



Jaakko Nousiainen, Researcher (left), and Mika Sipi, Administrative Director of UPM Research Center, were happy with the training program presentation skills targeted at experts.

From experts to expert speakers

Providing reports, summaries and presentations is an integral part of working as a researcher. AAC tailored a training program in presentation skills for the team of researchers at the UPM Research Center.

Text: Sara Lindström **Photo:** Ari Nakari

"If you're trying to sell your ideas, presentation technique is of crucial importance."

– Mika Sipi

The UPM Research Center in Lappeenranta is a genuine expert organization. The research projects carried out by the team are concerned with almost every aspect of pulp and paper production and development.

"You can say that everything that happens to wood fiber from a felled tree to a printed product has something to do with what we do," says Jaakko Nousiainen with a smile.

In addition to actual research, Nousiainen and his colleagues spend a lot of their time reporting and presenting their research to various audiences. Projects often last several months or even years, and it is important that researchers can compile reports that describe the project in a concise, easily understandable form.

"If you're trying to sell your ideas, the presentation technique is what matters. We started to wonder whether it would be possible to tailor a training program in verbal and written presentation skills for us," says Mika Sipi, Administrative Manager at the UPM Research Center.

The first Argumentative Presentation Skills for Experts courses designed by AAC were carried out last spring, with new training sessions to follow this year. Nousiainen also participated in the training. He was told of the opportunity by colleagues who had participated in the pilot project and was immediately interested.

"Of course I was interested in an opportunity to develop my competencies and particularly the skill of presenting my message in a brief, concise manner," he says.

A perfect match of theory and practice

The two-day training course is based on AAC's Target Based Argumentation (TBA) technique. The training language is English. Before the course, the participants study material which gives them an overview of the technique. During the first day of training they look at practical ways to apply the technique.

"The TBA technique is about the kinds of arguments you should use if you have an idea you want to sell to your audience. The content is tailored to the recipient's context and the meaning of the message for the recipient.

From the perspective of the audience, the presentation should be logical and easy to follow," says Tomi Lang, Key Account Manager at AAC. At the end of the first training day the participants receive an intermediate task, which includes preparing a report summary and presentation. Before the second training day, each participant has the opportunity to obtain help and feedback from the trainer.

During the second training day, the group focuses on presentation skills. At the end of the course, the trainer will also

provide feedback on each recipient's English language skills.

Mika Sipi finds the structure and concept of the course successful.

"In our opinion learning about the theory and the intermediate tasks were extremely important, as they allowed us to focus on honing our presentation techniques during the actual sessions," he says.

Intensive teamwork provides results

Nousiainen describes the training as efficient and says it gave him many useful tools for his work. He finds both his written and verbal presentation skills have taken a huge leap forward.

"It was eye-opening to realize how differently you can communicate things when you look at them from the recipient's perspective. Small things, such as a personal opening phrase, can help make your presentation more interesting," he says.

Nousiainen was also satisfied with the small group size (5 participants) and the training technique.

"In our small group everyone took an active part in the sessions and the discussion was rewarding. I found it particularly efficient that all presentations were captured on video and we then analyzed them together with the trainer. Getting feedback from a native English speaker also boosted my confidence in my language skills."

Nousiainen has also recommended the course for his colleagues.

Nousiainen and Sipi both see the training as benefiting the researchers' daily work in many ways.

"Being able to communicate efficiently, both among ourselves and with outsiders, is an excellent advantage and resource," Sipi concludes.

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