# How to Analyze an Audience for Public Speaking

https://www.youtube.com/watch/hYLo4xcBy6c

One of the best things you can do for any public speaking is to tailor your message to the specific interests of the audience that's right in front of you. The more you customize your message to the specific people right there, the more likely your messagewill hit that target. And to do that, you have to know as much about your audience as possible. So let's talk about how to analyze your audience for public speaking. The old public speaking triangle has a lot of wisdom built into it. In any situation you havethe speaker, that's you, you have the message, and then the audience. A lot of new presenters make the mistake of thinking that it's mainly about them as the speaker. They want to make the audience like them for example, or they wanna focus mostly on what's on their mind personally. They think of listeners as a captive audience and it's their opportunity as a speaker to shine. Well, I have some news for you. The audience is probably not there for that. They're there for their own benefits. Every single listener in your audience, whether they realize it or not, is asking themselves some version of the same question. Why should I care? What's in it for me? What do I get out of this? And on the surface, those may sound like self-centered questions, but I think it's entirely fair and appropriate to answer those questions for your audience. What's in it for them. In fact, you are asking yourself those questions anytime you're watching a speaker. People are trading their time for what you may have to say. So I think it's important to make sure your message speaks to them personally. I recommend that you take an audience-centered approach. Let's talk about some ways you can get to know your audience beforehand. There's some really obvious ways to get a quick glance at your listeners, like the general age of your audience, gender, and other demographic factors. This information is usually right on the surface and easy to learn about, and it can certainly help you tailor your message to that particular audience. Maybe you're speaking to a specific and official group. You can tell a lot about your listeners based upon their group affiliation because they joined that group. They're part of that group for a set of reasons. I spoke to a group of about 40 nurses in a hospital once, and that instantly told me a lot about what they cared about. And so I customized my message so it spoke directly to them. Once you get past the basics, you get into more specifics about the listeners' disposition toward the topic. This is a phrase I pulled from "The Art of Public Speaking" by Stephen Lucas. It's a classic book. The audience's disposition toward the topic, include their interest, knowledge and attitude. So what's their interest level? Are they showing up for your presentation because they want to be there or because it's part of their jobs and they have to be there? That will shape how you tailor your message to them. You may wanna spend a little time in your message directly explaining the value of what you're saying to get them more interested, for example. Next is knowledge. What do they already know about your subject? Are they just hearing about this for the first time? Or are they already experts on it? That's gonna shape the way you prepare in advance and deliver your message in the moment. And what's their attitude? This is especially important. If there's any kind of persuasive element to your message, you have to know wheretheir attitude is currently. We'll call that point A. So you have a starting place to convince them to your point of view. Point B, I had to learn the interest knowledge level and attitude about that group of nurses I was speaking to to make sure my message hit the right target. The challenge is interest level, knowledge, and their attitude might not be right on the surface. That means you have to gather this information about your audience ahead of time. And there are two key ways to do this. One way, which I have sometime seen used in profess settings and I've done this myself, is to give your audience questionnaires or surveys maybe a few weeks in advance. You can ask them anything you want that would help you adjust your message. But the second way to gather information is the one I have seen use the most in professional settings. You have a long and detailed conversation with the person who is trying to book you for the event, the person inviting you to speak in the first place. Essentially, if someone has already asked you to speak, they know the information and will usually be happy to share that with you. They want your workshop, your presentation or whatever it is to go well because they invited you to speak and that reflects on them. I was asked to speak to a group of emerging leaders a while back. This was for a government client and I spent about two hours worth maybe more with the person who invited me to speak. They told me everything Ineeded to know to tailor and customize almost every single part of that presentation. Sometimes this point person is the one who is organizing the overall event. And other times this will just be the supervisor of the team that you might be speaking to. I always make it a point to talk to the team supervisor. They are probably the very best person to give you any kind of information that might help you tailor your message. And then the last step isto go back to your message and adjust it in every possible way so that everything speaks directly to that particular audience. You don't want your messageto sound ordinary and generic. You want your examples, illustrations, even the specific research that you cite, and advice you give to hit the center of that target. When I was working with government client, I mentioned this point person was amazing. He offered to look at all the early versions of my notes and slides and the small workbook I was creating specifically for them. We went through every single page together in detail to make sure that workshop was a big hit. And it went really well. If we look at this public speaking triangle, one more time. Yes, you're still the speaker. And that includes all ofyour knowledge, expertise and any kind of special experience that you bring to the table. And you're still delivering a message that you care about. I never give talks unless I already care about a subject. And I never say anything that I don't really believe but the key is to take anaudience-centered approach, take everything you know about your audience and then customize that message and your approach so the audience gets the most value out of spending that time with you. The more you customize your message, the more likely it'll be to hit the target. Be sure to download that free PDF on these seven instant tips to make you a more confident speaker. And I would love to hear about your public speaking experiences below. What are you working on? What are you struggling with? What are some of your successes? I look forward to reading your comments. Until next time God bless, and I will see you soon.