CHAPTER 2

Profiling Audiences

CHAPTER CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2 IN A NUTSHELL

You write a different document based on how you define your audience. Because your understanding of your audience controls so many of your writing decisions, analyze the audience before you write. Create an audience profile by answering these questions:

- Who are they?
- How much do they know?
- What do they expect?

Find out who your audience is. Is it one person or a group or several groups? Are you writing a memo to a specific individual or instructions for "typical" workers?

Estimate how much they know. If they are advanced, they know what terms mean, and they understand the implications of sentences. If you are addressing beginners, you have to explain more.

Determine expectations. Expectations are the factors that affect the way in which the audience interprets your document. Will it conform to their sense of what this kind of document should look and sound like? Will it help them act in the situation? Does it reflect a sense of the history of the situation or the consequences of acting?

Chapter 1 showed how audience is a major concern in technical communication. Every piece of writing has an intended audience—the intended reader or readers of the document. Because your goal is to enable those readers to act, you must analyze the intended readers in order to discover the facts and characteristics that will enable you to make effective decisions as you write. The facts and characteristics that you discover will affect planning, organizing, and designing all aspects of the document, from word choice to overall strategy and structure.

This chapter explains the factors that writers investigate in order to analyze audiences. The chapter begins with an example of a technical memo, and then presents sections that help you answer these key questions:

- Who is the audience?
- What is the audience's task?
- What is the audience's knowledge level?
- What factors influence the situation?
- How do I create an audience profile?

An Example of Technical Writing

The following brief report (Figure 2.1) highlights the importance of audience in professional communication. Todd Magolan performs routine inspections of thick rubber cargo mats that fit into the beds of special hauling equipment in manufacturing facilities. He reports on their performance to Marjorie Sommers, his supervisor. Sommers uses the reports to determine whether or not her company has met the conditions of its contract and to decide whether or not to change manufacturing specifications. He sent the report as an e-mail attachment to Sommers with a "cover letter" e-mail. The body of the e-mail is very succinct: "Marjorie, attached is my report from my March 15, 2015, site visit to inspect mats at Oxbow Creek. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact me. Todd."

As you read the report, note the following points:

1. The writer states the purpose of the report for the audience (to deliver information on his impressions).

2. The writer uses unambiguous language to focus on the specific parts of the cargo mat (trim lines, holes, kick plate) and to point out specific problems ("the front edge of vinyl/maratex still needs to be evaluated with a base kick plate"). Note that the writer uses the word *good* to mean "implements the specification exactly," knowing that his audience understands that usage.

3. The information is designed, appearing in easy-to-scan chunks set off by heads. The writer sets up the document in the first paragraph by naming the three items—the 410, 430, and 480 mats—that he discusses in the body of the report. He repeats these keywords as section headings, presents information in a consistent pattern (vinyl/maratex, hole location, concerns) for each section, and numbers individual points within sections.

Clear title

Review of Mats at Oxbow Creek Plant

Introduction "sets up" discussion

Purpose

After seeing the 410 and 430 Cargo mats, as well as the 480 Front mat, installed in the vehicles at Oxbow Creek, my impressions of each are as follows:

Heading

Unemotional presentation

410 Cargo

1. The rear and side vinyl/maratex both fit. (The rear kick plate fits perfectly.)
2. All hole locations were good.
3. The front edge of vinyl/maratex was not evaluated because there was no base kick plate for the front.

Overall, I feel that the 410 Cargo mat fit was very good. However, the front edge of vinyl/maratex still needs to be evaluated with a base kick plate.

Words repeated as section heads

Chunking of information

430 Cargo

1. With our revised vinyl/maratex trim lines, I feel the mat fit is excellent. There was no pull out of the kick plate such as we noticed before.
2. All trim lines and holes are now good.

It is my feeling that our proposed design is much more functional than the original design and should be incorporated if feasible.

Words repeated as section heads

480 Cargo

1. All trim lines seemed good.
2. Hole locations were good. There was a little concern/suggestion that the rear group of holes (for the rear seat) be moved outward a few millimeters. The added lytherm seemed to bring them inward slightly.
3. The major concerns came in the B- and C-pillar areas (see attached sketch). There is much gapping between our mat and the molding. It is most evident in the C-pillar area. It is my opinion that our mat is correct in being molded to the sheet metal contour (in the C pillar) and that the pillars themselves are incorrect.

