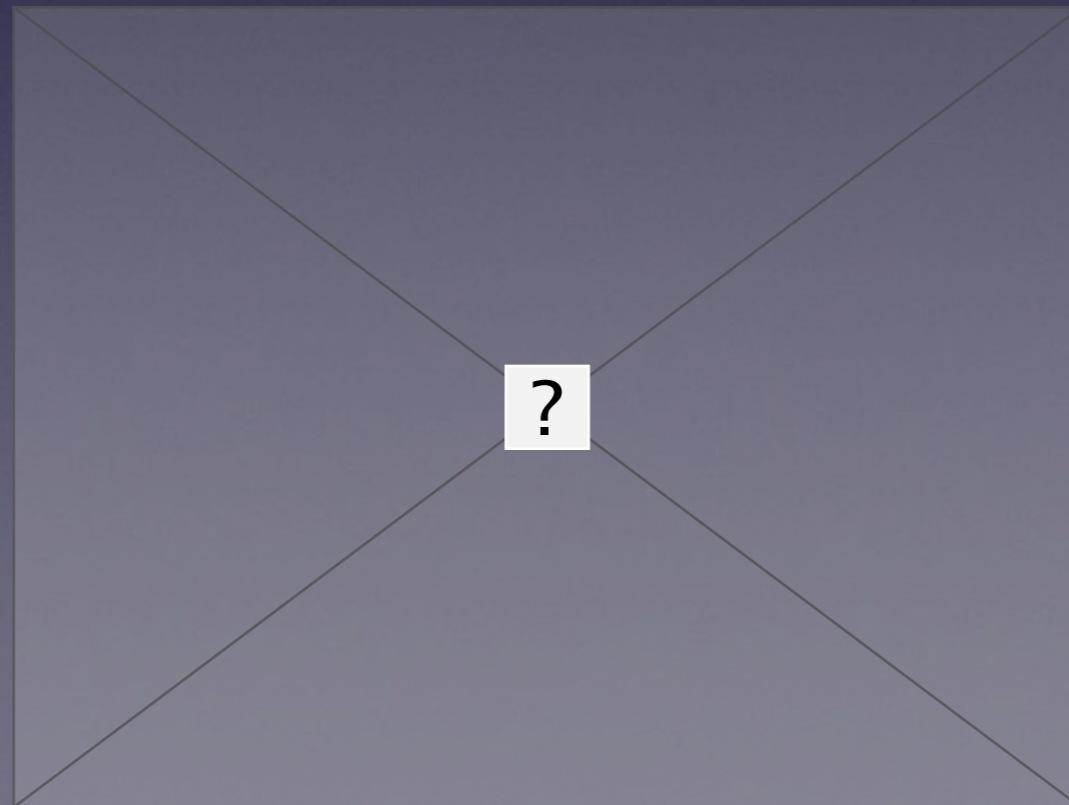


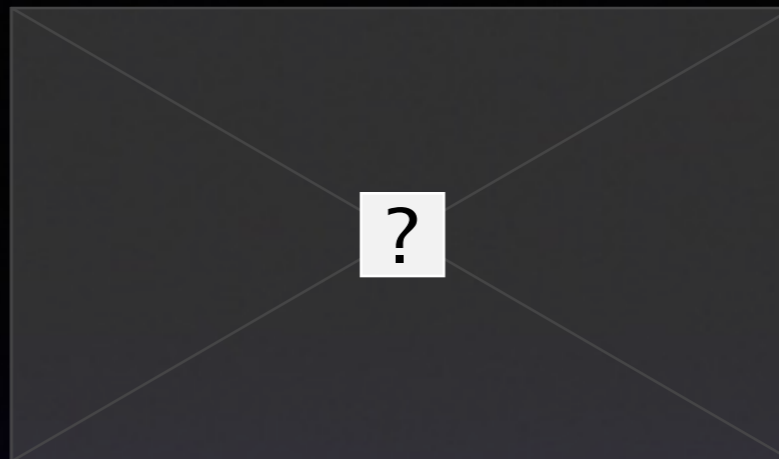
Postdoc Training Workshop
Seville National Wildlife Reserve and Field Station
January 2017

Talking to the media: why it matters and how to do it.

