



The Ups and Downs of Giving a Peak Oil Presentation

Posted by [Phil Hart](#) on June 16, 2008 - 6:00pm in [The Oil Drum: Australia/New Zealand](#)

Topic: [Sociology/Psychology](#)

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Since returning to Melbourne two years ago after working in the North Sea oil and gas industry, I've given a peak oil presentation to varied audiences on average once a month. They have all been positive experiences (some more so than others) and at least help me feel that I am doing something constructive. Generally though, I've had audiences who have invited me to come and speak about this topic, so I've usually had a polite if not completely convinced audience.

TOD reader Ralph started first time with a tougher audience:

Recently a client of mine (in Adelaide) asked me if I would like to give a talk to the local Rotary Club on a subject of my choice. Now there are lots of fascinating, amusing and uplifting subjects I could have chosen, but instead, inspired by some of the great TOD publicists, and having been a resource Cassandra for 35 years since reading Paul Ehrlich, I decided to throw away my chances of winning friends and being the life of the party- and talked about Peak Oil.

This was my first talk on the subject so I used a prepared script. They only gave me 20 minutes talk time plus 10 minutes question time to cover this huge subject. So I decided to start with the current rising price of petrol etc to establish a personal link, then moved onto the underlying cause from there. (A purist would probably have gone to the geology fundamentals first). Unfortunately, this left no time to talk about positive solutions.

I think if I had my time again, I would make it shorter and simpler and try to shoot down the objections in question time rather than pre-empt them in the body of the text.

Only 3 questions could be coaxed from an audience of 30. One was "If I drill for oil in my backyard will I find any?" I wasn't sure whether this lack of response indicated that everyone was stunned, or indifferent, defended by rationalizations, or just thought that I was a crazy millennialist who should be politely ignored. The president indicated to the

audience that he disagreed with my conclusions based around a vague "they will come up with something" argument.

I always expected Rotary to be a difficult nut to crack as they are more likely to be relaxed and comfortable with the joys and accumulated treasures of the post-war oil bonanza than most. So I intend to improve my speech and take another tilt at the windmill if the opportunity arises.

I welcome feedback, suggestions and criticisms from the TOD audience.

I think the whole issue of how best to strategically present the PO story for maximum persuasive impact is worth discussing on TOD- though the fundamental rules of public speaking - "Know your audience" and "KISS" should still determine the shape of any presentation.

thanks
Ralph (Adelaide)



You can download and read [Ralph's presentation](#) and provide comments below.

Also available are [Gail Tverberg's presentation and overview](#)--which has a whole packet of materials, and [a set of slides that I used recently](#) - there are very few words but most TOD readers will be able to see the story that goes with each slide.

You can also watch ASPO's Stuart McCarthy recent presentation to Engineers Australia in Brisbane earlier in May

(choose the presentation title from the May list):

[Peak Oil: The broader sustainability and engineering implications in South East Queensland.](#)

Over to you now.. Whether you've been in the audience or running the show, what makes a good peak oil presentation?



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