Technology & Policy Presentation Skills

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Objectives

• Good TPP presentation skills enable one to:
  – Introduce an important technology and policy issue from a personal perspective
  – Communicate effectively to a senior decision-maker
Communicating to a Senior Decision-Maker

• Begin by preparing an “elevator speech”
  – Very brief (2-3 points, less than 5 minutes)
  – Summarize the issues and decisions

• Must be able to answer:
  – What is the problem?
  – What are the issues?
  – Why is this important?
  – What should the decision-maker do?

Preparing a Briefing

• Plan on 1 viewgraph per 3 minutes available time
  – 1 viewgraph per 2 minutes maximum!

• Start with summary/recommendations
  – “Tell them what you’re going to say, then say it, then tell them what you told them”

• No more than 2 main points per viewgraph
• Choose wording and graphics carefully
• Present with sufficient depth and content, but have backups ready to answer questions
Making Recommendations

• Present no more than 7 recommendations

• Make sure all recommendations are:
  – Actionable by the decision-maker
  – Feasible (within available time, budget, technology, regulations, policy, etc.)
  – Associated with specific individuals for implementation

Example: Improving the Quality of the DOD Science & Technology Labs

• Problem Background
  – Senior DOD decision-makers were brought in from the “outside” (academia, Congressional staff, Washington think tanks, industry)
  – There were widespread perceptions that the DOD internal labs were not high quality
  – The labs were staffed by Civil Service employees
  – The labs were distributed all over the country (legacy of their creation)
Reasons for Negative Perceptions

1. Low numbers of national honors
   - 7 of 35 MIT Aero/Astro faculty are members of NAE; Air Force Research Lab (9000 employees) has none

2. 50% - 80% of the research $$ funneled outside
   - Benefiting agencies that rarely credit the labs

3. Civil Service reputation for being unresponsive

4. Little public awareness/recognition
   - MIT inventions/innovations far more publicized

Stakeholder Positions

- **DOD personnel community**
  - Happy with status quo
  - Don’t see why the Civil Service is a problem

- **DOD legal community**
  - Very conservative; wary of DOD violating laws

- **Science & technology employees**
  - Want to improve, but mainly want to keep their jobs

- **Congress**
  - Want the best “bang for their buck”
  - Don’t want to risk losing facilities or jobs
History

• 20 major studies on the labs in 40 years
• Paralysis between opposed stakeholders
• Various proposals for running the labs:
  – Civil Service
  – Military personnel
  – Government-owned, contractor operated (GOCO)
  – Shut down completely
• Only actual attempts: Civil Service experiments
  – Navy’s “China Lake” experiment
  – Similar Air Force experiment in 1995

Implementing Solutions

• Every study that has recommended GOCO has failed to be implemented
  – Members of Congress perceived risk of loss of jobs
  – Civil Service perceived risk of loss of power and jobs
• The problem: how to formulate policies that enable some resolution, while dealing with stakeholder concerns
  – Example: STW21 strategy