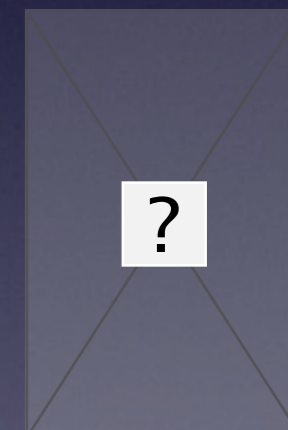
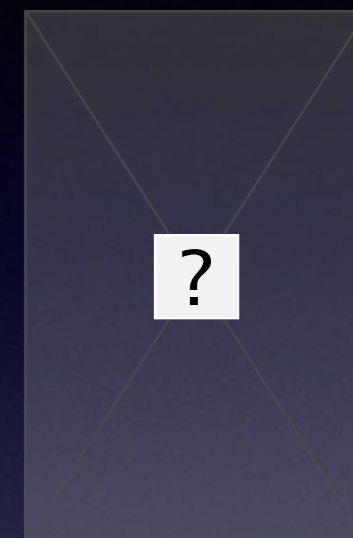
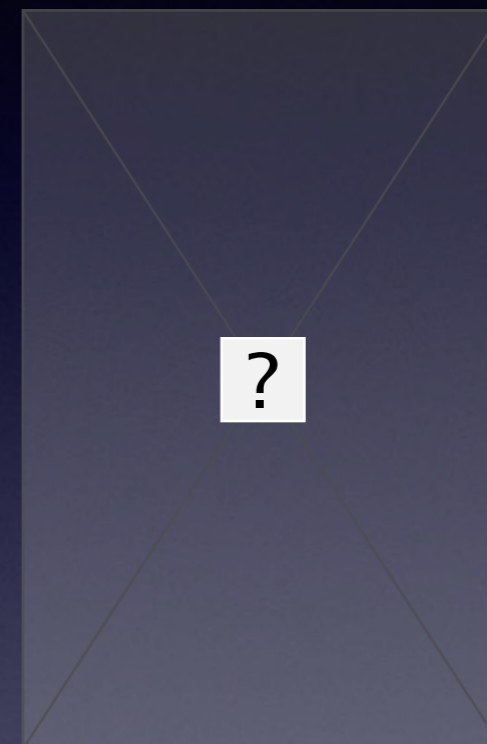
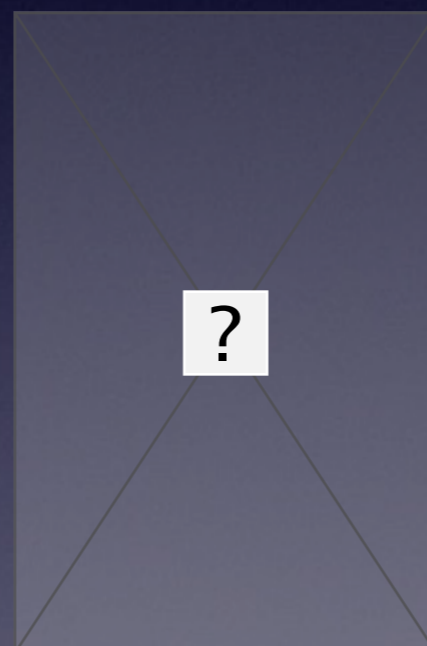
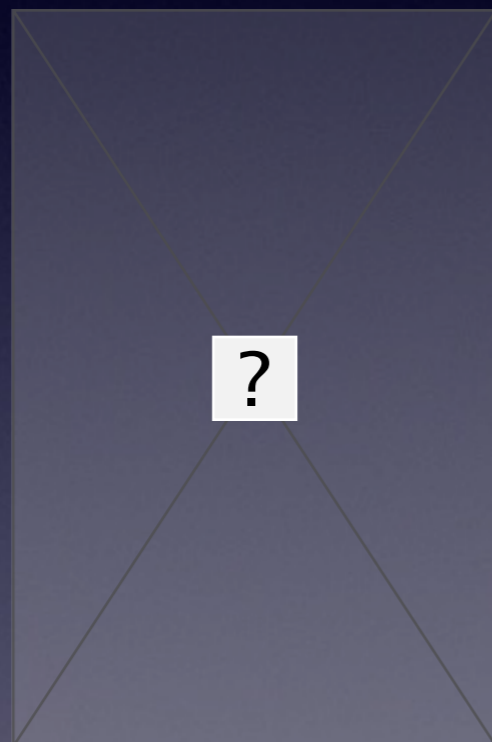
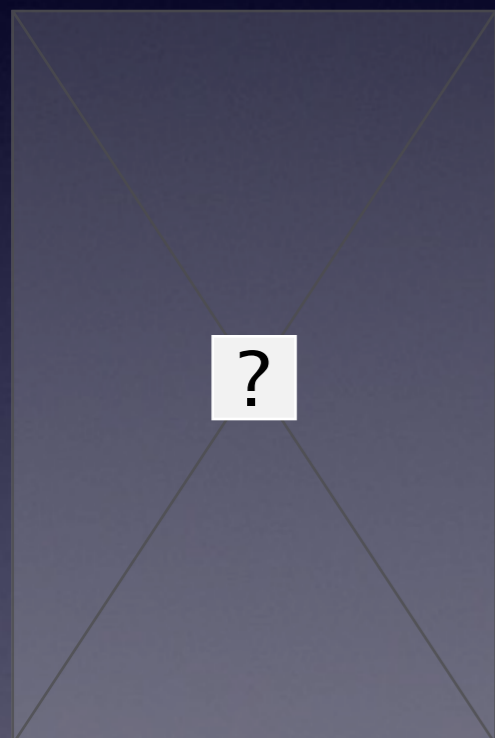
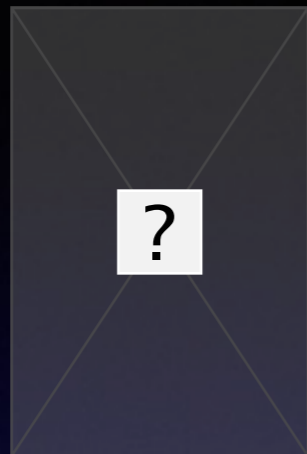


this is what I do...

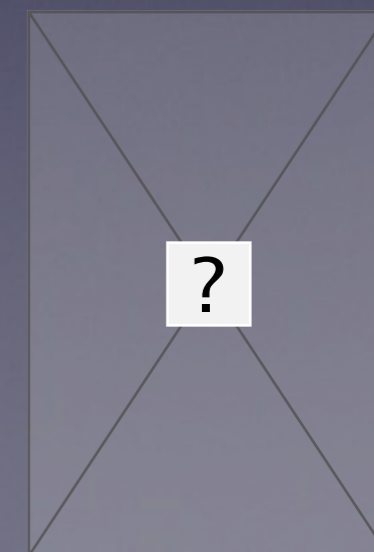
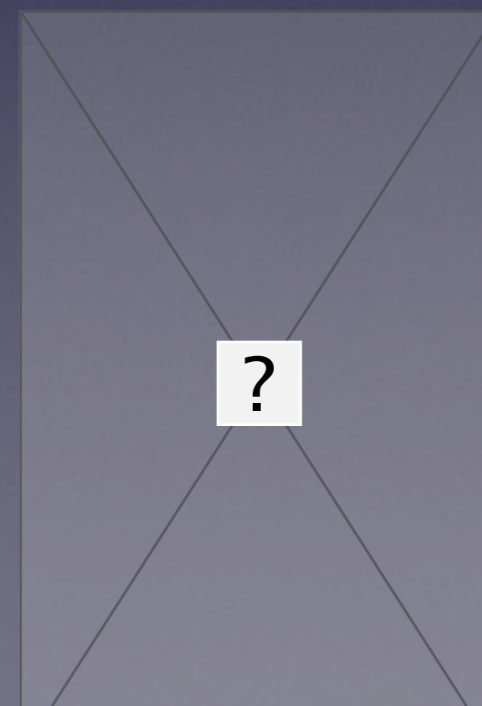
Dirt is Good

