

## Skills Training for Scientists Offered On-site or Online

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OpenTheBox.ca

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## Workshops/Webinars

### Connecting People and Science in a Post-truth World (focusing on science communications with impact)

#### Background

Joan C., a gerontologist at a seniors' residence, was let go because she refused to be vaccinated against the flu. Seniors are particularly susceptible, and therefore benefit from [herd immunity](#). Joan's reason? She was afraid of the mercury content of thimerosal, an antifungal preservative derived from mercury, used to prevent contamination in some vaccines where the vial is used for multiple patients. In her mind, mercury is a poison, period. But a vaccine containing 0.01% thimerosal contains 50 micrograms of thimerosal per 0.5 mL dose or ~25 micrograms of mercury per 0.5 mL dose. This represents about the [same amount of elemental mercury as in a 3 oz can of tuna](#)—which she would probably consider harmless. The MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine suffers from a similar type of vaccine hesitancy. Some people believe it causes autism. Although the myth has been [disproven](#), it refuses to die thanks to [websites](#), [social media](#), and [celebrities who are unqualified to speak](#). As a result, the [flu kills ~3,500 Canadians/year](#), and preventable measles outbreaks are becoming more frequent around the Western hemisphere.

Other sectors where opinion and emotion dominate evidence include agricultural technology (eg: gene editing, glyphosate), food (eg: gluten, fad diets), climate change, and general science (eg: flat Earth, moon landing conspiracy).

How can science and genuine science communication prevail in the face of misinformation, mistrust, cognitive bias, celebrity culture and other barriers?

#### Content

This one-day workshop (or series of webinars) provides practical learning on the rise of counter-knowledge in science, examples from sectors in which it is an issue, what makes people vulnerable to misinformation, the concepts and strategies to develop more effective messaging, and some success stories. Throughout the day, participants will analyze situations and discuss potential counter-balancing solutions through exercises, case studies, discussions and critical analysis that help bring the learning to life and into the workplace.

#### Outcomes

- An understanding of the psychosocial elements behind counter-knowledge.
- Techniques/ help overcome them.

#### Audience

Government and academic scientists, policy makers/analysts, knowledge brokers, health care providers and administrators, post-graduate students, science communicators, journalists, academic research services offices, health charities and others.

Listen to Genome Alberta interview Sylviane about the workshop [here](#).

## Presenting Yourself with Confidence

(focusing on networking, job interviews, poster sessions and oral presentations)

### Summary

Networking and professional social skills are a must in the professional and academic world to increase our visibility, join collaborative groups, increase influence among our peers, and get jobs. But, often, fear of talking to strangers holds us back, especially when we don't know what to say, we're shy in the presence of superiors or we'd rather be anywhere else.

If you're an extrovert, talking to people and networking come naturally. If you're an introvert, the good news is that you can learn these skills and how to apply them.

In this session, you will learn how to prepare for four key academic events: networking events, job interviews, poster sessions and oral presentations. You will learn the arts of conversation, socializing and professional behaviour. You will learn what to prepare for these events, how to reduce anxiety, and key strategies to present yourself and your ideas with greater clarity and confidence.

### Content

- Communicating well and why it's important
  - a. Networking events
  - b. Social intelligence, art of conversation, elevator pitches, value proposition, research spiel
- Job interviews
  - a. Relaxation, STAR statements, body language, uptalk
- Poster sessions
  - a. Working with props, interacting with visitors
- Oral presentations
  - a. The 3-message speech, verbal tics, Q&As, volume, effective visuals
  - b. Strategies

### Outcome

- Self-confidence
- Larger network of professional contacts
- More alert to professional opportunities

### Notes

- Networking online is covered in the LinkedIn session
- This session covers the human (behavioural) factors of presentation. It only touches briefly on, for example, designing PPT decks or posters.

## Pitching/presenting with Style

### Summary

First impressions count! Because people form an opinion of you within 30 seconds of initial contact, creating a positive lasting impression is crucial—especially if you are (or want to be) an influencer or whether you are presenting your research at a conference or pitching it to a team of reviewers.

In this short session, you will learn key strategies to present yourself and your research/ideas with more impact, leaving your audience no choice but to be impressed from the start.