Chunking of information

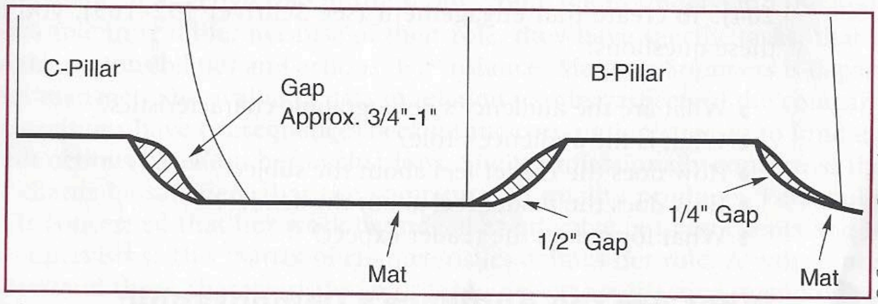

Figure 1.
480 B-Pillar and C-Pillar Gap Problems

If you have any questions or would like to discuss these findings further, please let me know.

Figure 2.1 Sample Report

4. The writer uses a visual aid—the drawing—to convey a problem discussed in the 480 section (Figure 1).

5. The writing is responsible. The writer tells the stakeholder (Sommers) all that she needs to know to be able to do her job. In addition, the report treats other stakeholders properly. Magolan's company, for instance, has informed individuals handling its affairs. Customers have received honest treatment of the problem, allowing them to interact with Magolan's company in an informed manner.

This brief report illustrates the skills and attitudes that technical writers employ. Although the report is a straightforward review of a site visit, it is nonetheless a well-crafted document that effectively conveys the information that writer and reader need to fulfill their roles in the organization.

Who Is the Audience?

The answer to this basic question dictates much of the rest of what you do in the document.

The audience is either someone you know (Sommers in the Magolan report) or a generalized group, such as "college freshmen" or "first-time cell phone users" (Coney and Steehouder). The audience could be a single person (your supervisor, a coworker), a small group (members of a committee), or a large group (the readers of a set of instructions). Sometimes the audience is multiple, that is, a primary audience who will act on the contents of your document and a secondary audience who read the document for information—to keep them in the loop—but who will not act on the information.

In order to communicate effectively with your audience, you have to engage them, that is, write in a way that makes it clear to them "that their knowledge and values are understood, respected, and not taken for granted" (Schriver 204). To create that engagement (see Schriver 152–163), you must answer these questions:

- What are the audience's demographic characteristics?
- What is the audience's role?
- How does the reader feel about the subject?
- How does the reader feel about the sender?
- What form does the reader expect?

What Are the Audience's Demographic Characteristics?

Demographic characteristics are basically objective items dealing with common ways of classifying people—age, ethnicity, and gender. The answers to these questions provide a base from which to act, but, in order to prevent stereotyping, have to be used with the answers to the other four questions listed earlier. For instance, in the Magolan example, the audience Marjorie Sommers is a 45-year-old white woman with a number of years' experience as a manager. However, the report is not written for a generic 45-year-old; it is written to Marjorie, an audience much more specific than a member of an age group. The report can be as individualized as it is because the writer also personally knows the audience and thus knows her attitudes and expectations.

Sometimes, however, if an audience is treated stereotypically, the message can fail. One researcher discovered that a brochure urging African-American teens to stay away from drugs failed because the writers used an image of a person who had an outdated hairstyle. The teens who read the brochure felt that the outmoded image indicated that the writer was someone who was out of touch; thus, they dismissed the brochure. In other words, the writers used demographic data but did not find answers to the other audience questions, and as a consequence failed to engage their audience (Schriver 171–189).

What Is the Audience's Role?

In any writing situation, your audience has a role. Like actors in a drama, audience members play a part, using the document as a "script." In the script, you "write a part" for department managers or tricycle assemblers or parents or students. For instance, the tricycle assembler could be a parent, on a Saturday morning, just home from the store, who needs to work quickly and efficiently to assemble the tricycle for an anxious three-year-old. The reader assumes that role as he or she reads. If the role in the document reflects the role the reader has in the real-life situation, the document will then engage the reader and thus make effective communication more likely. Readers' willingness to assume the role in the document often depends upon the way the role depicted in the writing is similar to the role they play in a real-life situation (Coney and Steehouder).

To create an effective role in the script, you have to understand the audience's role in real life. Because of their role, they have specific tasks, that is, specific responsibilities and actions. For instance, Marjorie Sommers is department manager. She evaluates data in relation to other aspects of the company. Her decisions have consequences because the corporation chooses to fund different actions based on her evaluations. She is professionally concerned that her clients be satisfied, that the company sell quality products. Personally, she is concerned that her work be judged as effective both by clients and by her supervisors. This matrix of characteristics defines her role. A writer must understand those characteristics in order to design an effective memo or any other document for her.

