

S2E5: 3 simple ways to be more productive when creating scicomm content

Well hello friends and welcome back to the scicomm toolkit podcast this is a show for scientists researchers and scientists communicated to gain all the tools they need to grow their scicomm confidence

if you are new around here then firstly welcome but I also thought it would be good to introduce myself again and also just explain a little bit more about the podcast the firstly I am so far I am a scientist turn science communicator and I have a real passion for or sharing the skills and lessons I have learnt throughout my science communication career so far and sharing that with scientists researchers science communicators so that together we can bring science stories to life. and that's why I launched This podcast the scicomm toolkit to Share those lessons to share tools but also to interview fantastic gifts and communicators from both inside the world of stem but also outside the world of stem as well to reach that goal. and incase science communication is new to you it can come in so many different form but for This podcast my little podcast project when I say science communication or si.com short I mean anything that could come under that umbrella I'm thinking digital media press talking public engagement science education I want to cover it all it's gonna take a little bit of time but there is so much knowledge out there and I'm hoping that we can bring all that in package it up into fun Bitesize almost audio workshops in each episode so you can find all the information advice and tips that you need to get started doing science communication or to level up your science communication.

Now as part of my job as a science communicator one of the hats that I wear is to convince scientists and researchers about the importance of doing a science communication persuade them of the impact it can have on them and their career. basically why they should be doing it. I have had countless conversations with academics with scientists in industry with PhD students about taking that first step into experimenting with science communication but I get met so often with this reply and that is that they don't want to do science communication because they don't have time. now I get that I've been in a researchers shoes and trying to balance lab work with communication work with all the other responsibilities it is time-consuming I'm not going to sugarcoat it but I truly believe that it is something that all scientists should be spending time, no! investing time on so today I wanted to share a handful of ways that I've learnt across the years I have been doing science communication and content creation that are going to save you time make creating more time efficient and make sure that in the time you do give yourself to do science communication you are much more productive. So listen up! Here are some of my suggestions that I share most often with scientists and creators.

Ok so hear me out! The first suggestion is to have a list. I do love a list. I have been known to create lists of the different lists I need to create. But this suggestion is to have an ideas list. I know I have sat down so many times knowing that I have Instagram posts to write for my personal scicomm pages, or that I need to write a blog post, or create a social media campaign in my day job, whatever it is. I have sat down to a blank screen so many times and I have spent most of my time not creating but just thinking of ideas. Having an ideas list means you are never starting from scratch. It also has the added bonus of whenever you

have an idea you can just jot it down in whatever form you use. It takes that idea out of your mind so you can continue to focus on whatever you were doing and all your ideas are in one place.

My ideas list is part of my project management tool that I use to schedule all my projects and tasks. The tool I use is Asana. I talked more about that in Season 1 as part of the episode about free tools to support your science communication if you want to find out more. And also if you listened to the last episode about getting started with Instagram for scicomm, you will know what I mean when I say content pillars. So my ideas list is also tagged or categories by content pillar too. So I know now that when I sit down to create a blog post, plan out the next series of my podcast, create a video, whatever it may be, I already have all these ideas to start from. I use my content schedule as a guide to know what I need to create that week. For example, let's say I know I can create 3 Insta posts a week, and I know two of those are from my second content pillar. I can go to my ideas list to see what I already have and see which one feels right to create this time.

Another app I love for lists is Google Keep. Which again you can categorise and colour code. That could work for your ideas list. Obviously a good old notebook and pen if you're not a digital fan. You can also use these sorts of tools to collect links to papers or resources or any kind of research that you are using for your content all linked in one neatly organised place.

So my first suggestion to help save time when creating scicomm content is to have an ideas list so you are not starting from scratch. Note those ideas down whenever they spring to mind, or have a dedicated brainstorm session to get one started. They will soon add up. Trust me.

Moving on to my next suggestion and that is time blocking. In the last episode of season 1 with Julia Ravey, we chatted about this technique there. Time blocking is a time management method that asks you to divide your day into - you've guessed it - blocks of time. No you might think you do that anyway, but if you are anything like what I used to do. I would log on for work for the day and I would check my emails, then I would check the social media and reply to any comments, then I might ping back to my emails before I start my first task. That then get interrupted by another email notification or that bright red dot on social media. All of this and I was still surprised that things would take me longer than I thought. Using time blocking I am much more strict with my time and focus only on one task in that time period so I am much more efficient. A key part of doing that is turning off all notifications on your phone and laptop, except for emergencies obviously. Not only does this save you time, but it helps with your focus when you only have one thing to work on with no interruptions.

Everyone time blocks differently. Some people will block out every waking minute factoring time to get ready, commute, breaks, down time and so on. If that works for you great, but for others that can be overwhelming. So on the other end of the spectrum, some people I know who use this technique will just block the AM for one project and work through tasks to make progress there and then the PM is focused on project two. Or you could sit anywhere else on that spectrum. It takes a bit of trial and error to see what works for you, but since starting this technique I have been able to get more done in a day, or just get the same amount done is

less time. So blocking out time to focus on specific tasks is going to save you some time when creating.

