



REVIEW

For scientists who want to better communicate science

Reviewed Book

Lindenfeld, L., Besley, J. C., Zheng, X., Dudo, A., & Newman, T. P. (2026). *Science communication for scientists: linking strategy with creativity, practice, and respect*. Routledge.

Reviewed by

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Abstract

Science Communication for Scientists: Linking Strategy with Creativity, Practice, and Respect serves as a necessary, current resource for scientists seeking to communicate about their work more effectively. The book expertly meets the collective moment in which we find ourselves – socio-politically, based on practical norms and common institutional infrastructures and incentives, and based on the state of the science communication literature – to offer scientists operating in democratic societies a much-needed resource for communicating their science with various stakeholder groups.

Keywords

Public engagement with science and technology

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Although this journal's readership should not need convincing of the importance of thoughtful science communication efforts or the challenges associated with doing science communication well, Lindenfeld et al. [2026] have provided an excellent resource for those working in science who want to engage stakeholders more successfully and who may be less familiar with the commonplace theories and practices in the science communication discipline.

This book is for those scientists who want to go beyond simply publishing a study and sharing its insights via a press release or social media posting. As the authors note:

Such communication is fine, but it's not the approach we describe in this book. We see communication as a core part of the scientific process, something that can help scientists do better science while ensuring that their work has the impact it deserves... It is for scientists who believe — as we believe — that science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) have vital roles to play in society, but that STEM can only fulfill this potential when scientists actively share their hard-won insights with those who stand to benefit from them. The book is also for those who are open to the idea that STEM professionals can make better research and communication choices when they actively seek out and listen to the insights of others, including the diverse range of voices present in all our communities. This book probably isn't for scientists who need convincing that communication is worthwhile. [p. 1–2]

In an ideal world, normative practices in science would be such that thoughtful, robust science communication efforts would be a fundamental part of the scientific process; thoughtful science communication would be expected, supported, evaluated, and celebrated. Unfortunately, there are many structural barriers and institutional and disciplinary norms that prevent this reality in many cases, and many of the incentives that exist for scientists to engage in science communication appeal to intrinsic values and motivations, or short-term extrinsic motivations (e.g., social impact work conducted based on funding contingencies). In an ideal world, the types and levels of professionals involved in carrying out and supporting thoughtful science communication (strategy, planning, implementation, and evaluation) would be much more nuanced and expansive. However, Lindenfeld et al. [2026] meet the moment we find ourselves in and provide a timely, evidence-based resource to equip those with legitimacy to speak on behalf of — and to engage the public with — science. Readers who apply the insights contained in the book will better communicate the impact and relevance of their work with the various stakeholders who might need to know about or act upon such information.

The book is focused on evidence-based, ethical, and creative strategies. It emphasizes communication as a long-term, reciprocal process of information sharing and receiving that can be used to develop and maintain trust with stakeholders. The authors make an important distinction between how the book's focus on science *communication* is distinct from research and practice in science *education*, noting that while science communication and science education "have deep groundings in the social sciences, and both involve sharing scientific ideas and findings with a wide range of people... educators typically aim to increase students' factual knowledge, whereas communication researchers seem more likely to focus

on fostering real-world behavioral change” [p. 4–5]. This focus provides the foundation for why those focused on *strategic* science communication must be concerned with how to influence people ethically in science contexts. Similarly, they emphasise communicating *with* audiences rather than communicating *to* audiences — noting that authentic listening is an imperative component of effective and ethical communication, particularly if communicators want to build trust and be seen as credible sources of information.

The book is organised in three major sections: the first section devoted to a rationale for making science communication strategic; the second section focused on common approaches to message design, and the third section dedicated to the norms and distinctions specific to common contexts in which scientists might want to communicate their work, and guidance for developing communication skills in each. The book’s structure will appeal to scientists wanting to explore specific message design tools (e.g., the use of visuals or narrative) and specific communication contexts (e.g., communicating as a team member versus communicating with policymakers versus journalists), but also it prioritises a necessary infusion of communication theory and rationale throughout rather than accommodating a sole focus on tactical communication. Applications and examples of how social scientists conduct research about these topics infuse the book, and the book instils the importance of research and evaluation as readers consider designing, implementing, and assessing the effectiveness of their own science communication activities.

Although not an explicit focus of the book, science communication scholars will find interesting fodder for advancing science communication theory in ways that could meaningfully inform science communication practice moving forward; for example, a curious reader might be inspired regarding the role of visuals in communicating science, the various contexts in which narratives can (or should) be used (for better or worse) to communicate science, and the ethics and effectiveness of implementing communication design choices in different contexts. The book raises opportunities to pursue (theoretically and practically) interesting questions building from the evidence base described in the book. The book is openly accessible, too, which further lends authenticity to the authors’ stated goal of the book and the spirit of encouraging thoughtful science communication practice and making the barriers to entry (e.g., gaining access to specialised knowledge) a little less pronounced. As the authors note, they “wrote this book because we care about science and its role in society. We know that helping scientists, technologists, engineers, and mathematicians communicate effectively and creatively about their research and the research of others is inextricably linked to how society values — or doesn’t value — science.” [p. 2]. Relatedly, the book’s content is primarily applicable and relevant to scientists and science communicators working in democratic societies where they have opportunities to engage in ethical and strategic public communication; that is, scientists and science communicators working in democracies likely have more opportunities to foster behavioural change with their work than those who do not.

In summary, *Science Communication for Scientists: Linking Strategy with Creativity, Practice, and Respect* serves as a necessary, current resource for scientists hoping to communicate about their work more effectively. The book expertly meets the collective moment in which we find ourselves — socio-politically, based on practical norms and common institutional infrastructures and incentives, and based on the state of the science communication literature — to offer scientists operating in democratic societies a much-needed resource for communicating their science with various stakeholder groups.

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