

Lightning Talk Tips

For the 2018 Intramural Sports Institute Lightning Talk Hour we'll be offering four topics:

- **Marketing**
- **Technology**
- **Changing Demographics**
- **Engaging Non-Traditional Participants**

Thursday, June 21 | 1:30pm-2:30pm | Diplomat Rooms

These brief, potent sessions will each be just 10 minutes or less. These bite size talks are the perfect platform to express a spark of an idea, a quick tip, or innovative concept. Lightning talks are a great way to begin speaking, but these short talks come with their own set of problems. Below are some tips for creating and delivering an exceptional lightning talk.

Make your Point

The point of a lightning talk is to convey a message and explain it as quickly as possible. You don't have to provide a lot of background or explain other issues. The truth is that no one will care if your presentation is shorter (if you've made your point) but they will notice if you clog up your message with a lot of unnecessary information and go over your time or take longer than it needs to explain. Keep your structure simple and your message clear.

You Don't Need Most Details

Unless those details are vital to your message, don't include them. Most people won't remember the finer points after the session, and if they are interested this is great for Q&A or connecting with that participant afterwards.

Practice

The best way to build confidence and ensure you're staying within your time limit is to practice. Find a friend, colleague, or family pet who can spare a few minutes and present to them. This will also help you discover what parts you might want to emphasize, or particularly in the case of lightning sessions, cut.

Slides

Do you need slides for a lightning talk? That is totally up to you, lightning talks can be very successful with or without slides. But don't just have slides to have slides, make sure they mean something. Slides are not to remind you of where you are in your presentation. Practices and notecards are much better tools to help you stay on track for your talk. Slides are visual aids for the audience, so the biggest question is, does it benefit them?

If you use slides remember that less is more and make sure all slides are prepared and practiced with ahead of time. You may even want to run through the outline of your presentation a few times before creating any slides to help you identify why and how you would use them. Always have a backup. What if you can't use your slides? Can you do the presentation without them?

Presentation Equipment

Make sure you know what equipment you'll be using for your talk, are you required to provide your own laptop? Will you be collaborating with the other lightning talkers to setup one laptop with all presentations? Will you need to submit your slides early to an individual to upload your materials?

Operating a computer while you're presenting is already hard, with lightning sessions you won't have time to mess with a computer error or take a break between slides, so keep that in mind. You want to use software that is easy to operate, like only having one click to get to the next slide—or setup your slides to automatically advance on a timer! Automatic slide advancement can be a great tool, but you need to practice your presentation to make sure you're in time with your slides. Don't present from a web browser. Wifi will be available but speeds can be unreliable and HTML code can create some unexpected surprises depending on the web browser, best practice is to have your presentation downloaded onto the computer. Remember to download any clips or videos so you don't have to rely on linking to the internet.

Unexpected Problems

You're going to have them. Even if you take every precaution, you will still encounter problems. With presentations this short, if something goes wrong, you really have no choice but to move on. So, it would be a good idea if you have slides to practice how you would present if something went wrong and you had to scrap your slides and present without them.

Wrapping Things Up

In a 60-minute educational session you usually leave some time at the end for Q&A. Due to the nature of having multiple lightning talks in one 60-minute block, there will be time for Q&A, but it will come at the end of all the presentations and will be for all the presenters. This means that it's even more important to tell attendees where they can go to get more info or how to contact you. If you are using slides, a thank you slide with your contact info is recommended.

Good luck with your talk!