

Science Communication as a Key to Personal Branding

A look back at a discussion on why self-branding is a „soft science skill“ with hard impact



The discussion on effective science communication continued in a small, highly motivated group. In the picture: Lucas Kreuzer (far left), Kaori Nakashima (front left, white blazer), Christian Kuttner (center, gray jacket), and Elodie Chabrol (next to him on the right, dressed in black with colorful hair tips).

Between poster sessions and technical presentations, an unusual format took place during this year's DPG Spring Meeting of the Condensed Matter Section. Around lunchtime, Lucas Kreuzer (AGyouLeaP) and Christian Kuttner (AIW), both alumni of the "Leading for Tomorrow" program, invited participants to an interactive discussion forum titled "Soft Science Skills: Self-Branding for Scientists".

The Audimax at TU Dresden was well filled—mostly with early-career researchers in the midst of their PhDs. This clearly shows that alongside "hard science," other questions are becoming increasingly important: What do I stand for? What topics drive me? What is my intrinsic motivation?

Once these questions are answered, the next ones follow naturally: Who do I want to reach? Who is part of my community? How do I address these people? And what should they say about me when I'm not in the room?

We discussed these questions together with guests who engage in science communication from very different perspectives. Elodie Chabrol, a freelance science communica-

tion expert and director of Pint of Science, works daily to make complex research understandable and accessible. In coaching sessions, she helps early-career researchers distill their work to the essentials—sometimes quite literally into 180 seconds. Occasionally, she says with a smile, the fine-tuning still happens the evening before the presentation.

One central challenge always remains the same: simplification must not lead to distortion. Good science communication makes content accessible without altering its meaning. When asked by the audience what to do if one cannot achieve this alone, her pragmatic answer was: "Then get help—ideally from people who do this professionally".

Institutions must also rethink their approach. Kaori Nakashima emphasized that publication announcements and event notices are not sufficient for effective science communication. What is needed are targeted insights into real research practice, tailored to different audiences. She coordinates projects between the European Space Agency (ESA) and the Helmholtz Centre for Geosciences. Her experience shows

that early-career researchers can particularly benefit from the reach of their institutions if they make use of and further develop existing formats.

Christian Kuttner offered another perspective. As a Senior Editor at Nature Communications, he deals daily with the question of how new research fits into the scientific canon. His message was clear: science requires precision—even in communication. Exaggerated claims, pointed superlatives, or unsupported statements have no place in the scientific record. Instead of qualitative judgments, he recommends quantitative arguments: numbers, data, facts. Science thrives on evidence, not opinion. This applies to research papers but also to science on social media.

However, good communication does not end with writing a paper. Lucas Kreuzer, instrument scientist at the Heinz Maier-Leibnitz Research Neutron Source (FRM II) and host of the podcast "Your Friendly Physicist And Other Nerds", emphasized how much work goes into seemingly simple formats. Whether it is a podcast episode or a YouTube script, most of the effort lies in fact-checking. He also explained how science comm-

unication can help build networks and communities, both online and offline.

In the end, three key principles emerged:

- **It has to be enjoyable.** Communication works best when it stems from genuine enthusiasm—not from trying to satisfy an algorithm.

- **Just start.** The “first-pancake rule” says that initial attempts are never perfect. That’s normal. Perfectionism is often the biggest obstacle to getting started.

- **Have the courage to try something new.** Anyone who wants to experiment should not fear setbacks.

Inspiration is fine—but in the end, your own voice, vision, and brand are what matter.

Self-branding is not a marketing trick. It is a tool to make yourself and the topics you stand for visible. In a scientific world that is increasingly interconnected with society, media, and politics, this skill is becoming a key competency.

Anyone who wants to explore the topic further will soon have the opportunity: the DPG Academy will offer the workshop “Positioning and Visibility: Personal Branding for Early-Career Physicists” on October 9–10 in Munich. This was one of the

three winners of the 2026 idea competition. Because anyone who wants to convince scientifically must also be able to communicate clearly what they stand for.

Christian Kuttner and Lucas Kreuzer