Transcript: How To Do a Science Fair Project: Step 5

Ota Lutz: You want everyone to know how hard you worked on this project and what a great job you did so it's important to be able to communicate your experiment and your results in a way that will captivate your audience's attention. Now, Serina and Arby, you both, as part of your professional lives here at JPL, have to present your work in poster sessions and you've also been a part of science fairs and had to do judging in some cases or presenting yourself. What tips do you have for designing your presentation so that the audience will really understand what's going on and it'll grab their attention?

Arby Argueta: Think of your display as a way to attract people. The worst thing you can do is clutter it up with a lot of text and tables. The best thing you can do is include pictures of yourself in action and also include graphs that display your data. This includes line graphs, bar graphs, pie charts, and so forth. If you limit your text and add a lot of pictures, you'll notice that people will be more attracted to your display.

Ota: Okay, so it's real important, the visual appeal of your display, but the content of course has to be there because content is king in this, so Serina, what sort of things from a content perspective can you add?

Serina Diniega: So the main things I always try to work into my own presentations and that I look for when I judge science fair projects: you have to have a clean, clear expression of your scientific question. That hypothesis is what guided the entire investigation. So you do want to have that text in there but stated very cleanly. You want to make sure that you remember you're talking to people who are not experts in whatever it was that you were studying, so you need to use very simple words. Do not use complicated words that only someone who has already studied it will understand. Your title should also be very clear. It should draw the eye, draw people in. And the title and the conclusion should both maybe tie into a bigger picture question. So you may have studied something like how does your pulse rate relate to how much water you drank while running or how much dirt do you need to grow a plant, but then you have to go back to what's the big picture question? Why should people care about this particular investigation? You're addressing one bite-sized science question, but that gives information about a much larger picture that relates to a problem that people can understand, that people can relate to. And so that goes into your conclusion, your interpretation, and when people come by and ask you about your presentation, you want to make sure you can clearly explain that to them. It doesn't necessarily have to be explained in great detail on your board. That's a great question that people can ask you that then you can answer and draw them even further into understanding and appreciating the work that you just did.

Ota: Okay, very good. So it needs to be visually appealing, it needs to be clear what you did and why people should care, and that should hook in your audience. We wish you the very best of luck as you embark on your scientific investigation or engineering design challenge. We know you'll do a fantastic job.