

Audience Centered Approach

How Can I Remove the I From Public Speaking?

Audience Centered Approach in public speaking includes considering the background, needs, make up of those in the audience.

Age, socio-economic, educational and other needs have already been discussed. Additional audience focused topics would include...

Experience

Interest Level

Motivation

Cultural Background

Familiarity

Expertise

How will you prepare to meet and exceed the needs or personality traits as an audience centered approach to your public speaking?

To meet those needs will require understanding those needs.

Experience

What knowledge base does the audience have? As a general rule, talk at one level less than the knowledge base of those you're speaking to.

For instance in nursing, Bloodless Medicine has been around since the late 1960's. Even so, fewer than one in 10 nurses and fewer than one in five doctors know what it is. Don't assume your audience has the knowledge **you think they should have.**

Interest level

What is the motivation for the attendance. Is it to get CEU's (Continuing Education Units) or interested consumers? Consider an example... a Bloodless Medicine and Surgery Seminar given at a local High School. It was put on by a competing hospital from a city over an hour from where I worked. An audience of 900 came out in heavy rains to hear 3 hours of lectures. That was interest.

Even within the audience different levels of interest can exist. Those who sit to the front typically are the most interested. Many but not all who sit in the back, want to be able to make a quick get away when they have served their time.

An audience centered approach requires recognizing all the various needs, wants, desires, and resolves.

Motivation

What factors move the audience to come? Is it a job requirement? Are you offering new skills? What value does the training have for the audience? For these questions you need to look at these questions through the eyes of someone who will be sitting in attendance. If you take the attitude

they should want to know, you may miss opportunities to reach those who do not have the motivations they should. An audience centered approach requires learning what the motivations are.

Cultural Background

Are they tech savvy or old fashioned? Are they computer literate? Do they use computers at all? I gave a lecture to a group of 35 artists, many retired professionals. In the entire group, only about five used a computer. To use computer jargon would have been over their heads. However they were very well educated. When asking if they were familiar with the Right Brain, Left Brain psychology theories, almost all raised their hands.

People in their 50's and up may still be mentally in the industrial age. However this may not always be so. In visiting an 89 year old friend at his work, he asked me to give him a moment as he said, "Let me get out of this window first."

Younger people may not be in the information age. this presents a unique audience centered approach to reach such an audience.

When at a theater watching "March of the Penguins," an eleven year old boy asked mom and dad, "When will this commercial be over so we can see the movie?" Some minds need constant action, flash and clash to hold their attention. This is not being said to encourage it. It is something speakers need be aware of.

Familiarity

Does your audience know and love you? Are you a stranger? This can affect the ability to reach the audience.

When giving lectures where people are stiff and formal and I have been viewed the same, there will be few laughs. However when speaking before an audience that doesn't know me, humor is more readily accepted.

Because of your background do you command respect? Do you need to establish your credibility? Demanding respect will not insure you will get it. Most people have to earn it. If you put the audience first by an audience centered approach, you will be well on your way to earning that respect.

How do You Find the Answers?

How do you find the answers to these questions? As you develop your audience centered approach to public speaking the questions can be best answered by your future audience.

Talk to your coordinator. Ask questions about the make up of the audience. What do they want? What kind of information would be of use to them? Find out their backgrounds and experience levels.

Survey the audience prior to the event. Ask for input in the form of questions for a Q&A segment. Then have a volunteer read the questions and you can prepare the answer and give it.

Talk to the audience before the speech. Find out their knowledge level. I once spoke to a group of mostly retirees who are supplementing their income as artist. I was reviewing ways to make the most out of their marketing and promotions. During the intermission I discussed with the president one of my prints made by a process called Iris printing or Giclee print.

It was that discussion and the questions when asked that told me what the audience didn't know and probably would want to learn. Also since I have never spoken on the subject, it gave me a feel of how to present the information.

To prepare for an audience centered approach requires preparing for those who will listen. It requires knowing about the listeners, who and what they are, their longings, passions, and resolves. With this information, you will have met one more requirement to move toward Speechmastery.

Learn The Listening Styles of your audience. Listening styles, yes. Everyone has different ways they listen. Learn more about these differences to enhance your speaking.

Speak to the Listening Style of your audience. Once you know the ways people listen, learn how to reach their style of listening with the words used in your public speaking.

I might add, the audience centered approach works great for speaking within personal relationships as well as with audiences.