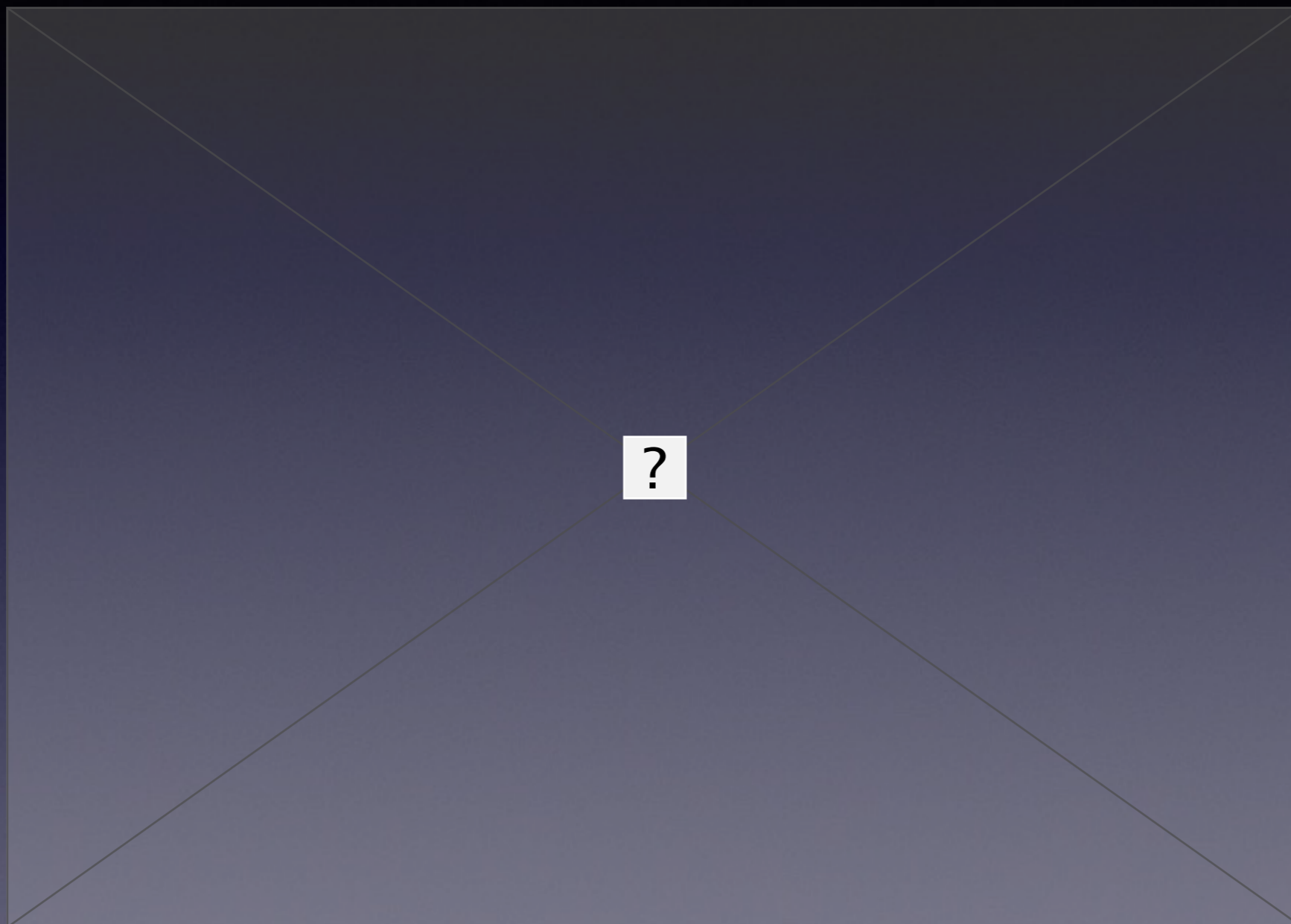


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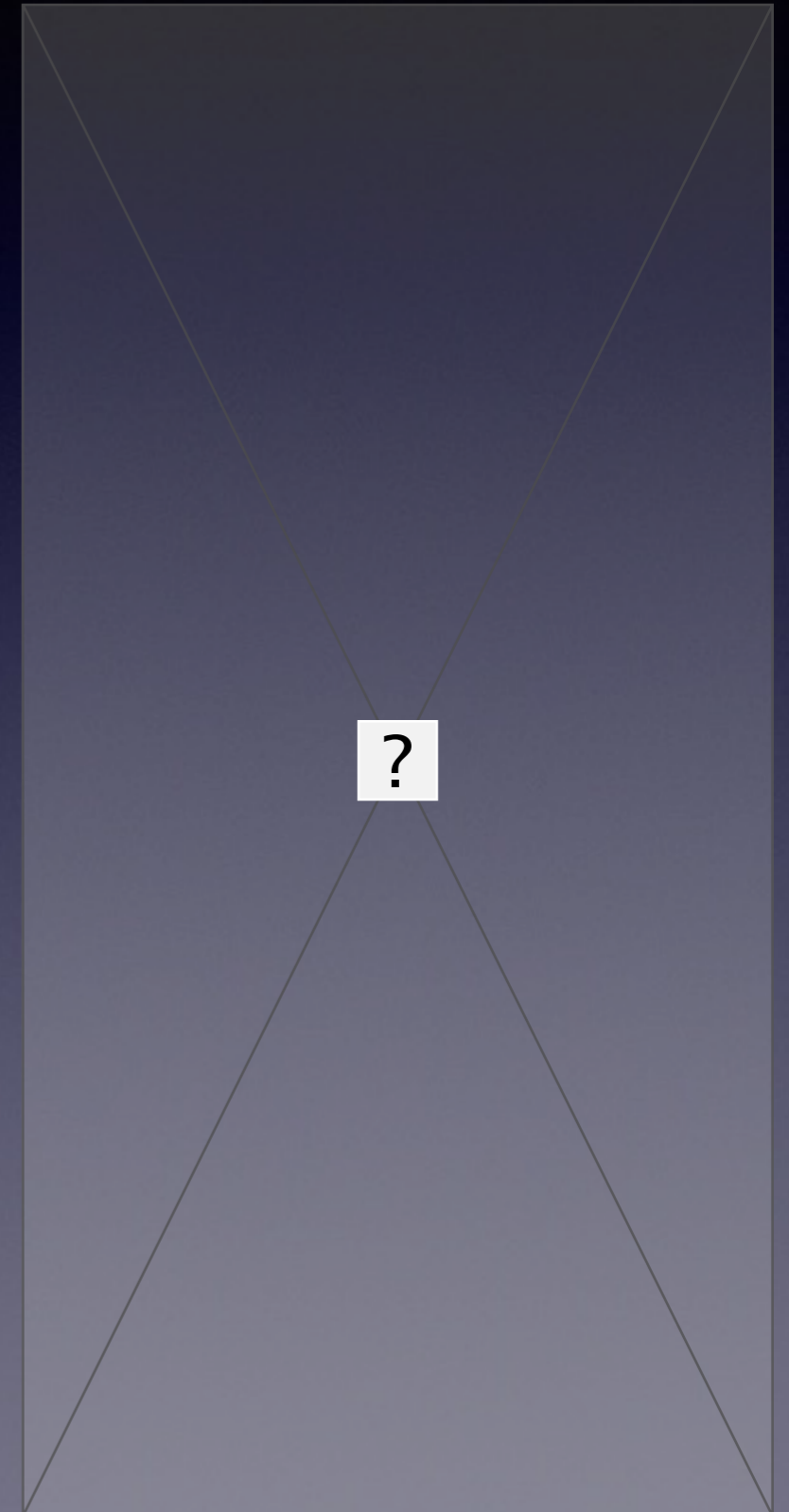
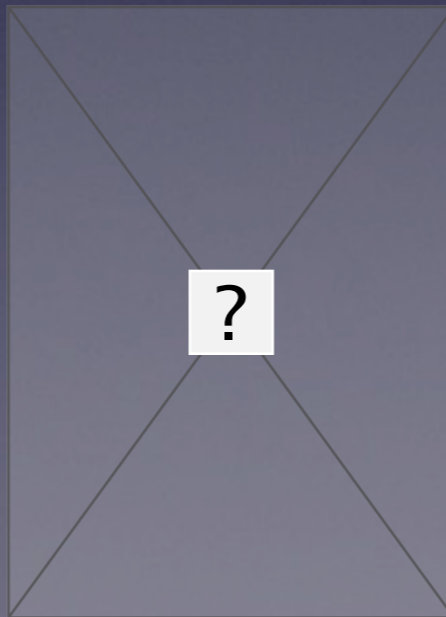
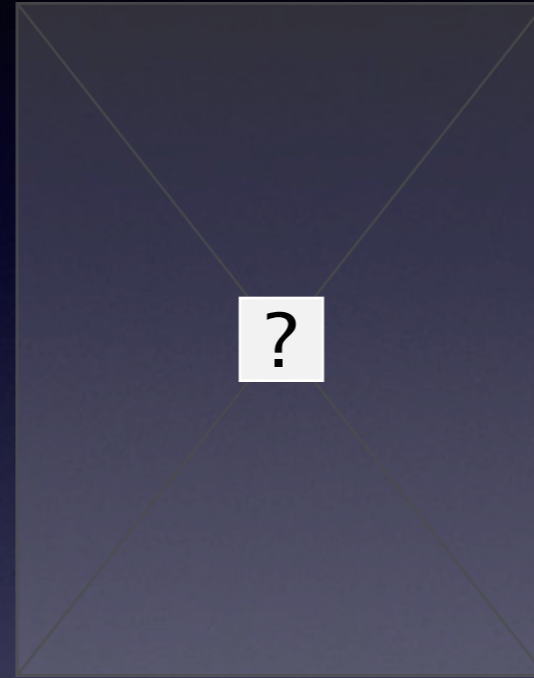
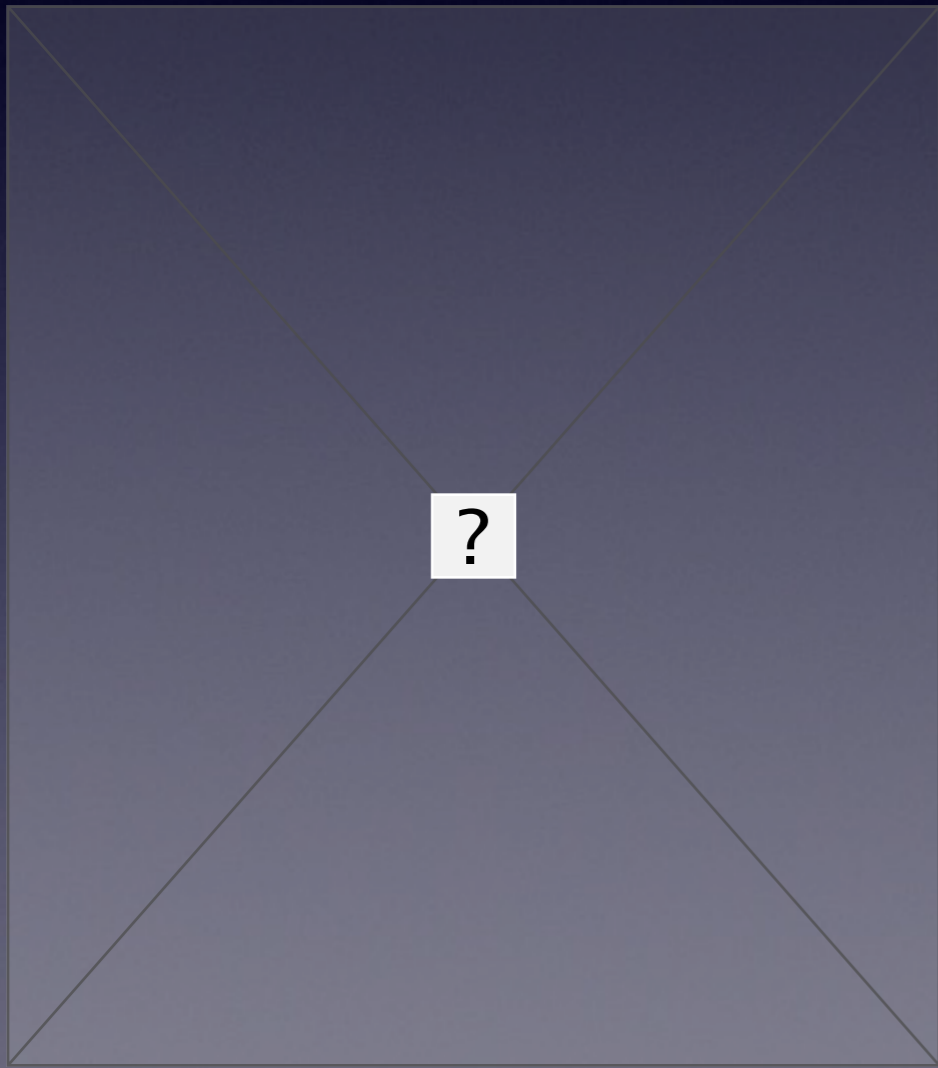