Another way builds on this time blocking technique and that is task batching. Let's say I need to create a podcast episode, or a few podcast episodes in the series and I have blocked a two hour session on a Sunday to do some work on that. The best option for my brain, and our brains collectively is for us to work on the same tasks for that time period rather than switching between different modes. So for my podcast episodes, I need to write a script, record an episode, edit, upload and schedule and create resources to promote it. With time batching, it is much more efficient for me to record the next three episodes in that two hour time block, and then edit all three in the next block in my schedule rather than trying to do one complete episode per session. I can't say that I have stuck to this all the time. I'm still working on it, but I need to focus on different things when I am writing compared to when I am recording and again compared to when I am editing. So it is less jarring when I group similar tasks together which means I am much more efficient with my time when I'm creating.

Just as an aside - I have been reading a fabulous book recently called Screen Time by Becca Caddy. The chapter on focus explains this in even more detail and also explains the science behind it, as well as also why the vast majority of us can't multitask. So that is a reading recommendation for you if you want.

So - so far I have told you about creating and maintaining an ideas list, time blocking and also task batching. This next one is probably my favourite way to save time when doing scicomm well creating for scicomm and that is repurposing. Or what I like to call content fission!

If you have followed me for a while, you will almost definitely have heard me say that all science communicators should have a core or hero platform for communication. That could be a blog, a podcast, a YouTube channel or a newsletter as examples. But crucially not social media. Social media is what you should use to drive people to those core platforms. Why? Well the short answer for now is that you should own your core platform and have control over it, whereas social media could disappear tomorrow and you might then have nothing to show for all your work.

But right now we are talking about repurposing. Whenever I suggest this to anyone, they think this means even more work and even more creating as it is another platform, but that doesn't have to be the case. Let's say you write a blog post that is called 5 things I learnt during my PhD. Straight away you can turn that into 5 different Instagram posts. For your podcast episode, you could create a 30 second audiogram and share it as a reel or a Tik Tok. Break up those core pieces of content to populate your social media so you are not creating something completely new for each platform. You can also turn podcasts into blogs, videos into podcasts, and if you are already filming a video. It is not going to take too much extra time to turn the camera portrait and record a 30 second explainer or promo video from that longer video. You can even use your social media analytics to identify your best performing posts and give them a little makeover.

Don't think that having another platform or medium always means double the content creation. Think how you can repurpose or split one piece of content up into smaller bits.

The final way I save time when creating any form of digital science communication is by creating templates. I have templates for social media graphics, slides for talks and presentations I may be asked to give, I have templates for writing blogs, creating podcasts, newsletters and storyboards for video scripts and so on. Of course it took a bit of a time investment to set them all up initially and there may be some new ones that crop up over time, but now I don't have to create any graphics or slides from scratch and I don't have a blank page when creating blogs and so on. The templates help me focus what I need to write and everything is in one place when I am scheduling or posting.

So there are the five main techniques I use to balance doing my own scicomm with a side hustle and a full time job. There are free tools that help me which I talked about in Season 1 Episode 6, and of course there are a range of productivity techniques that you might want to try out like the Pomodoro technique, apps like Forest are great, or there is the 1-3-5 rule.

All of these are ways that will make it easier to balance doing scicomm with other commitments and make sure you are being as efficient and productive with your time as you can or want to be.

Time for some DIY. This is the section of the podcast where I give you something actionable that you can take away straight away to continue to level up your scicomm confidence. Today I have a little resource pack for you. All of the techniques I've suggested are quite personal to however you like to work, but I want to share some examples of what a content schedule and time blocked calendars look like so that you can find a version that works for you. If you are a science communicator, I would highly recommend starting your ideas list if you don't have one already. Then try out one of the other techniques, see if it works for you, if not try another.

So in today's time saving resource pack is also my blog templates, podcast episode, video and Instagram caption templates that you can use or adapt to better suit your needs. I hope that all of this together is going to give you some ideas or building blocks to have processes in place to help you save time when doing scicomm.

If any of these work for you then of course I would love to hear about it. You can find me on Instagram @soph.talks.science or tag the podcast @scicommtoolkit. The links to all the resources and all I have mentioned can be found on the podcast page on my website. That is sophtalksscience.com/scicommtoolkit.

As always, I hope that you found this episode useful and that you want to come back and listen to some more scicomm tips and advice from me and my fabulous guests. If you did and you have a spare minute or two, I would love it if you could rate and review the podcast

and of course make sure to subscribe so that you get all these pearls of wisdom delivered straight to you. Hey you could even set them to auto download to your phone.

Thank you all as always for listening. I have just ordered myself some new tools to create with that I am very excited about and will be creating another vlog to share very soon so I can share another insight into my career as a science communicator so you can subscribe to my YouTube channel too if you want to see that soon. Just look for Soph talks science :) until next time friends, keep bringing science stories to life and catch you in the next episode.

Byeee