### Content

- Prepare
  - a. First impressions
- Rehearse
  - a. Uptalk
  - b. Body language
  - c. Distractions
  - d. Notes
  - e. Props and handouts
- Relax
- Pitch with style
  - a. Introductions
  - b. Know when to stop
  - c. Q&As

### Outcome

- Self-confidence
- Well-received presentations/pitches, potentially leading to more speaking engagements

### Notes

- 30-minute webinar or presentation
- Related to Presenting Yourself with Confidence (see previous page) but more focused on pitching and presenting

## Building a Modular CV/Résumé and Cover Letter for All Occasions (customized for post-graduate students and post-docs)

### Summary: CVs/Résumés

This session will examine the first impression your CV gives of you, and what you can do to improve it.

We will go over the key pitfalls to avoid, key words, the most sought-after characteristics employers are looking for, and how to put all those together into a modular CV you can easily update and customize to each opportunity. We will go over the content of the CVs you are likely to need—these being academic, industry and electronic—and the differences between each type.

Finally, we will look at case studies of a few real job opportunities, find the key words and discuss how best to respond.

### Content: CVs/Résumés

- What your CV should be doing for you
- What you should be doing for your CV
- Some pitfalls to avoid
- Academic, industry and electronic CVs
- Characteristics employers are looking for
- How to build your modular CV
- Case studies

### Summary: Cover Letters

This session will explore the role of the cover letter and the sections it should contain to be effective. We will go over some do's and don'ts, what employers want to see, and the differences between academic and industry letters, and how to stand out when the employer actively doesn't want one. We will also examine some examples to see why they work or don't work.

### Content: Cover Letters

- Why do you need a cover letter
- Tips
- What employers are looking for
- What goes into the letter (academic and industry)
- What if employers don't want a cover letter
- Case studies

### Outcomes

- Useful skills for future career.
- Present a more tailored, stronger application.
- More effective presentation of key information that improves the likelihood of getting an interview.

### Notes

Complements the LinkedIn session as some content there informs how to develop résumés.

Possibility of feedback afterwards by phone with individual participants.



## Personalized Feedback on CVs/Résumés and LinkedIn Profiles (an eagle eye that spots errors or places for further improvements)

### Summary

Generalized guidance on CVs/résumés and LinkedIn profiles is all well and good but nothing beats personalized attention, especially when students lack top-notch English writing skills or confidence in their career-oriented documents.

One-on-one feedback after the CV/résumés and LinkedIn sessions gives participants time to digest the material and make basic revisions. This feedback is highly anticipated and valued.

### Content

By phone or in person, the student and I go over the revisions intensively in 15-20 minute individual sessions. We also address issues that the student may not have spotted as a result of the session, such as syntax.

### Outcome

- Increased confidence in the CV, résumé or profile
- Better likelihood of documents meeting employers' expectations

## Plain Language: Make it easy for people to understand your science (covers audience, document structure, design, sentence structure)

### Summary

In today's innovation- and research-rich world, we need to share complicated messages with a wide range of readers, such as granting agencies, colleagues, stakeholders and the public.

On the one hand, the density of our writing styles has spiralled out of control. On the other hand, our attention spans are getting shorter. We don't want to pore over every word to find meaning.

Documents written in plain language offer a win-win solution for readers and writers. They convey information simply and clearly, they broaden the reach of the message, and they are easy to understand.

This session will present the background to literacy and plain language. It will also illustrate some basic principles at the structural, visual and sentence level with practical examples, and leave you with a handful of strategies that improve the clarity of your writing and visual style—and ultimately, your message.

### Content

- Literacy and the need for plain language
- Key concepts
- Common barriers
- Their solutions
- Pointers to take away
- ... and lots of examples and resources

### Outcome

- Ability to analyze writing and correct for plain language
- Ability to write in plain language without needing to correct
- Clearer messages, better outcomes
- Useful skills for future career



## A Strategic Planning Approach to Industry and Academic Proposal-writing

### Summary

At some point in your career, you will have to write a grant application or a business plan, or plan a project. Most people dread the thought. But each has common elements that, when understood and mastered, will help you be more effective in your writing approach and show you how to manage time, budgets and people.

