

Knowing Your Audience

It is critical that you understand where your audience is coming from and what their needs and wants are. What do they really want to know? What are they searching for? What information can you present to bridge the gap between what they feel and what they want? It's important to understand your audience as a general group and also to get inside their minds as individuals. Here are some of the questions they will be asking themselves as you present—and that you should be thinking about as you prepare:

- Why do I need this?
- What will happen if I follow through with this? What will happen if I don't?
- What are my options?
- How will this improve/change my life?
- Where else could I go to fulfill this need?
- What is this going to cost me?
- Where can I get the best price?
- When do I need to make a final decision?
- What will my spouse/friends say?

You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view.”

—HARPER LEE

Here are some questions you should ask yourself about your audience as you prepare:

- Who am I trying to persuade?
- What is the common background or interest that brings them together?
 - Who are these people as individuals (business people, students, mothers, etc.)?
 - What can I offer that they will universally care about and understand?
 - What types of things will they be looking to get out of my message?
 - In terms of my key point(s), are they likely to agree, disagree, or be indifferent?
 - Do I need to be aware of their political, religious, professional, or other associations?
 - What is their average education and/or income level?

- What is their general age range?
- Will they tend to be more conservative or more liberal in their life views?
- Is this likely to be an easygoing or demanding crowd?
- How long will I be likely to keep them engaged? How much time is available?
- Is what I have to offer appropriate for this audience?
- What is my audience's biggest challenge and how am I going to solve it?

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