Role and task, in turn, are connected to need, those items necessary to fulfill the role. In order to fulfill her role in the organization, Marjorie Sommers must be assured that the mats serve the purpose for which they were sold. She must know of possible problems so that she can keep the customer happy

Personas Digging Deeper

Another method for understanding what motivates a particular type of audience is the creation of personas. Many writing professionals use this tool to understand who their customers are, and get in touch with their preferences, lifestyles, and beliefs (Duncan-Durst). A persona is "essentially a representative profile, which summarizes a key demographic target. It is usually accompanied by a photograph of a representative customer who is given a "real name" and assigned some basic demographic data (such as age, marital status, tangible occupation and income) as well as relevant information pertaining to personal behavior" (Duncan-Durst).

Creating a persona helps you understand whom you are talking to, so you know both how to talk to the audience and what to say. Using current slang to try and persuade an audience of senior citizens will likely not work. You need to think about what motivates and appeals to each type of audience. Then you need to tailor your messaging style to appeal to their beliefs, values, and lifestyles.

Although personas and profiles share a lot in common, personas tend to dig deeper. Some writers construct a "day in the life" story to imagine what their customers might do during the course of an ordinary day. As mentioned before, writers choose a stock photograph *of* their persona, so they can write *to* that person. Others write up imagined scenarios to determine what the persona would do in an imagined situation, like making a purchasing decision. Oftentimes, they base their personas on people they know.

Personas can be an effective tool when making any type of communication, whether print or Web. Having a visual representation of who your audience is can be extremely helpful. Keeping these ideas in mind when creating written messages will help you to make the best choices possible to ensure not only that readers understand your message, but also that the message appeals to them on a personal level.

with the product and with the company's service. She must be able to explain to her supervisor how her department is functioning. She has to decide whether she should talk to people in manufacturing about the fabrication of the part. In short, she needs the information to help her carry out her job responsibilities.

You can easily see the different effects of need by considering two audiences: operators of a machine and their department managers. Both groups need information but of different kinds. Operators need to know the sequence of steps that make the machine run: how to turn it on and off, how to set it to perform its intended actions, and how to troubleshoot if anything goes wrong. Managers need to know whether the machine would be a useful addition to the workstation and thus to purchase it. They need to know whether the machine's capabilities will benefit staff and budget. They need to know whether the machine has a variable output that can be changed to meet the changing flow of orders in the plant, whether the personnel on the floor can easily perform routine maintenance on the machine without outside help, and whether problems such as jamming can be easily corrected.

Because the audiences' needs differ, the documents directed at each are different. For the operator, the document would be a manual, with lots of numbered how-to-do-it steps, photos or drawings of important parts, and an index to help the operator find relevant information quickly. For the manager, the document would contain explanatory paragraphs rather than numbered how-to-do-it steps. Instead of photos, you might use a line graph that shows the effect of the variable rate of production or a table that illustrates budget, cost, or savings.

How Does the Reader Feel About the Subject?

The reader's feelings can be described as positively inclined, neutral, or negatively inclined toward the topic or the writer. Those feelings arise from many sources, which an author should analyze. For instance, any of these sources could affect the reader's attitudes: the topic (a pay cut, a meeting); the genre (a manual, a PowerPoint, a long e-mail, a Facebook message); the reader's opinion of the author (fair, clear, pushy, arrogant), the reader's level of knowledge (expert in this field, never heard of this issue, had an argument about this last week). If it is an e-mail from a committee chair announcing a meeting, the audience will probably feel neutral about the document and author. However, if the e-mail cancels a project led by the reader or announces a change in health insurance plans, the audience will likely feel negatively. If the e-mail announces that the advertising team won an award for its work, the audience will probably feel positively. Sometimes there is no way to predict the feelings. If the reader is having a "bad day," even a neutral message might be interpreted negatively.

If the audience is positively inclined, a kind of shared community can be set up rather easily. In such a situation, many of the small details won't make as much difference; the form that is chosen is not so important, and the document can be brief and informal. Words that have some emotional bias can be used without causing an adverse reaction. Marjorie Sommers is positively inclined toward the subject. Knowing about mats is part of her job; she is responsible for seeing that clients are satisfied with the product they purchased.

