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### 2 Specialists Share Tips for Getting Your Message Across

There's a bright spot in the U.S. employment picture: the health-care industry.

Health-care employers added 17,000 jobs in November, and they've been adding an average 27,000 jobs a month since December 2010, according to the most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics report.

That's the good news. The bad news is nearly 10,000 health-care workers have lost jobs since August; there were 136 mass layoffs in that time period.

"Finding work in health-care is definitely getting easier, but the stiff competition means you'll need more than credentials to land those jobs," says Stephanie Roberson Barnard, a communications consultant who specializes in training medical professionals to speak and write clearly and effectively.

"Check any online job-hunting Web site for science, technical, pharmaceutical, biotech and medical jobs and you'll find one common requirement: 'excellent communication skills,'" she and co-author Deborah St. James write in their new book, *Listen. Write. Present: The Elements for Communicating Science and Technology* (Yale University Press; 2012), [www.ListenWritePresent.com](http://www.ListenWritePresent.com)

Unfortunately, the science-rich education required for health-care professionals leaves little room for learning how to craft a message for a particular audience, be it an email or a PowerPoint presentation. And that's essential not only for getting jobs, but for keeping them and winning promotions, Barnard says.

She and St. James, deputy director of publications and communications for a North Carolina biotech company, offer these tips for getting your message across:

## Great Communicators Get the Health-Care Jobs, Promotions, Experts Say

Written by Ginny Grimsley

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- **Plan:** Take time to get to know your clients, colleagues and co-workers. Establish rapport and cultivate a collaborative relationship by finding out about others' interests (check out the pictures in their offices for clues) and inquiring about them. If you have never been to their offices, look them up on Google or their company's Web site. Always keep your personal conversations light and professional.
  
- **Listen:** Smile, nod, and acknowledge the speaker – and mean it. Really focus on what the person is saying and not just on the words. Truly effective communication requires your full attention. It's better to spend a few minutes concentrating on the other person's message during a conversation than wasting time trying to remember what he or she said because you were trying to do something else. It's okay to write or type notes as long as you ask permission first.
  
- **Present:** Practice. Practice. Practice. Need we say more? Of all the tips we offer, practicing is perhaps the most important one. People in our audiences often suggest that it's possible to over practice. They claim that too much practicing makes a talk appear staged. We have found that the "stiff" presenters are the ones who haven't practiced. They're so busy trying to remember what they're going to say, they can't tune into the audience or deviate from their slides. In contrast, the speakers who have mastered their content seem to glide about the room, exuding just the right amount of enthusiasm.
  
- **Meet:** Respect people's time by presenting materials simply. The biggest complaint people have about meetings is that they last too long. For this reason, presenting your ideas in a simple, concise fashion will give you the advantage of appearing focused and prepared. Remember, never compromise content for simplicity.
  
- **Serve:** Be kind to others. It costs nothing and requires no skill. Your kind words, good deed, or thoughtful gift may even launch a cascade of positive gestures among others. A recent study by researchers from the University of California San Diego and Harvard University suggests that cooperative behavior spreads among people. This ripple effect can have a wonderful positive impact on the corporate culture of your organization.

"Good leaders must learn to communicate not only within their field of expertise but also to reach people outside their field of authority, influence and passion," Barnard says. "With proper training and practice anyone can become a better communicator."

### About Stephanie Roberson Barnard

Stephanie Roberson Barnard has trained thousands of pharmaceutical industry professionals on how to be more effective speakers, writers and communicators. She has also coached hundreds of health-care professionals on presentation skills for FDA hearings, CFO reports and scientific speaker programs, as well as national and international congresses. Her clients include AstraZeneca, Bayer Corporation, WL Gore, and Boehringer Ingelheim. This is her second Yale Press book collaboration with Deborah St. James.

### About Deborah St. James

Deborah St. James is Deputy Director of Publications and Scientific Communications at Grifols. She has worked in the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industry for more than 20 years. Prior to her current position, she was Bayer Corporation's senior manager for national sales training in the pharmaceutical division. She is a former college English instructor and Senior Editor of Better Health magazine.