

## Compelling Evidence

As you prepare your message, understand that humans aren't capable of absorbing all of the information you can gather. We are hit with data all day long and most of the time we don't absorb it. In fact, we are very selective in what we allow ourselves to retain. When we hit information overload, we turn our minds off and retain nothing.

An amazing U.S. study on comprehension of television messages produced very revealing results. After watching commercials and other forms of messages, 97% of viewers misunderstood some part of *every* message they saw. On average, viewers misunderstood about 30% of the content they viewed overall. Information is just poured out too fast. The evidence that you choose must be selective, precise, and powerful. You can't afford to bombard your audience with too much information.

When creating the logical side of your message, you have to understand the concept of the number seven. This is also known as channel capacity, which is the amount of room in our brains capable of storing various kinds of information. George Miller wrote, "There seems to be some limitation built into us either by learning or by the design of our nervous systems, a limit that keeps our channel capacities in this general range." There is only so much room in your prospect's brain to absorb logical numbers and information. This is why phone numbers only have seven digits.

Spend the time necessary to fully research the types of evidence you want to use to strengthen your arguments. You already know that using the *right* evidence from the right sources greatly increases the credibility of your message. However, the opposite is also true; poor or irrelevant evidence undermines the credibility of your message. When compiling evidence, consider the following:

1. Use evidence supported by an independent expert rather than facts presented alone.
2. Statistical evidence will be more persuasive when paired with individual case studies.
3. Document the sources of all testimonials.
4. New information is often more convincing than old.
5. Evidence consistent with your audience's beliefs will be more persuasive because they'll evaluate everything from their own perspectives and attitudes.
6. Build credibility by also acknowledging and even including the other side of the argument. A two-way discussion will bear far more weight than a one-sided lecture.

Evidence works best when it is suited to the audience and their experience. Consider the following presentation points:

1. Referring to evidence as fact increases its weight
2. Evidence that is verifiable will always be more persuasive.
3. Evidence that is specific will always be more persuasive.
4. An unbiased testimony is more persuasive than a biased one.
5. Personal experience is more persuasive than not having any personal experience.
6. Presenters who have not yet established their credibility will benefit more from the use of evidence than those with established credibility
7. Evidence is especially important when the audience is unfamiliar with the topic.

8. Factual evidence is particularly persuasive when the audience consists of highly intelligent people.
9. Evidence is more persuasive when you provide not only the source, but also his/her qualifications.
10. Evidence is more persuasive when you confirm an audience's beliefs.

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