

Participatory Poster in NACTA Increases Viewer Involvement

Poster presentations are rapidly becoming a major communication strategy in meetings of professional societies. These visual strategies allow people truly interested in a topic to spend quality time with the author(s), and not feel 'trapped' in a session where only one or two presentations are of interest. Posters provide a more personal and interactive type of communication that promotes maximum efficiency in use of time for those who want to engage in chosen topics. Organizers and participants agree that more focused interactions are possible in a poster session, one advantage over 15- to 30-minute oral presentations (Miller, 2007).

Anyone who has presented a poster is well aware of the modal behavior of colleagues attending these sessions. Involvement ranges from a quick walk-by while reading the title, to a rapid reading of the abstract or viewing the photos, figures, and tables, to an in-depth engagement with one or more authors. We have observed that the first two brief encounters are most common. While some may want to engage the author(s), when they are already busy with other visitors it is likely that the next person will not want to interrupt or wait. They may or may not come back to the poster. Generally, presenters tell us they may have five or fewer in-depth conversations during a 90-minute poster session when they are required to be present.

A participatory poster was introduced at the NACTA Conference in Twin Falls, Idaho, to evaluate a unique method of engaging colleagues and encouraging their written comments. Forty-seven attendees were recruited as they cruised by a poster on future teaching strategies that summarized results of a two-day visioning session in a previous meeting in Ames, Iowa (Jabbour et al., 2019). Only a handful turned down an invitation to read the poster. People provided feedback as they visited the poster by writing comments on small pads we gave them.

The goal was to encourage people to read the poster, then answer key questions to help us in planning future posters. How important is envisioning the future? How appropriate were methods used in the workshop? And did we accomplish the goal of urging people to look into future teaching methods and course content?

Ninety percent agreed on the importance of long-term visioning, while 76% found that methods used in the workshop were useful. Feedback on how well the group was able to 'envision the future' was confusing, as some answered the question and others described what they felt the future should look like. We learned that questions should be clearly stated and pre-tested with a small group before designing the formal inquiry.

The exercise was successful in engaging conference attendees to think about the content, and in capturing their interest for a longer time than with passive poster presentations. In general,

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increased participation was achieved, and written feedback convinced us that creative ways to increase involvement during a poster session are worth pursuing.

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References

Jabbour, R., C. Francis, M. Barbercheck, and K.S. Ullman. 2019. Teaching organic agriculture in 2025: an exercise in visioning. *NACTA J.* 63(Suppl. 1):56.

Miller, J.E. 2007. Preparing and presenting effective research posters. *Health Serv. Res.* February; 42(1 Part 1): 311–328. doi: [10.1111/j.1475-6773.2006.00588.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6773.2006.00588.x)

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