www.sandrablakeslee.com



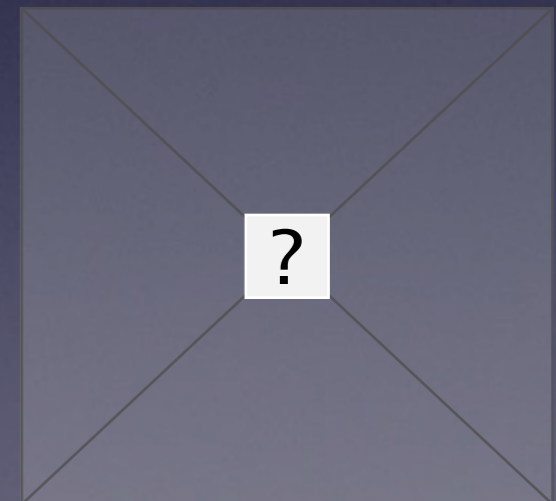
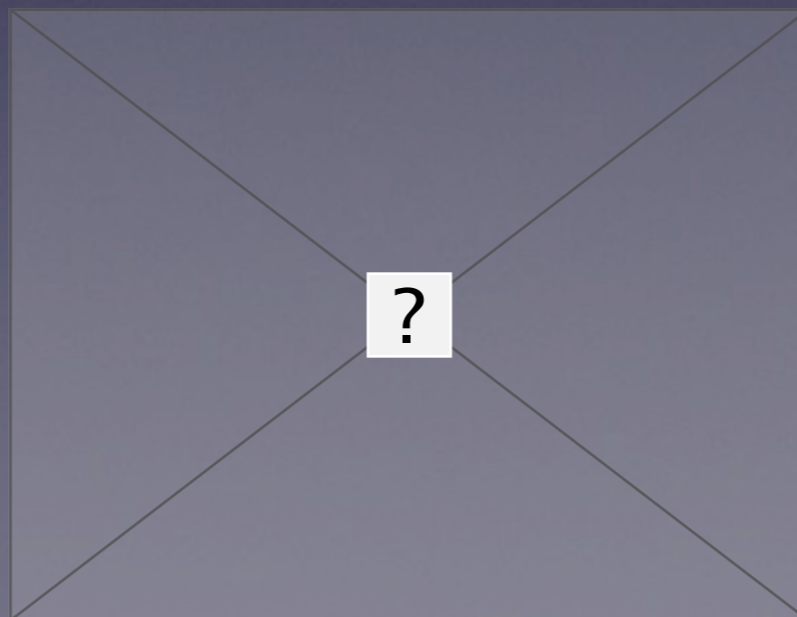
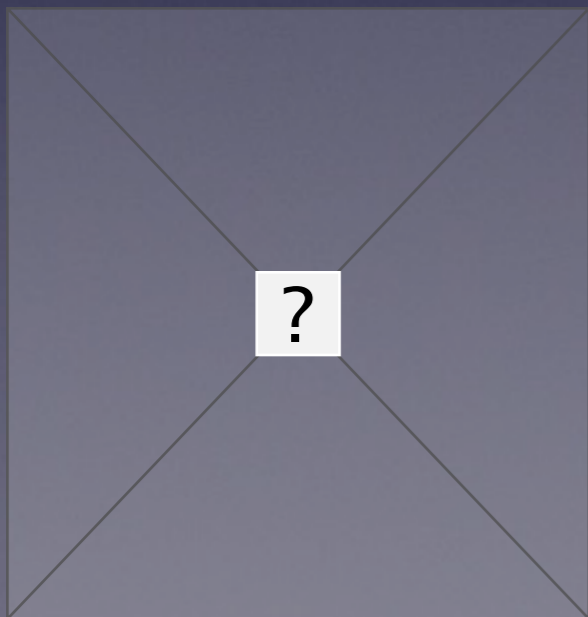


