

TARGETING A CERTIFIED CROP ADVISER AUDIENCE: IS THERE SOME MIDDLE GROUND? Bryan G. Young, Professor, Department of Plant, Soil, and Agricultural Systems, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901.

Certified Crop Advisers (CCAs) serve a critical role in relaying pertinent research findings and practical implications to growers for the purpose of improving environmental stewardship, crop production, or profitability. In general, a CCA may be viewed as someone that is a liaison from the technical research/education side of the agricultural industry to the practitioner or crop producer. In fact, the range in educational level for CCAs is extremely broad from less than a high school diploma to a Ph.D. Thus, the CCA audience may range from those who are comfortable with scientific methodology to those who just want to know what your message has to do with their job focus and production practices. Thus, the CCA audience can be challenging in terms of knowing what level of expertise to focus your presentation on and trying to find the middle ground to make your presentation effective for all in the audience. That middle ground may very well be that all CCAs share a common knowledge and appreciation for the technical aspects of crop production which can serve as a base for all presentations.

The content of a presentation to a CCA audience must be filled with technical information that can be readily adapted to improve crop management or improve the audience's understanding of the science behind some of the current issues in crop production. The presentation should start by demonstrating to the audience that you understand the current status of their industry and by explaining how your information relates to their circumstances. In other words, it's best if you come with some field credibility or the group may choose to disregard your comments as it may be evident that you are not familiar with their situation. It is not necessary to include a literature review in the introduction of your presentation. The CCA audience will acknowledge your expertise and will not hold you to describing all your research methods to prove you conducted the research correctly. Instead, a few pictures and a general approach to the research methods is all that is necessary. Again, the CCA audience is not there to question your knowledge of the literature or your ability to conduct research. They just want to hear how your information may be able to help them perform their job duties. Slides with data (graphs, tables, figures, etc.) are well within the comfort level of CCAs. However, don't go overboard with very technical data that does not easily translate to the field (ie Southern Blots, complex soil physics, enzyme kinetics, etc.). Feel free to use a simple bullet point or picture in lieu of data to deliver your message or summarize some research. You should conclude your presentation with a summary of the practical importance your message or findings have on crop production and how it may be used to improve crop management. You should deliver a convincing message on the importance of your information and at the same time push the audience to their technical limits so they can continue their education in crop management. Lastly, keep the presentation as informal as possible and consider entertaining questions during your presentation.