Much the same is true of an audience that is neutral. A writer who has to convey the minutes of a meeting that dealt with routine matters would assume that the audience will feel neutral about the topic and would just send an e-mail, if that is the usual practice. As long as the essential facts are present, the message will be communicated.

However, if the audience is negatively inclined, the writer cannot assume a shared community. The small details must be attended to carefully. Spelling, format, and word choice become even more important than usual because negatively inclined readers may seize upon anything that lets them vent their frustration or anger. Even such seemingly trivial documents as the announcement of a meeting can become a source of friction to an audience that is negatively inclined.

How Does the Reader Feel About the Sender?

A writer must establish a relationship with the reader, even if the reader has no previous relationship with the writer. Readers feel positively about a message if they feel that it is organized around their needs and if the writer "has taken the time to speak clearly, knowledgeably, and honestly to them" (Schriver 204). Documents that contain this sense of relationships tend to motivate the reader both to read and to act, a key requirement for effective communication (Carliner, 2000). To create this you-and-I-are-in-a-relationship sense, writers must create the belief that they are credible and authoritative and their documents must be "inviting" and "seductive."

Credibility means that you are a person who can be listened to. Credibility arises because of your role or your actions. If readers know that you are the quality control engineer, they will believe what you write on a quality issue. If readers know that you have followed a standard or at least a clear method of investigating a topic, they will believe you. The effect of demonstrating your credibility is that readers tend to think, "I will accept your message because I feel you are a credible person in the situation." Credibility grows out of competence and method.

Competence is control of appropriate elements. If you act like a competent person, you will be perceived as credible. The items discussed in this text will all improve your credibility—attention to formatting, to organization, to spelling and grammar, and to the audience's needs. Competence is also shown by tone. You will not seem credible if you sound casual when you should sound formal or facetious when you should sound serious.

Method includes the acts you have taken in the project. Simply put, audiences will view you as credible—and your message as believable—if they feel you have "acted correctly" in the situation. If the audience can be sure that you have worked through the project in the "right way," they will be much more likely to accept your requests or conclusions. If you have talked to the right people, followed the right procedures, applied the correct definitions, and read the right articles, the audience will be inclined to accept your results. For instance, if you tell the audience that package design A is unacceptable because it failed the Mullen burst test (an industry-wide standard method of applying pressure to a corrugated box until it splits), they will believe you, because you arrived at the conclusion the right way.

In all the informative memos and reports you write, you should try to explain your methodology to your reader. The IMRD report (Chapter 10) provides a specific section for methodology, and in other types of reports you should try to present the methodology somewhere, often in the introduction, as explained in this chapter. Sometimes one sentence is all you need: "To find these budget figures I interviewed our budget analyst." Sometimes you need to supply several sentences in a paragraph that you might call "background." However you handle it, be sure to include methodology both in your planning (what do I need to do to find this information?) and in your writing (be sure to add a reference or a lengthier section).

Authority means that you have the power to present messages that readers will take seriously (Lay). Basically, you have the right to speak because you have expertise, gained by either your role or your actions. Naturally, this authority is limited. Your report is authoritative enough to be the basis for company policy, even though you might not be the one who actually sets the policy.

Inviting documents cast the writer in a helpful role toward the reader. For instance, the writer could assume a role of guide who shows visitors the path through the forest of instructions in assembling a tricycle, a librarian who leads users through the information to find what they need. Often how inviting the document is depends on the wording. For instance, Coney and Steehouder suggest that on Web pages the phrase *e-mail us* is much more seductive than a link to an unnamed webmaster (332).

Seductive, in this usage, means "to attract our readers' attention and win their sympathy" (Horton 5). To create a seductive document is partly a matter of your attitude (and partly, as Horton explains, the way you design and present the information, concepts that will be dealt with in later chapters). Horton suggests that the key attitude is to present yourself as a person who will "guide and protect the reader" in order to stimulate him or her into action.

In our example, Sommers is positively inclined toward Magolan. Magolan knows that Sommers likes and trusts him because the two have worked together for a while. His past actions have generated a sense of authority. He is a person who has the right to speak because he has acted well in the past. Todd knows that Sommers is the supervisor and expects clear information without much comment.

Todd, however, creates a credible, inviting document. He establishes credibility in the first paragraph by explaining his methodology—he inspected the site. He clearly feels that he has the authority to make evaluative comments that suggest future actions (incorporate the proposed design, not the original one). His tone is informal, using "I" and "you"; notice, too, that he is comfortable enough to structure his communication as a short, no-nonsense list. In short, Todd presents himself as a person who will guide and protect the reader. He has created an easy-to-follow document that invites further action, should it be necessary. He is a person whom the reader can trust.