this is what you do..



THE PROBLEM ...

This is how the public perceives you



The Brain Explained

Before we get started -- tell me
where do you get your news?

- television

- online

- radio

- print

- Social media (all forms)
- Friends and family
- Facebook
- Science Blogs

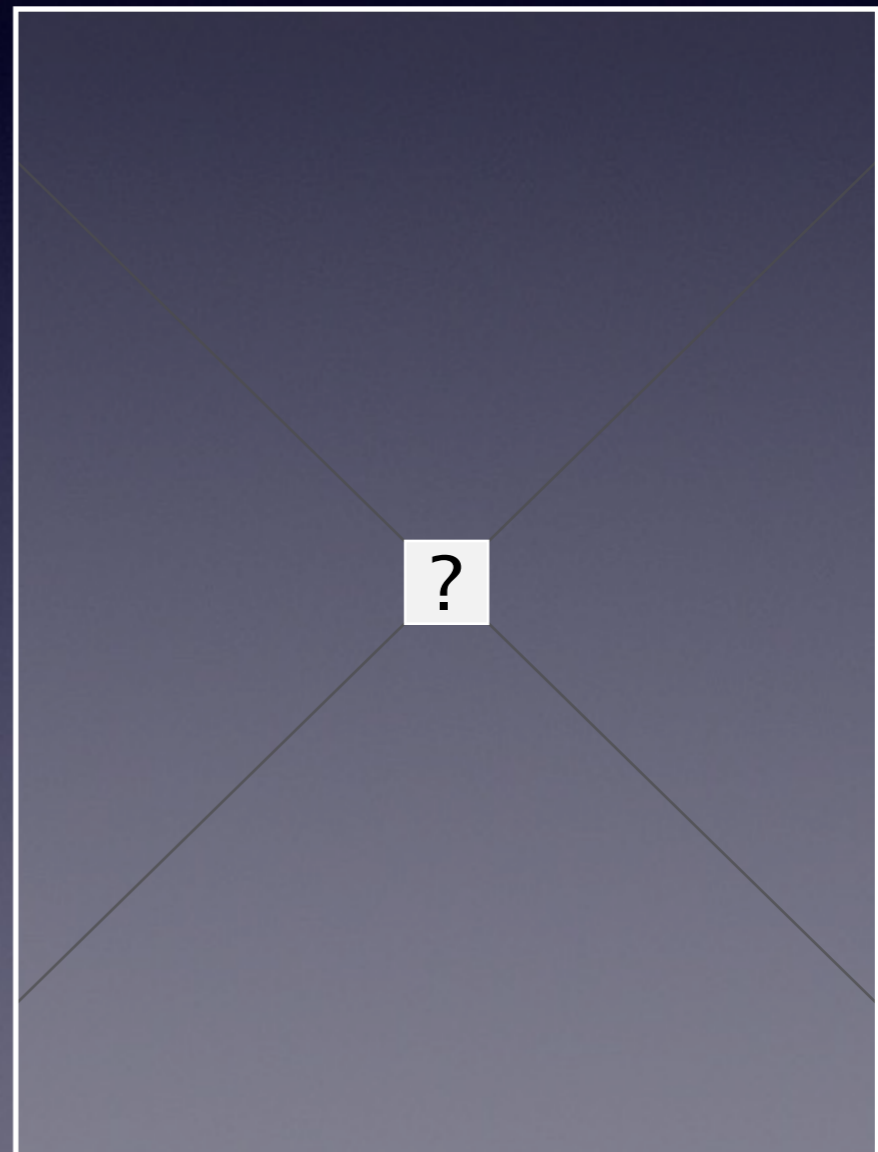
where do you want to
tell your story?

But first, how do you tell your story?

- No one can translate your research better than you
- But you need to think about how to communicate the information

Are you afraid? Are you worried that...

- you will be embarrassed
- you will be misquoted
- colleagues won't take you seriously
- you are told not to by your superiors
- your effort not rewarded, no payback for your time



But it is worth the risk!

You must unlearn what you have learned -- Yoda

You need to learn
a new set of skills

These include knowing exactly what you want to say, understanding your audience, and using common language to get your main points across clearly.

