreach skills (such as powerpoint presentations, speaking to audiences at festivals) was discussed. The organizers expressed an interest in repeating this workshop on Guam at PIEC this summer (2013).

Participants in the workshop were also given evaluation forms to fill out. Participants stated that they expected to use the skills of effective delivery of a speech, tips for a press release, not using big words, body language and hooking audiences. Individual participants mentioned that all sessions were the most helpful, but specifically many mentioned the 2-minute pitch, the no-no words, tips on general public speaking, the 30-second pitch, the hook, working with the press, analyzing your audience as particularly useful. The sessions some people liked the least were being timed in the 2-min and 30-sec speech and having to give an impromptu speech (without much warning or practice). However, most evaluations did not list any "least useful" session. Participants stated they would like to learn other skills such as confidence tips, meeting presentations, public speaking in general, professional writing, attracting an audience or pecha kucha. Requested improvements to the next workshop included having more time (added days), a follow-up or refresher course, more breaks and including managers and supervisors.

Overall, it seems like this type of skill-heavy and activity-packed training was well received and incredibly useful. It is our hope that this workshop can be improved upon and repeated often within different agencies and organizations and during Guam and CNMI partner events. We look forward to seeing the outreach and public speaking skill sets of natural resource staff improve and be more thoroughly utilized in the future.

Attached: agenda, scenario, participant list

# Are You Being Heard?

**A communication workshop that runs through a funding scenario in order to improve communication between non-scientist, media, and the general public.**

Time	Presenter	Topic
8:00am		<b>Coffee/Tea and Biscuits</b>
8:30am	Kaity M. & Nicole S.	Introduction to Scenario
9:00am	Kaity M. & Nicole S.	<b>Icebreaker/Activity</b>
9:20am	Speaker: Tammy Jo Anderson-Taft	<b>Make Them Stop.</b> How to engage an audience, initiate conversations, and the use of body language when presenting.
10:00am	Activity	Roles play one correct and one incorrect way of initiating a conversation.
10:10am	Speaker: Frankie Eliptico	<b>Who Are You People?</b> Learn how to approach different audiences with the same information.
10:40am	Activity	Decide on the No-No words.
11:00am	Speaker: Tammy Jo Anderson-Taft	<b>Find the Bullets.</b> Ascertain the highlights to your big picture. You don't have to tell your audience everything at once.
11:30am	Activity	Develop a 3 minute spiel about your program, write out the main bullets.
12:00pm		<b>Lunch</b>
1:00pm	Activity (continued)	Deliver 3 minute speech to a panel of teachers for comments.
1:30pm	Speaker: Laila Boyer	<b>Hook Me.</b> How to summarize a story into a headline, get readers interested, and make headlines.
2:00pm	Activity	Make a headline/catch phrase
2:30pm	Speaker: Nicole Schafer	<b>Before the Next Floor</b> The tricks to the elevator pitch. Learn how to kill your darlings.
3:00pm	Activity	Speed Pitch Session: 30 seconds to deliver your ideas.
4:00pm	Kaity Mattos	<b>Wrap Up.</b>

## Communication Workshop Scenario: Are You Being Heard?

There is a funding giveaway for all the natural resource agencies. Each program will receive \$75,000 if they can convince the people of CNMI that they deserve the money. They will need to make the CNMI population aware of their program, their research, or their reason for needing the funding. You will have to talk to the press, to non-scientist, and to the general public. If you are not convincing enough you will not have funding and your programs will fall on deaf ears.

So how do you go about this, how do you let people know? Here we will go through this scenario, the steps you will need to take, and how to present yourself in each step.

You arrive with your posters, your activities and your presentation all ready. But, you have one missing component, a sign announcing who you are.

**Icebreaker:** Make a sign for your booth (table) announcing your group

Now you have a beautifully engaging booth, but no one is stopping by. How do you engage your audience?

**[Speaker:** How to engage an audience, initiate conversations, and body language when presenting, you must look like you are interested in what they are saying as well]

Now when we get talking especially about things we are really interested in we sometimes forget who we are talking too and the conversation goes one sided. Be sure to understand who your audience is. Understand the different approaches, you do not talk to a child the same way an adult as you do not talk to a beachgoer the same way you would in a formal presentation.

**[Speaker:** Know the level you need to be presenting at.]

**Activity:** no-no words (i.e. sedimentation, photosynthesis, symbiotic) do large poster board and write up the words that need explanation and discuss how to avoid the words in general or how to define it when using it in a conversation. Once these words have been decided on they will be buzzed every time they are used.

You get people stopping by, but during your talk you notice more and more eyes glazing over. Some booths have a constant rotation of people while you are monopolizing only a few people or having to hear their excuses on why they need to leave your booth.

**[Speaker:** Most people do not want to sit through a full presentation, they want the highlights, and they want the big idea. You don't have people stop by or run into people who want to sit down for 20 minutes and hear your spiel. You generally have between 30 seconds and 3 minutes to get someone's attention. If you can peak their interest in that time they will either ask questions, stay longer, or do their own research. YOU DO NOT HAVE TO TELL THEM EVERYTHING AT ONCE.]

**Activity:** Now that we have the no-no words lets develop a 3 minute speech about our program. This will be presented to a teacher's panel that will raise their hand every time they do not understand something that is too complex.

You have more visitors to your booth and you are doing a great job explaining your program when they stop by, but you are missing that initial hook. You want to gather your thoughts and think about this but a reporter stops at your booth and starts to questions you. Reporters write for the general public. They could translate your information, but since they are not scientists you need to help them understand those concepts and you should be kind to them so they will want to interview you often.

**[Speaker:** What journalists want to hear, what they aim for when writing for the general public, and that quick catch of a headline.]

**Activity:** Make a headline; you can use this headline to initiate interest in visitors to your booth and to start a pitch, or to start an article. No more than 7 words to catch the readers' interest.

You have the journalist on your side and the article is going to impress all the readers of the Saipan Tribune, but your hardest task is next. Time is running out and the judging panel is making their rounds. They don't have much time to hear from you and can only give you 30 seconds! They are an agency administrator, a scientist, an elementary school teacher, and a freshman college student who studies literature.

**[Speaker:** Scientists are scientists because they love the job, they dedicated years of school and time to be scientists and their projects are their darlings. They get excited when people want to hear about their darlings just as parents get excited when people want to hear about their children. But you don't show a full album of your kid, you show a few photos. You have to do the same things here. You have to be careful with your darlings and occasionally kill them. How to deliver the big picture in a short message aka the elevator pitch.]

**Activity:** Cut down the 3 minute spiel to 30 seconds and practice it. You will than go around the room and speed pitch your program to the other participants. There will be a minute of questions and comments from the listener, than switch.

**Wrap Up:** Recap and survey as well as a \$75,000 fake certificate of completion.

**Option:** This can be done at lunch or at the end. Short clips of other things to be aware of and other presentations that could be offered if there was an interest: phone demo, e-mail demo, public speaking tips, graphic design, PowerPoint dos and don'ts, etc.

## Participant list as of January 30, 2013 (not all participants showed up for the training)

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