Top Tips for Community Engagement Events

- Make sure to keep in mind the purpose of the event. What do you want people to take away from the activity? Is there somewhere they can find out more information, if they're interested, or an activity that they could do at home? How will you measure whether your activity/event was effective? Do consider your evaluation strategy ahead of the event.

- Consider any ethical issues that may come up during your engagement. Be prepared for meeting individuals directly affected by the subject of your research, such as a particular disease or condition. You may need to make it clear that you can’t give out medical advice to individuals. You may get some tricky questions, particularly if you use animal models in your research. It is a good idea to go through how you could respond to different scenarios and questions before the activity.

- If you don't have DBS clearance and the engagement activity involves children, make sure that you are not left alone with a child/student at any point. If there are any lost children at an event, then let the event organizers know. Avoid touching any child/student (within reason).

- Be prepared to be asked questions that are not directly about your research. Be prepared to talk to people more generally about careers in science/technology/your field of study too.

- If you don't know the answer to a question then be honest about it. There will usually be someone else around who knows the answer. If not, then why not take down the person’s details and tell them you will get back to them in due course.

- Having a bottle of water to hand is always a good idea as your mouth can get very dry from talking a lot. Wear comfortable shoes too as you will be on your feet a lot.

- Don’t panic if you are doing an activity that requires kit and you run out mid-event. It happens, so just be flexible and adapt the activity until you can replace the kit.

- Look enthusiastic and avoid engaging in too much conversation with your colleagues. You are there to engage with the public, and this may make you look less approachable.

Most importantly, enjoy yourself, your enthusiasm and knowledge of your topic will shine through.

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