

Audience Customization

Understanding different types of audiences will also help you determine their acceptance level. Following are some different categories of audiences and how to deal with each of them.

1. The Hostile Audience

This group disagrees with you and may even actively work against you. For a hostile audience, use these techniques:

- Find common beliefs and values.
- Use humor to break the ice.
- Don't start the presentation with an attack on their position.
- You are only trying to persuade on one point; don't talk about anything else that could be considered hostile.
- Because of your differences, they will question your credibility. Increase your credibility with studies from experts or anything that will support your claim.
- They will try to find reasons to not like you; don't give them any.
- Don't tell them you are going to try to persuade them.
- Express you are looking for a win-win outcome rather than a win-lose situation.
- If possible, meet with the audience more than once before confronting them on areas of disagreement.
- Show them you've done your homework.
- Respect their feelings, values, and integrity.
- Use logical reasoning as clearly and as carefully as possible.
- Use the Law of Connectivity and the Law of Balance.

2. The Neutral or Indifferent Audience

This audience understands your position but doesn't care about the outcome. The key to dealing with this group is creating motivation and energy – be dynamic. To persuade the indifferent audience:

- Spell out the benefits to them or the things around them.
- Point out the downside of not accepting your proposals.
- Grab their attention by using a story. Make them care by showing them how the topic affects them.
- Get them to feel connected to your issues.
- Avoid complex arguments.
- Use concrete examples with familiar situations or events.
- Identify why they should care.
- Use the Law of Involvement and the Law of Social Validation

3. The Uninformed Audience

These people lack the information they need to be convinced. To persuade the uninformed audience, you should employ the following tactics:

- Encourage them to ask questions throughout the presentation.

- Keep the facts simple and straightforward.
- Find out why they are uninformed.
- Use examples and simple statistics.
- Quote experts the audience respects.
- Stress your credibility - i.e. degrees, special expertise, experience.
- Make your message interesting in order to keep their attention.
- Use Law of Dissonance and Law of Scarcity.

4. The Supportive Audience

A supportive audience already agrees with you. You may think that persuading these people is easy, but remember that your goal is to get them to take action, not necessarily to just agree with you. These techniques should be used with a supportive audience:

Most audiences are a mix of all four of these types. Find out the dominant audience type that will be present and tailor your remarks accordingly. Of course, mix in some techniques from the other three areas since your prospects will always be a blend of all three.

- Increase energy and enthusiasm with inspiration
- Prepare them for future attacks by inoculating them against other arguments.
- Get them to take action and to support your cause.
- Let them know what needs to be done.
- Use testimonials to intensify the commitment
- Use Law of Esteem and Law of Expectation.

© 2009 Kurt Mortensen