Know your messages

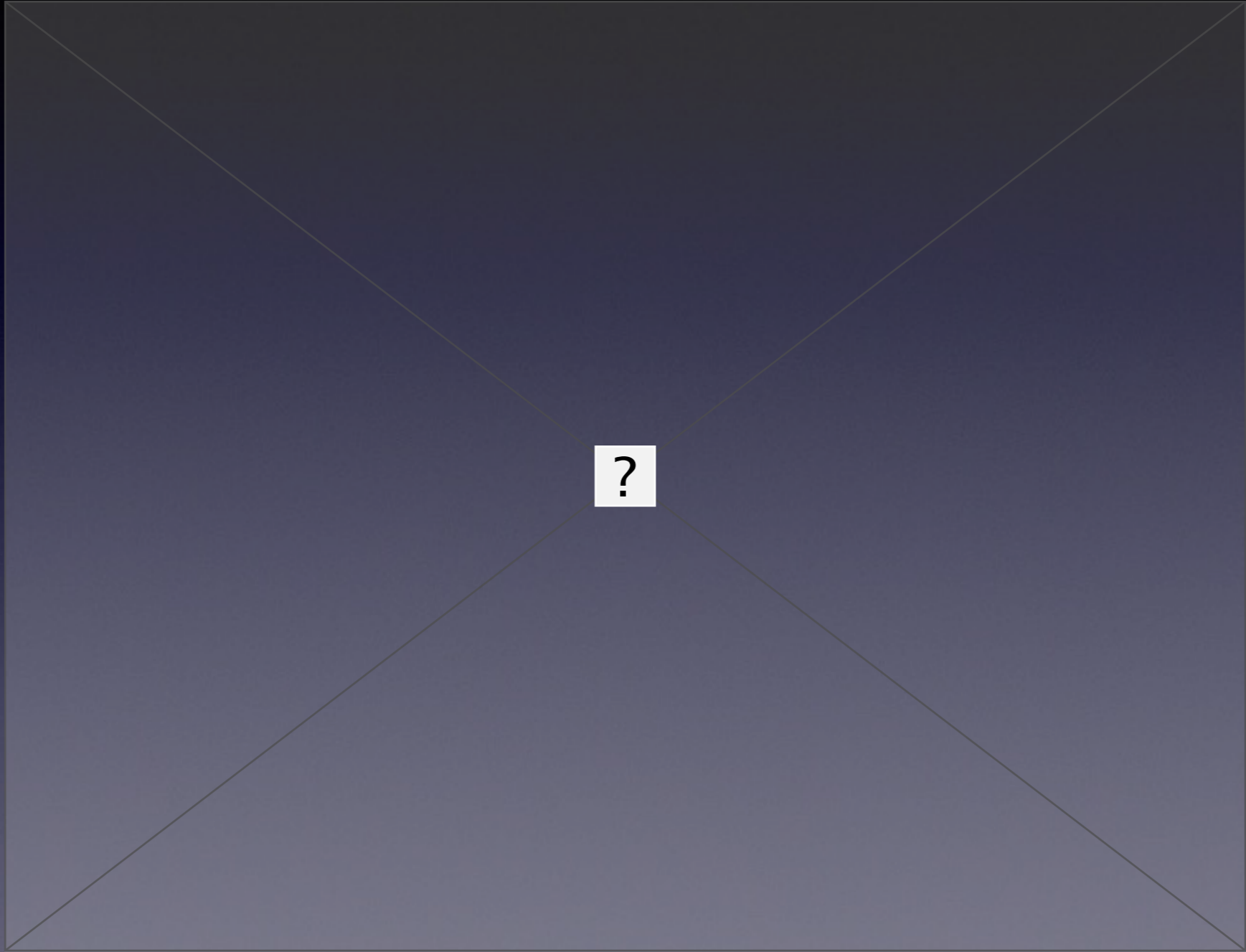
- core ideas you are trying to get across, not necessarily sound bites.

must be simple, not necessarily simplistic

must be limited to three or four ideas -- one if it's for
television

must be jargon free

should be supported by sound bites, metaphors, statistics,
anecdotes --- what we in the news biz call color



- never rely on your audience to do math in their heads. Round off numbers and translate them into conversational terms.
- use frequencies instead of probabilities. A value expressed as “only three in 10,000” is more easily understood.

- Compare and contrast:
- on average, only one person dies from shark attacks in the U.S. each year. In comparison, lightning strikes kill almost fifty people.

- Explain significance versus magnitude:
- Lay audiences do not understand the meaning of significance in a statistical sense.
- Small but significant difference can sound unimpressive and unimportant.
- Try to present data so that the magnitude is striking. Instead of saying “we’ve seen a 4 percent annual decline since 1992,” say “we’ve lost more than 260,000 square miles in the past twenty years, which is an

- Instead of saying “a 90 percent increase in population”
- say, “the population almost doubled.”
- Instead of saying, “the lifetime probability of developing liver cancer is 0.46 percent”
- say, “out of every 1,000 people, fewer than 5 will develop liver cancer.”

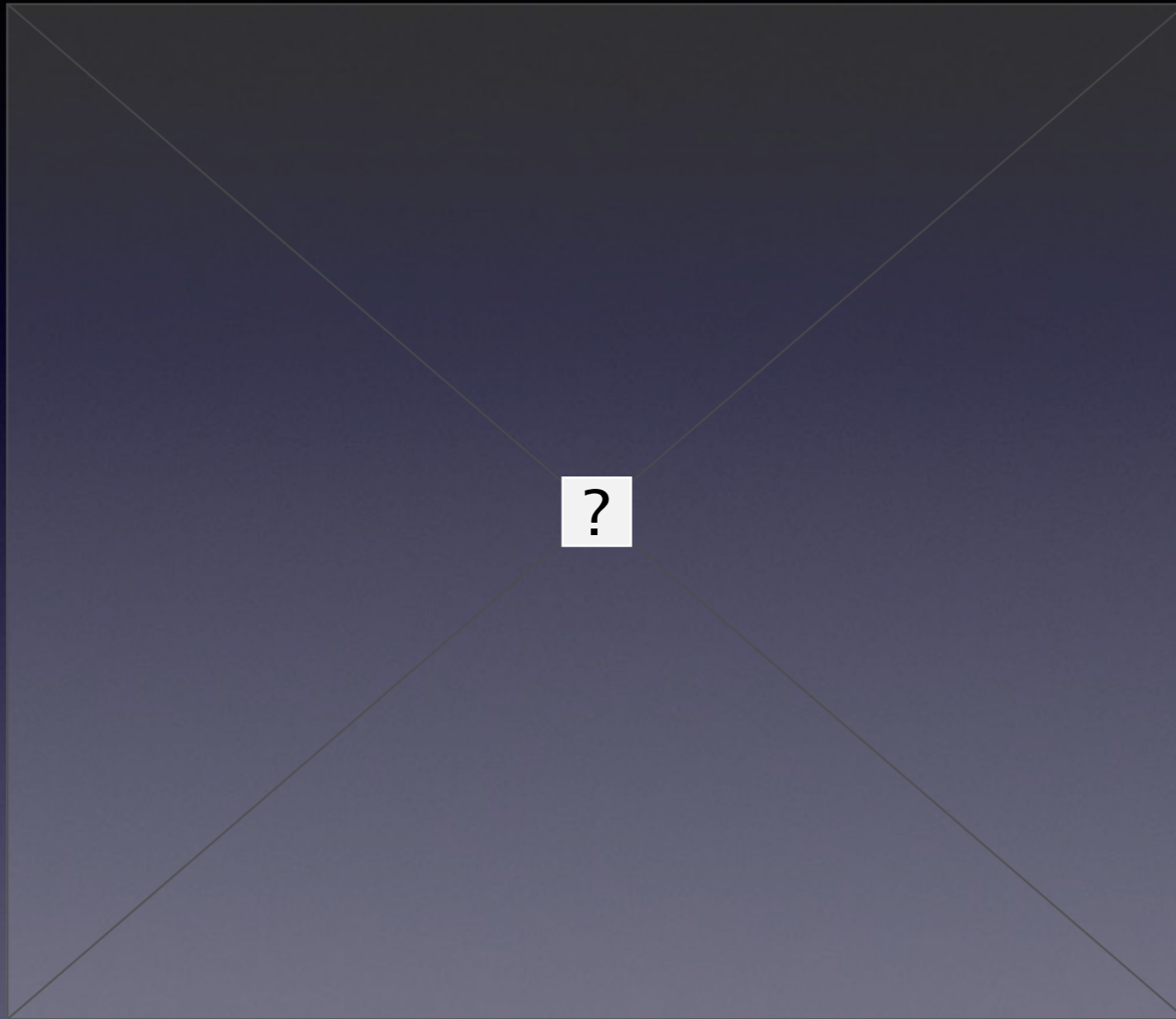
- Instead of saying, “Annual coral cover loss was 1 percent over the last 20 years and 2 percent between 1997 and 2003”
- say, “We are now losing coral reefs more than twice as fast as we are losing rainforest.”

