

Workshop "Present yourself and your work"



GAIA Ambassadors Network

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Rijkswaterstaat



Rijkswaterstaat
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Introduction

Visibility is crucial for career development: You have to present yourself and your work! Women often struggle with this, thinking it is immodest to place oneself in the spotlight, and that good work will be automatically noticed. Unfortunately, this is usually not the case. The GAIA Ambassadors Network (GAN) therefore organized the workshop "Present yourself and your work", attended by 32 women working in technical disciplines at the GAN-organizations. The workshop was led by El Batoul Zembib and Gerla Ophem from E-Quality, and hosted by Rijkswaterstaat in Den Haag.

Tips & tricks for presenting yourself

Because so many potentially useful tips & tricks were given during this workshop, we have decided to share these also with those of you that did not attend. E-Quality started off with various key theoretical aspects of presenting yourself. Some important things to remember:

- Also in your absence, you will be on people's mind, and people will talk about you.
- Make sure others know you, that you have somehow impressed them.
- Make sure others know what you do *now*, but also what you would like to do in the *future*.
- Be aware of certain (male) codes; know that they are used and how you can use them.
- When presenting yourself, make sure to balance "content", "form" and "relation":
 - a) The "content" is of course important, but not the only issue. As a technical

expert, be sure to talk in basic terms about your work when you talk to non-experts.

- b) The "form", or process/procedure, is knowing where and when to present yourself, and how to communicate to effectively pass on your message.
 - c) The "relation" refers to the interaction between you and the listener(s), and the perception of others.
- Think ahead when/where you want (or will be able) to talk to certain people, and about what. Share your success, dreams and ambitions with those around you.
 - Give people the opportunity to help you. Don't just work hard by yourself, but let others help so that they can see what you do, and make them part of your success.
 - Keep in mind that it is not only about you having *results* to deliver. Also you, as a *person*, can be very valuable to others.
 - Ask for recommendations, advice, names of people or teams/departments that may further help you... Don't be shy: Most people will be happy, and even honored, to help!
 - Presenting yourself and your work, both in a full-fledged presentation and a 1-minute summary, is a skill. You need to practice and gain experience to get better.
 - Ask for feedback on your presentations, not only on the technical aspects, but also on your personal style and message, so that you can improve these a next time.

Advice from Lucia van Geuns

After the various tips and tricks, it was time to listen to Lucia van Geuns, who currently works

for the Clingendael International Energy Programme, and previously for Shell. Lucia shared her fascinating and impressive career so far in an open and much appreciated manner. Key take-aways for the audience included: Find your own balance in life, try to get to know yourself, and attempt to determine what you want now and in the future (also ~10 years ahead). Even if you always try to combine work and family as best as you can, you may still have to significantly change and re-balance things at times throughout your career. It was clear that Lucia is (and has been) very passionate about her work. Lucia's extensive experience in giving public presentations was also very clear: Her personal presentation was highly energizing, interesting and relaxed at the same time.

Do's & don'ts of an elevator pitch

Finally, there was time for some individual action and practice: Each participant had to prepare and give her own "elevator pitch". How can you get across, in a 1-minute elevator trip: Who you are? What you do? What your experience is? What you hope for or dream of? And, last but not least, how the other in the elevator could benefit from that?

Obviously, the message depends on the person you are talking to. Seeing so many different introductions, as well as trying out your own, all within one hour, was an interesting and inspiring experience. Some aspects came up more than once, and therefore seem to be key:

- State your name slowly and clearly, the other may have never heard or seen it before. You could also repeat, or just say your first name.
- A little "bridge" to something that you have in common with the other feels most natural, e.g. you have just read an article or interview of that person, listened to her/his presentation, you have just attended the same workshop, etc.
- Your introduction of yourself doesn't need to be long at all! Too much detail may even distract from your actual message, so try to say just enough to capture the interest of the other person.
- Be clear what it is you want from the other. Do you want to talk further about the content/science, or for mentoring, or for advice/recommendations? There may even be a clear benefit for the other.
- Make sure you define a "follow-up" by the end of the elevator trip. Some gave their own business card and asked the person to contact them. Others asked permission to contact the person later, which possibly has the highest chance of success.
- Make sure to impress the other! This, we have seen, can be done in many different ways, and obviously everyone will have to do this in her own personal way. It is essential to make sure the other person will remember you!

Last but not least, there was a general advise to make sure to go to informal events and drinks, where you can talk with others... Obviously this workshop was one of those occasions with plenty of time to get to know new people during coffee breaks and drinks afterwards. We hope to see as many enthusiastic participants in our next workshops!

GAIA & GAIA's Ambassadors Network

GAIA is the Dutch network for female geoscientists. GAIA's Ambassadors Network (GAN) is comprised of the directors of 10 organizations employing female geoscientists: KNMI, TNO, Deltares, Shell, VU, UU, TUDelft, Fugro, Grontmij, and RWS-Waterdienst. The objective of GAN is to improve the career development of women working in technical disciplines within these organizations. All GAN activities are organized by volunteers from GAIA: Marjolijn Haasnoot, Edith Hafkenscheid, Ellen Brinksma, Fraukje Brouwer, Mirjam van Kan and Klaudia Kuiper. For more information: <http://www.vrouwen.net/gaia/> and <https://public.deltares.nl/display/GAIA/>.