

Knowing Your Audience Can Make All The Difference In The World

From your audience's viewpoint, your presentation must answer a simple question: "WHATS IN IT FOR ME?" But in order to know what's in it for your audience, you must first know WHO your audience is!

Begin by forming a mental image of your audience through the following checklist as soon as you schedule a presentation.

- Create a profile of the average audience member-include age, background, marital status, education, income, and job;
- Create a list of people your audience would likely admire;
- Talk with former attendees of the same types of presentations;
- Talk with former presenters who've addressed similar groups;
- Interview the client or event planner if available;
- Request a list of likely audience members, then pre-poll them by calling in advance to see what they expect.

Knowing your audience is crucial if you want to satisfy their needs. According to David Freeborn, an experienced speaker and presenter, there are four basic categories or mental states of those in the audience. They include:

The Prisoner: This is the person who would rather be anywhere other than indoors listening to another talk. Someone else sent him to your seminar. Prisoners are not responsible for being there—but they are responsible for what they take out of there!

The Vacationer: This is the person who volunteers to go to any seminar, figuring it's better to be in a meeting than at work, home, or wherever else he'd normally be. He's happy to be there, but for the wrong reasons, but count on vacationers to help you have a good time.

The Graduate: This is the person who thinks he doesn't need to be there because he already knows this stuff! Create opportunities for them to share their knowledge and wisdom with others.

The Student: This is the attentive, hard-working, perfect audience member who wants to hear what you've come to say. He is eager to learn and share and, like a sponge, ready to absorb all he can to help him be more effective personally and professionally.

Once you've done this audience research, answer the following 5 questions:

1. What knowledge about my topic do they bring to the table?
2. Will they be for me or against me? Why?

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3. Who are the people they most admire in their organizations and who are they most likely to admire outside their organizations?
4. What things have worked with similar audiences in the past, and what things haven't?
5. Why was I asked to present?

This single audience reference page will do wonders for taking the "unknowns" to the "knowns." After all, knowing your audience is one of the most crucial foundations to a powerful presentation.

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