- Instead of saying “microbiota” say “microbes.”
- Instead of “hypoxic” say “low on oxygen.”
- Instead of “trophic structure” say “food web.”
- Instead of “piscivorous” say “eats fish.”
- Instead of “pelagic” say “open water.”
- Instead of “phototactic” say “moves in response to light.”



Journalists are from Venus
Scientists are from Mars

many tensions are rooted in the different time frames
under which journalists and scientists operate.



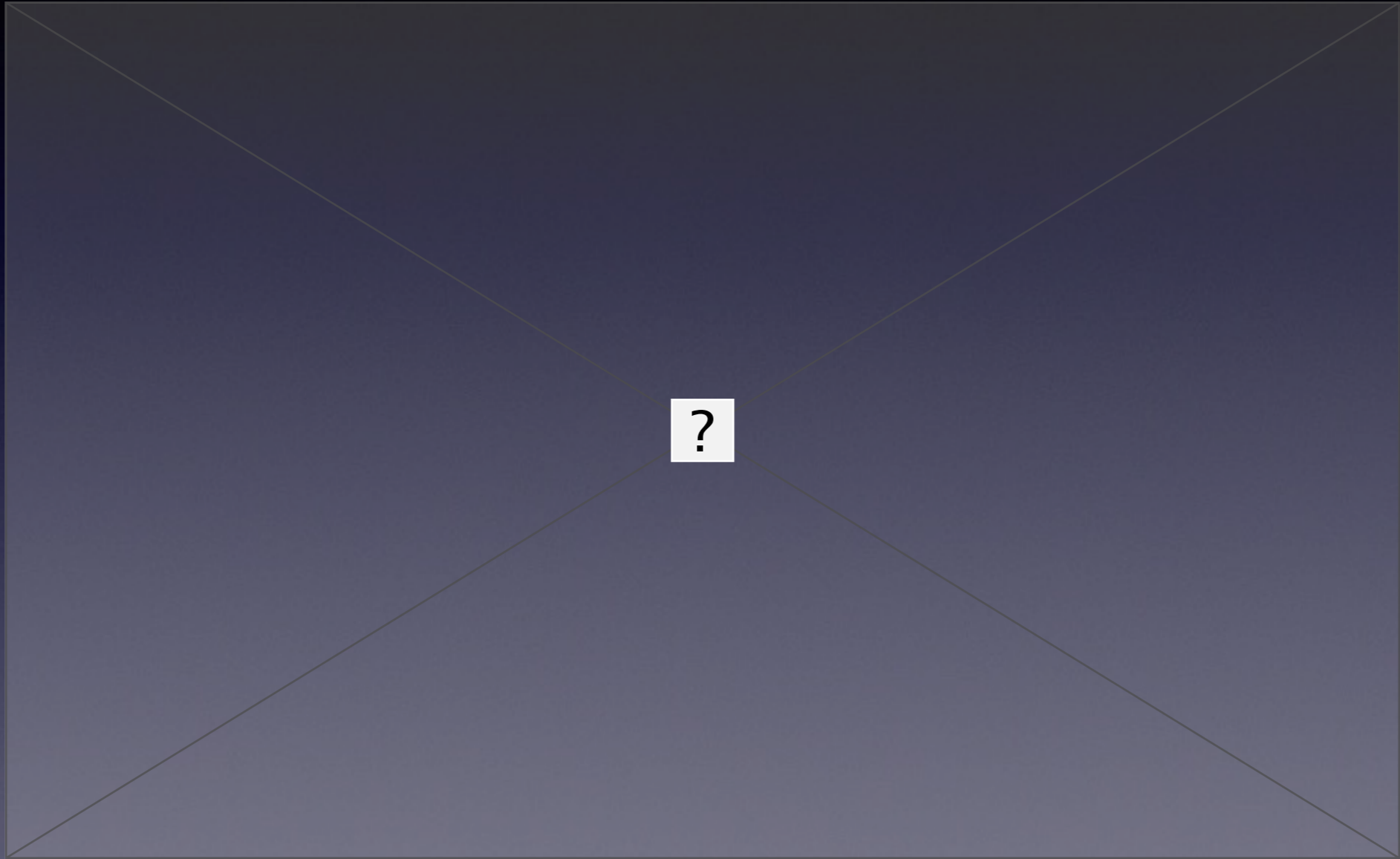
We do have some things in common
in our search for knowledge.

We are:

- curious
- love discovery
- analytical
- skeptical
- competitive (very competitive)
- independent thinkers
- love to drink and talk late into the night

But!!!

we have nothing in common when it comes to
reporting results



worlds in collision

- SCIENTISTS

- slow

- driven by caution

- in depth

- uncertainty

- specifics good

- credentials matter

- JOURNALISTS...

- fast

- driven by deadline

- quick overview

- certainty

- generalizations good

- emotions matter

Who's Looking Over Your Shoulder?

SCIENTISTS...

the scientific community

JOURNALISTS...

The Editors

Common misperceptions about journalists

- The “media” are all the same
- They will misquote you
- They don’t know anything. They screw things up
- They sensationalize
- Do anything to get their story. Damn the facts
- Give scientific outliers a platform. Damn the credentials

Common misperceptions about scientists

- They caveat things to death
- Overly interested in process
- Lack a bottom line
- Can't see the forest from the trees
- Speak in jargon

What makes a good story?