This webinar will

- Show you how to structure your writing to create a cohesive storyline for the project
- Strip proposal-writing back to its basics, show you what funders want to see in each section and how the sections link together.
- Use NSERC Discovery Grants and NSERC Canada Graduate Scholarships: Master's Program as example of highly subscribed academic programs with a common structure
- Demystify key sections of industry business plans/projects (which are more fluid)

### Content

Where to look for funding, planning, how to structure effective headings and paragraphs, how to write a business plan (vision, mission, goals, deliverables, strategies, risk management, Gantt, etc.), other required content (knowledge transfer, evaluation, benefits, etc.), strategies for success, tips and tricks

### Outcome

- Ability to write a business plan that is a transferable career skill.
- Ability to write an effective grant application.

### Notes

- Currently only available in webinar format.

## Using LinkedIn as a Job-finding Strategy

### Summary

Most people just collect names passively on LinkedIn. Yet it's a 450 million member professional network—replete with recruiters who trawl for candidates—that job-seekers can tap into to advance their career by making its tools work their magic.

This workshop will

- offer strategies to enhance your LinkedIn profile, valuable tools you may not be aware of, and opportunities to network with peers and potential employers online.
- show you how to research jobs/companies of interest, build an effective profile that helps recruiters identify candidates, and to make those all-important connections.

At the end of this session, you will have the tools and knowledge to create a profile that brings recruiters to you instead of the other way round. You will see that the power of LinkedIn eliminates the need to send résumés to “Dear Sir/Madam.”

A copy of the presentation will be circulated to registered participants in advance. Please bring the presentation, your CV/résumé and a laptop with you to the workshop.

### Content

- Building an effective profile
  - a. Headline, summary, mugshot, key words, endorsements, links, skills, privacy and settings, STAR statements
- Building your network
  - a. Finding interesting roles and companies, building connections, linking to others, communicating online, recommendations, groups, viewing profiles
- Using LinkedIn to find jobs
  - a. Putting it all together, networking, how to tap the resource

### Outcome

- The tools and knowledge to create a profile that brings recruiters to you instead of the other way round.
- An understanding that the power of LinkedIn eliminates the need to send résumés to “Dear Sir/Madam.”

## General Information

### Sample Feedback

#### The Modular CV

- 80-93% of participants gave the instructor a rating of 4 or 5 (good/excellent).
- 80% of participants gave the webinar an overall rating of 4 or 5 (good/excellent).

#### Cover letters

- 90-100% of participants gave the instructor a rating of 4 or 5 (good/excellent).
- 91% of participants gave the webinar an overall rating of 4 or 5 (good/excellent)

#### Feedback session

- “I greatly appreciate her thoroughness in evaluating my CV.”
- “She was really objective and expressed the main points during the 15 min.”
- 66% of students rated the experience as “excellent;” 33% rated it as “good.”

### Testimonial

Sylviane designed a fantastic professional development webinar series for the graduate students, post-doctoral fellows and young professionals in our research network.

She effectively tailored the webinars to meet their needs, teaching them how best to structure their CVs and cover letters to create successful applications for government, industry, and academic job postings.

They gained further confidence in their CVs and cover letters after receiving one-to-one coaching from Sylviane, and felt the series was an extremely valuable experience. We look forward to working with Sylviane again in the future.

*Jennifer Robinson, Network Manager  
NSERC Canadian Network for Aquatic Ecosystem Services (CNAES)  
University of Toronto*

### Duration

- Webinars: ~1 hour (exception: CVs/Cover letters runs ~1.5 hours)
- Workshops: ~3 hours

### Handouts, etc.

- To maximize pre-teaching and give students a chance to study the material ahead of time, you will receive all materials 4-5 days before the session for distribution to participants 2-3 days in advance.
- Depending on the session, materials include:
  - a. Stand-alone PPT deck with slide summarizing strategies and implementation
  - b. List of hyperlinks to online resources on topics broached in the session.
  - c. Other handouts (examples, exercises, etc.)

## Interactivity

- Webinars are designed for minimum interaction (except Q&As) to accommodate clients' varying software resources.
- Workshops are fully interactive.

## Other

- I retain copyright over all original content.
- Each webinar/workshop is offered as a one-time event, not to be recorded.
- You are welcome to share costs with another group of students to make up numbers.
- Webinar format does not allow the “dead air-space” of reading time for material. I recommend that participants familiarize themselves with the deck and handouts in advance.

## Pricing

- I offer discounts depending on the number and format (webinar/workshop) of sessions you book. Please [contact me](#).

## About OpenTheBox

- Visit [www.openthebox.ca](http://www.openthebox.ca) for more information.