

Audience Types

Understanding different types of audiences will also help you determine how you design and deliver your message. Following are some different categories of audiences and some strategies on how to deal with each of them.

The Hostile Audience

This audience group openly disagrees with you and may even actively work against you.

For a hostile audience, use these techniques:

- ❖ Find common beliefs and values. Find something to agree on.
- ❖ Use appropriate humor to break the ice.
- ❖ Don't start the presentation with an attack on their position.
- ❖ Keep in mind that you are only trying to persuade on one point; don't talk about anything else that could be considered hostile, offensive or condescending.
- ❖ Because of your differences, a hostile audience will question your credibility. Increase your credibility with expert studies or any source that will support your claim.
- ❖ A hostile audience 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 that 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 beliefs.
- ❖ Use logical reasoning as clearly and as carefully as possible.
- ❖ Use the Law of Connectivity and the Law of Balance as leverage. (See Maximum Influence.)

The Neutral or Indifferent Audience

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

- ❖ Spell out the benefits or the “what’s in it for them.”
- ❖ Point out the downside of not accepting your proposals. Use a combination of inspiration and desperation.
- ❖ 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, hard-to-understand arguments.
- ❖ Use concrete examples that incorporate familiar situations or events.
- ❖ Identify why they should care. How will this enhance their life?
- ❖ Use the Law of Involvement and the Law of Social Validation as leverage. (See Maximum Influence.)

The Uninformed Audience

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

- ❖ 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, pointing out such things as degrees, special expertise and experience.
- ❖ Make your message interesting in order to keep their attention.
- ❖ Use the Law of Dissonance and the Law of Scarcity as leverage. (See Maximum Influence.)

The Supportive Audience

A supportive audience already agrees with you. As a result, you may think that persuading these people will be 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:

- ❖ Increase their energy and enthusiasm with inspiration. Help them see the vision.
- ❖ 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 their commitment.
- ❖ Use the Law of Esteem and the Law of Expectation as leverage. (See Maximum Influence.)

Most audiences are a mix of all four of the preceding types. When dealing with a new audience, find out the dominant type that will be present and tailor your remarks accordingly. Of course, you should always consider mixing in some techniques from the other three areas since your prospects will always be a blend of all four audience types.