

**Thank you for agreeing to speak for us! Your time and talent are greatly appreciated, and we look forward to hosting a great experience for everyone.**

We strive to be a premier provider of education for Landscape Architects in Illinois by offering unique higher-level learning opportunities to increase knowledge and propel careers forward. In turn, we also want to help you gain experience and insight through your presentation.

To assist you, we have gathered **Attendee Feedback** from the past 5 years of Education presentations made to ILASLA audiences: tips to reach this particular group and things to avoid. We hope these ideas help and are happy to add thoughts that you have gathered over your years (or weeks) of speaking to landscape architects and members of the green industry. Tips are broken out into the following categories:

1. **Know your (Landscape Architect) Audience**
2. **Title, Objectives, and Content**
3. **Topic Introduction**
4. **Room Prep**
5. **Audience Materials**

## Tip 1: Know your (Landscape Architect) Audience

You are a star speaker – of course, they want to see you! Well, at least you think they do. Not everyone has an amazing speaking reputation preceding them. And even if you are a star in the field it doesn't guarantee you are a star communicator. So, the basic rules still apply.

These are valid questions for the education contact:

- A. Are my audience members new or experienced professionals, students, or members of an affiliate green industry association?
- B. What is the general interest of the audience? Why are they there and what level of experience do they have with the topic?

Are they:

- a. Genuinely interested in the topic → you will need to keep their attention through engaging them and asking questions back to them
- b. Generally interested in the topic → you will need to gain their attention through solid examples and a well-timed presentation
- c. Just there to get their CE credits → you will need to gain and keep their attention through connecting personally at the beginning of the presentation

Of course, there will be a mix, but the most successful speakers check with their conference manager and survey their audience at the beginning of the talk. Most importantly, adjust

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accordingly and prepare to be flexible. If you prepared your talk for an inexperienced group and they have heard it all before (aka eye-rolls) have the upgrade available ... this may mean invoking the audience for more of a problem-solving/sharing session or anecdotal stories that delve deeper into the issues.

### **Previous Attendee Feedback:**

- A little too narrow for the audience – not for rural areas
- Too basic
- Need a talk on specific design criteria
- More technical would be helpful
- (Details) Process, engineering, pitfalls, expectations
- Overly technical about the manufacturing process and specs, show applications to landscape architects
- + Love the science background

### **Tip 2: Title, Objectives and Content**

**Title and Objectives:** Name your session and provide a description and learning outcomes to the Education Chair/Contact. This will address complaints that the title and description of the presentation didn't accurately represent the content. Leaving it up to the contact to complete these steps often creates a lot of guessing, resulting in confusion by the audience.

It can be difficult to condense your session into one topic line but choosing the most definitive outcome goals will help narrow the ideas. Subtitles are helpful if one line is too difficult. Being a bit catchy in the title doesn't hurt.

**Content:** No particular class is mandatory, so there is at least a slight level of interest and/or knowledge from the participants. As mentioned, the goal is to provide unique higher-level learning opportunities to increase knowledge and propel careers forward.

Is the goal of the presentation to provide information or provoke a thought change? Are there one or two points that you expect everyone to grasp? Defining and sharing this with your audience will help to determine if the content was a success.

This is a good time to also remind you that talking about a specific brand is off-limits, most especially if you are representing that brand. Of course, there are exceptions, i.e. if you are giving a talk on the top BIM software programs and how they compare or similar instances.

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### **Previous Attendee Feedback:**

- It's not what I expected based on the description of the topic and title
- Speak to current trends
- More hands-on sessions and if advertised as "hands-on" make it hands-on and leave time for practice
- Where practical – provide updated pictures
- Would like to see more before and after's
- Skipped through too many slides
- Would have liked to see more examples of projects
- + Case studies are good – what went well, what didn't
- + He's a passionate person and has a way to draw you in
- + Excellent hands-on participation – more of these, please!
- + Interesting presentation of different solutions
- + Really like the photos of what not to do - would like to see more of that
- + Was good at taking a detailed issue and making it easy to understand

### **Tip 2: Topic Introduction**

How much background is necessary for your introduction? For ASLA members, you can assume your audience has at least a strong science and design background, usually a bachelor's or master's degree in landscape architecture or a similar field. Think of it as a college 201 class versus a 101.

To assist you and the participant, we will request a level of class designation.

1. General Study: The subject should be understood by everyone who has a working knowledge of the green industry.
2. Deep Dive: Some previous knowledge of the topic will help you understand the course.
3. Master Class: Experience in the topic is expected. Review basics first.

Avoid using the introduction as your biography. While it's effective to state your credentials, a little goes a long way.

### **Previous Attendee Feedback:**

- Spent too much time talking about the history [of the subject], would like to hear more about how to use it in a design
- Too much introduction about himself
- Get to the meat of the subject quicker

**Tip 4: Room Prep**

Ask the education contact to send you a layout of your lecture room. Walk the room before your presentation – you’d be surprised how many experienced speakers make sure this is a part of their routine. Get familiar with the room and take advantage of any run through opportunities such as mic tests, slide practice, and lighting. Don’t be shy about this step – it’s a vital presentation skill that many people skip because they are either comfortable anywhere or don’t want to inconvenience anyone.

During the presentation, be ready to adjust to feedback. Barreling through a talk when your audience can’t hear you or see you or your materials will negate all the preparation you’ve put into the presentation.

**Previous Attendee Feedback:**

- Couldn’t hear session in the back
- Couldn’t see the yellow words on the slides
- Slides were fuzzy
- Speak more clearly

**Tip 5: Audience Materials**

One of the most consistent and confusing pieces of feedback has been what collateral to provide to the landscape architect audience. “Can we get copies of the slides?” is heard during virtually every session. Some people prefer them ahead of time, some want them digitally and some will settle for the ability to take a photo of the slide or even see them after the presentation. But requests tend to be consistent within particular audiences.

Emerging Professionals: Digital access is usually requested, either during the presentation through an app or at least the ability to take photos of the slides. Make it clear if they do or do not have permission to take photos and if so, leave time for snapping pics.

Mid-Career to Experienced: Handouts of pertinent information and/or the slides or an outline before the presentation are requested consistently.

**Previous Attendee Feedback:**

- Handouts please (this is our number one request!)
  - Provide handouts before the presentation
  - Make slides available
- You get the message...

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**Thank you, again, for sharing your time and knowledge with us. We hope with these tips we can all prevent feedback such as:**

- Boring
- Speaker could be more engaging
- Don't pitch/advertise so many things in the presentation

### **And more like:**

- + Excellent presenter
- + Great use of pictures and examples in the presentation
- + To the point – good slides
- + Knowledgeable
- + Loved everything about it
- + Wish there was more time to this topic
- + Thank you. More like this!

Have tips to share from your perspective? Contact us at [susan@il-asla.org](mailto:susan@il-asla.org).