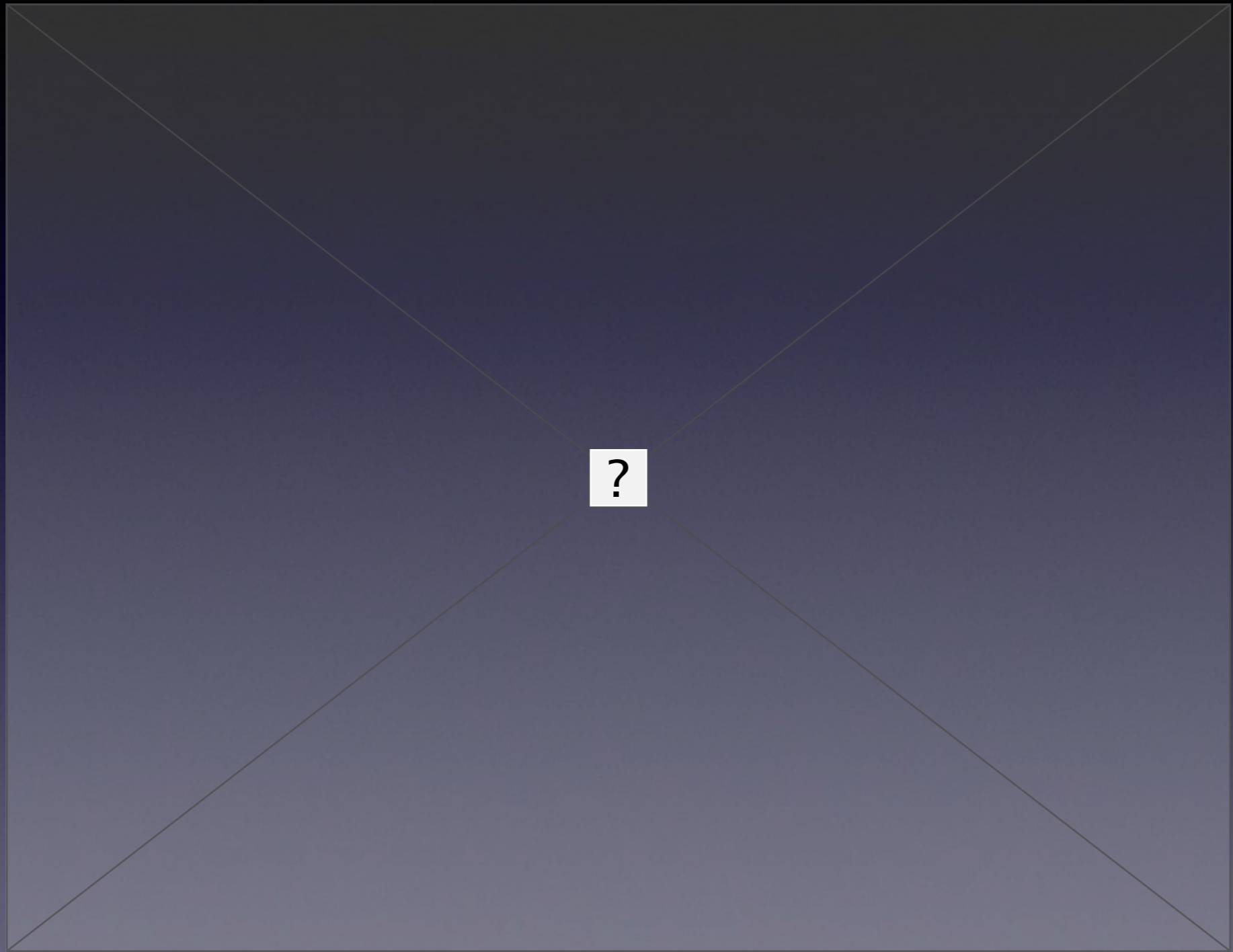
- A new and surprising discovery
- Overturning conventional wisdom
- Conflict or controversy
- Passion
- An adventure
- Just plain cool insights
- AND.. it is not necessarily the WHOLE story

If you want to bore someone, tell them
everything you know...

Voltaire

Put the hay where the mules can reach it

- frame it
- what is important. SO WHAT???
- Why now?
- Who cares?
- Make complicated issues personally meaningful. Be yourself
- Know your audience



What the journalist needs from you

- ability to explain the “so what”
- why is this finding important.
- again, who cares and why now?
- responsiveness -- return that phone call or email right away
- who else should the reporter talk to?

Remember! During the interview

- Be concise
- Avoid jargon
- Avoid lengthy sentences
- Be conversational
- Be passionate!

Don't be afraid to lead the conversation

- The real issue here is...
- Yes, and in addition to that...
- I don't know that. What I do know is..
- Let me put that in perspective
- The most important thing you need to know is..
- What you're really asking is..

advice:

talk to the public information officer
at your institution

Nothing is ever off the record

Illustrations

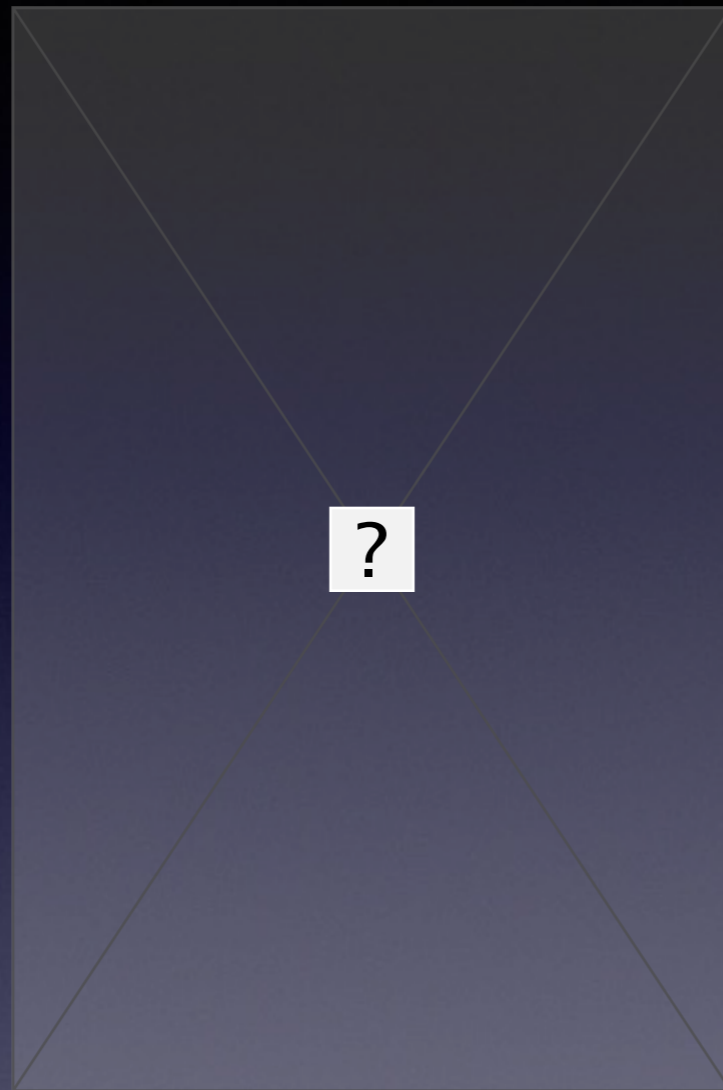
- photos
- graphics
- audio clips
- video clips
- keep your website up to date !!!!!
- post pdfs of your papers, please!

And most of all

- Tell a compelling STORY

Let's role play...

- we are at a cocktail party.
- tell me, how is your work going?
- you are being interviewed by a reporter
- what is your message?



thanks to Nancy Baron!

Prepping for a TV interview, documentary segment
or a You Tube short film.

three scenarios

you are going to be interviewed by a news reporter who visit you at work or at home. The reporter will be accompanied by a field-camera person and, in bigger cities, a sound person. In smaller stations all the work may be done just by the reporter

You could also be asked to go to a station or a company's studio where there will be several cameras, dressing rooms, a control room where the director calls the shots, and a host who will be asking the questions.

The third situation which will happen less frequently and probably later in your career is when you are being interviewed at a remote location in the field (or your office) where you are one-on-one with a camera linked up by the satellite truck crew. The host or reporter asking the questions will do so remotely through an earphone. In this situation you would speak directly into the camera lens and avoid glancing around. In the two instances above, you will speak directly to the reporter or host as you would in a conversation and avoid looking at the camera. Easier said than done.