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# It's Not What You Know, It's What You Value: Why Facts Alone Don't Bridge Divides

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For many of us trained in science, communication seems like a straightforward process: identify misinformation, present the correct facts, and trust that evidence will do the rest. But in today's polarized landscape, it's increasingly clear that differences in opinion rarely stem from differences in information. Instead, they often arise from differences in values: the deeply held worldviews, priorities, and moral frames through which people interpret information in the first place.

This talk explores what happens when we shift our focus from informing people to understanding them. Drawing on insights from recent research and real-world examples from science communication campaigns, I will argue that the traditional "deficit model" (assuming people just need more information) fails not because people don't understand the facts, but because the facts are filtered through different value systems.

As Bloomfield writes in *Science vs. Story*, scientific communication often falters because science tells people what is true, while stories tell them what is meaningful. Similarly, McIntyre's *How to Talk to a Science Denier* reminds us that persuasion in the face of misinformation is less about refuting claims than about building trust and shared identity. And as Storr argues in *The Science of Storytelling*, humans think in narratives first and reason second: our values shape which stories feel true long before the data arrive.

For instance, climate change can be seen as a threat to the planet (a care value), a call for stewardship (a loyalty value), or an assault on personal freedom (a liberty value). The underlying data don't change, but how people feel about the data does, depending on what they value most. When communicators ignore this, we risk speaking fluently to those who already agree with us, and alienating those who don't.

This session invites science communication officers to reflect on who they are really talking to, and who they are not. The goal is not to "market" science differently, but to make it relatable and relevant by understanding the human stories behind disagreement, and how to leverage them to communicate science in ways that build connection rather than conflict.

Facts matter. But as we face growing mistrust and misinformation, we must remember: facts travel further when carried by values and stories people recognize as their own.

**Workshops only: Duration**

**Workshops only: participants**

**Workshops only: Equipment**

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