

The Famelab experience: planetary sciences in three minutes

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Abstract

Basing on my experience in the participation of the Famelab Italy final, I show advantages of short scientific communication (addressed either to an adult or a childish public), and methods which can be adopted to make it more winsome. An example of short communication (concerning planetary science) will be given in the presentation.

1. Short communication

Famelab is a scientific contest, where participants have three minutes to present a science topic to a non-specialistic audience [1]. The contestants cannot use slides, but can take advantage of small objects to explain their scientific matters.

The Famelab format, based on short talks, can be very efficient for scientific communication to both an adult and child audience.

As a matter of fact, especially a non-specialistic audience tends to be distracted during a seminar or conference, being the attention time often limited to one minute or a bit more. To limit the communication in three minutes allows the public to capture the essential information. In addition, this kind of communication is particularly efficient for a web dissemination, since short videos are the most visualized on video-sharing websites.

However, the brevity is not sufficient to guarantee the public attention, which should be increased by adopting the following expedients:

- *Language*. The language should be such that the listener assimilates as much information as possible. This means that the language should be very simple and any technical word should be avoided, as well as any word that can be difficultly remembered by the spectator (e.g. names, dates)
- *Culture*. The speaker should take into account the social and cultural background of his public. To explain a scientific concept

making reference to situations well known by the public helps to keep the attention on the talk. For example, we can refer to cartoons in the childish public case or to current events or TV shows if we are talking to an adult public.

- *Performance*. Monotonous speeches should be avoided. To change the tone of voice, to move along the stage, to use small objects, to resort to jokes and humor, are techniques which help to keep high the rhythm of the talk and hence to do not lose the public attention. However, these techniques should be used with care, since their overexploitation risks to distract the audience from the scientific content.

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References

- [1] famelab.org

