

Preparing Your Message

Think twice before you speak, because your words and influence will plant the seed of either success or failure in the mind of another.

—NAPOLEON HILL

We have addressed the big communication complaints, so we have a long list of don'ts. Now it's time to look at the dos. What are the common factors in great presentations and great communication? Whether you're talking to someone one on one or over the phone, or to a room full of people, great presentations should:

- Be complete.
- Anticipate questions and concerns.
- Avoid distracting mannerisms.
- Be clear and concise.
- Build value.
- Inspire interest.
- Avoid rambling and vocal fillers.
- Suggest the next step to take.
- Have a call to action.
- Capture attention.
- Flow well.
- Contain visual aids.
- Be well-organized.
- Be filled with passion.

Another thing you have direct control over is the crafting of your message so that it will fit and resonate well with your audience. It is critical that you make sure they know you are about to share something that is both meaningful and useful to them. In order to do this, you must clearly communicate the answer to your audience's three most pressing questions:

1. Why should I care?
2. How will this benefit me?
3. Will this fulfill my needs?
- 4.

Your audience has to have a reason to want to listen to you, and providing them with the answers to these questions gives them a reason to listen. This strategy naturally leads to the next set of questions: What are the needs and wants of this audience, anyway? What do they want to hear about? How can I customize my message to them? Answering these questions, of course, means you must know and understand your audience. Obviously, any large audience is going to represent many different personality types. Try to get a sense of the general feeling and background that is coming from the group. What is the common theme that draws them all together?

Audience-Member Types

Monitoring great persuaders reveals that you must understand how to interact with different people and understand where they are coming from. Here are composites of the most common audience-member types persuaders face:

The Hostile Person

This person openly disagrees with you and may even actively work against you. When faced with a hostile person, use these techniques:

- Find something to agree on.
- Don't start the presentation with an attack on her position.
- Focus on your credibility.
- Show them that you've done your homework.
- Respect their feelings, values and beliefs.
- Hear them out

The Indifferent Person

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

- Spell out the benefits or the "What's in it for me?"
- Use a combination of inspiration and desperation.
- Grab their attention by using a story.
- Get them to feel connected to your issues.
- Avoid complex, hard-to-understand arguments.
- Tap into your passion.
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The Uninformed Person

This person lacks the information she needs to be convinced. To persuade the uninformed person, you should employ the following techniques:

- Encourage questions.
- Keep the facts simple and straightforward.
- Keep your message interesting and maintain attention.
- Use examples and simple statistics.
- Quote experts the person respects.
- Make sure they understand what you are saying.
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The Supportive Person

A supportive person already agrees with you. As a result, you may think that persuading this type of person will be easy, but remember that your goal is to get him to take action, not necessarily to just agree with you. These techniques should be used with a supportive person:

- Increase their energy and enthusiasm with inspiration.

- Prepare them for future attacks by inoculating.
- Get them to take action and to support your cause.
- Enhance their esteem.
- Use testimonials.
- Get their commitment.

When speaking to a larger audience, you will find a mix of all four of the previous types. When dealing with a new audience—of one or of one hundred—find out the dominant type that will be present and tailor your remarks accordingly.

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