November 3, 2017

**Engaging the Public Where They Live: Perspectives from Media Personalities and Strategists for Better Science Communication**

Organized by: Shawn McGuirk & Vanessa Sung, Science Policy Exchange

Speakers: Mark Blevis, President and Digital Public Affairs Strategist, Full Duplex Ltd.; Pascal Lapointe, Editor-in-Chief, L’Agence Science Press; Alyssa Lerner, Senior Editor, SciShow; Kirstine Stewart, Chief Strategy Officer, Diply

Moderator: Nora Young, Host, CBC Radio’s Spark

**Takeaways and recommendations**

* It is important to develop compelling narratives to capture the attention of those who may not be initially interested in science stories. Emphasize the human dimension to drive the narrative and ignite interest.
* Analogy and metaphor are useful in connecting science to the lives and environment of the audience.
* For audio media, emphasize stories that lend themselves to that format. Social media is a challenge for audio.
* Podcasts have a huge advantage in engaging listeners deeply and in building listener loyalty, engagement and sharing.
* Accuracy is paramount in convincing media consumers that the information they are receiving is correct and trustworthy. There are more than 140 fact checking websites in more than 40 countries. Breaking news is harder to fact check than stories that can be developed over time.
* There will always be people and groups that are unconvinced by scientific facts. For example, climate sceptics usually aren’t swayed by rational argument.
* Science video delivered via online services like YouTube make science more accessible than previously possible with conventional media. Unusual or “weird” science stories can appeal to a broader audience than hard-science stories such as HIV/AIDS or replication of scientific results.
* The explosion of online news and social media has given everyone the opportunity to have a voice, allowing people to generate as well as receive science content. Alternatively, it has led to a proliferation of “fake news”, which can be combatted by using algorithms to weed out erroneous content.
* Social media can open up science conversations to marginalized people, as well as reaching those who often do not stray outside of their self-prescribed media outlets.
* Youth need to learn digital media literacy to discern what is real or fake.
* With the proliferation of information sources, it has become more difficult to generate interest and enthusiasm in science stories. But there will always be a core audience that can be enhanced by targeting people that are not aware of your existence.