

The Ten Types of Poster Session Audience

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ABSTRACT

Scientists gather at conferences to learn about the latest developments and discoveries in their fields. These meetings are usually bustling with poster presenters and spectators. The goal of this study was to identify and assess different personality types that stop by poster presentations. My data suggests that the poster audience can be classified into 10 different categories. Future studies are needed to further validate whether these "out-of-the" box audience will have a detrimental or beneficial effect on the career advancement of the young and upcoming researchers.

KEYWORDS: Scientists, Career Development, Poster Session, Audience, Feedback.

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INTRODUCTION

Chances are that someone already popped up in your head after you read the title of this article. The question is whether you smiled or frowned? Their face may have blurred out but their comments and reactions are still etched in your grey matter:)

As scientists we thrive on feedback from our peers, hence it is a norm for us to present our work as posters in conferences where we can expect tons of stimulating scientific conversations.

But, we all know that there are "thorns" on a rose and "bumps" on a road, so how can we not expect to cross paths with some of those "memorable and unforgettable" scientists at our poster sessions?

If you are a regular at poster shows, then you probably know what I mean:) Even if you haven't had an opportunity to present a poster before, scan on and get an honest laugh. After all, laughter is the best medicine and it's free!

So, what kind of characters might you expect to come at your poster presentation? Well, here a listing of those "distinctive" clans that have paid a visit to my poster shows in the past, and will again:

The Critics

This is one of the most daunting classes of audience that you can expect at your poster. These scientists were once the alumni of "**The Judge Judy School of Sarcasm**". Expect to hear the unexpected from these individuals. If their critique is on point then you can congratulate yourself, but some of them will surely slap you with what I call "destructive criticism". You will most likely start hating your projects or maybe your life after you meet them.

The Vacationers

These folks are visiting the conference solely to wine, dine and paint the city red. Nope, they are not too curious about your work, but they can undoubtedly tell you the best hot spots to party within the city:)

The Gossip Girls

Well, well, well! Another quite common class of attendees that you may see. "Have you seen her hair and makeup? How down market!". "Her handbag is fake; there is no way it is Gucci and it doesn't even go with her shoes!"

You guessed it right, this bunch is usually comprised of mean women (in some rare cases even men) still stuck in their high school years. (Psst! A number of them are successful professors). Can you trust their feedback on your work? You decide:)

The Paparazzi

Now, it is hard to miss these in a poster session. They hover around your poster like satellites and when you take a break for a moment they capture your data in their phone cameras. I call them "**the daredevils**", can you guess why? Sometimes they stand next to the "photography prohibited" warning signs and do the deed.

And I have seen "daredevils" every single time during my past presentations, I mean every single time!

The Undercover FBI Agents

These folks have an agenda of making every presenter feel like a prison escape. How to recognize them? It's easy! They will keep you pre-occupied with a long list of queries, write down every detail of your data and who knows maybe they are attempting a sting operation on you.

The Sheep

If you get a little time, simply scan around during your poster session. There will be at least one popular presenter in the vicinity that is surrounded by a herd of scientists. No, these are not the sheep! The sheep are the attendees who get attracted to these herds and flock around them as they are curious to figure out why those "few" posters are so special.

The Blow Your Own Trumpeters

Now these are exactly like our great Mr. President (you-know-who). Needless to say, they will pay a visit to your poster and promote their own work extensively. You will learn that their projects are much more relevant, dynamic and life changing than yours. They definitely know ways to press your "buttons". Also, they claim to make science better again!

The Secret Admirers

I have encountered this sort in many of my poster sessions. This is how this works. A shy scientist pretends to not notice, but then stops by your poster and skims through it. They might not acknowledge your presence for a few minutes, but will soon turn to you and pass a smile, you smile back and the cycle continues for a while. They will then say "hello" and leave. That's it!

The Mimes

To be honest, these peeps are the hardest to gauge. But maybe the most enjoyable of all! As evident by the name, they will not utter a word while reading your posters. In a span of few minutes, you will see them emote through a broad range of expressions. You will never know what they thought about your work. Yes, the secret will go to their grave!

The Sweethearts

I kept the best for the last:) This audience is the most genuine of all and are often rare to find just like "The Kohinoor diamond". They radiate self-confidence and ooze compassion. They truly care about your work and they will make sure to convey that through constructive feedback and tons of encouragement! Look out for these when you are presenting your next poster and don't forget to thank them:)

So, have you stumbled upon any of these at your poster or, are you one of them?

Note: All the characters in this article are absolutely real. In any way if this relates to your professional life, it is not a coincidence. The writer shall be liable and will take all the credit if you feel de-stressed after reading this. Also, overthinking kills so, just take this with a pinch of salt!

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Authors' contributions

Deeksha Gambhir Chopra conceived the idea, wrote and edited the article.