What Form Does the Reader Expect?

Many audiences expect certain types of messages to take certain forms. To be effective, you must provide the audience with a document in the form they expect. For instance, a manager who wants a brief note to keep for handy reference may be irritated if he gets a long, detailed business letter. An electronics expert who wants information on a certain circuit doesn't want a prose discussion because it is customary to convey that information through schematics and specifications. If an office manager has set up a form for reporting accidents, she expects reports in that form. If she gets exactly the form that she specified, her attitude may easily turn from neutral to positively inclined. If she gets a different form, her attitude may change from neutral to negatively inclined.

Marjorie Sommers expects an informal report that she can skim over easily, getting all the main points. She expects that this report, like all those she receives reporting on site visits, will have an e-mail "cover letter" and will be an attachment to that e-mail. It will have the main point first and heads to break up the text. Todd knows that the message must be brief (one to two pages), that its method of production must be a personal computer, and that it must appear as a typical Word document so that it can easily be printed on 8 1/2-by-11-inch paper if that becomes necessary.

What Is the Audience's Task?

What will the reader do after reading the document? Although fulfilling a need is why the audience is involved in the situation, the task is the action they must accomplish (Rockley). Tasks vary greatly, and can be nearly anything—to assemble a tricycle or a workstation, to say no to drugs, to agree to build a retail outlet at a site, to evaluate the sanitary conditions of a restaurant. The document must enable the reader to perform that task.

Marjorie Sommers's task is to act to protect the interests of the company. As a result, she will alert her superiors to the problem with the pillars. Because Magolan feels the problem is the customer's, Sommers will not ask manufacturing to change their process. But because she has been informed, she will have the facts she needs if she must act at a later date.

What Is the Audience's Knowledge Level?

Every audience has a knowledge level, the amount they know about the subject matter of the document. This level ranges from expert to layperson (or nonexpert). An expert audience understands the terminology, facts, concepts, and implications associated with the topic. A lay audience is intelligent but not well informed about the topic. Knowing how much the audience knows helps you choose which information to present and in what depth to explain it.

Adapting to Your Audience's Knowledge Level

You adapt to your audience's knowledge level by building on their schemata—that is, on concepts they have formed from prior experiences (Huckin). The basic principles are "add to what the audience knows," and "do not belabor what they already know." If the audience knows a term or concept (has a schema for it), simply present it. But if the audience does not know the term or concept (because they have no schema), you must help them grasp it and add it to their schemata.

Suppose for one section of a report you have to discuss a specific characteristic of a digitized sound. If the reader has a "digitized sound schema," you can use just the appropriate terminology to convey a world of meaning. But if the reader does not have this schema, you must find a way to help him or her develop it. The following two examples illustrate how writers react to knowledge level.

For a More Knowledgeable Audience

For a more knowledgeable audience, a writer may use this sentence:

> That format allows only 8-bit sampling.

The knowledgeable reader knows the definitions of the terms *format* and *8-bit*. He or she also understands the implication of the wording, which is that the sound will not reproduce as accurately if it is sampled at 8 bits, but that the file will take up less disk space than, say, 16-bit sampling.

For a Less Knowledgeable Audience

A less knowledgeable audience, however, grasps neither the definitions nor the implications. To develop a schema for such readers, the writer must build on the familiar by explaining concepts, formatting the page to emphasize information, making comparisons to the familiar, and pointing out implications. You might convey the same information about sampling to a less knowledgeable audience in a manner as shown in Figure 2.2 (p. 46) (Stern and Littieri 146).

Finding Out What Your Audience Knows

Discovering what the audience knows is a key activity for any writer. It complements and is as important as discovering the audience's role. To estimate an audience's knowledge level, you can employ several strategies (Coney; Odell et al.; Selzer).

- Ask them before you write. If you personally know members of the audience, ask them in a phone call or brief conversation how much they know about the topic.
- Ask them after you write. Ask the audience to indicate on your draft where the concepts are unfamiliar or the presentation is unclear.
- Ask someone else. If you cannot ask the audience directly, ask someone who knows or has worked with the audience.

Explanation of concept	In many ways, it helps to think of digitized sound as being analogous to digitized video.
Highlighted text Implication of explanation	Digitized sound is actually composed of a sequence of individual sound samples. The number of samples per second is called the *sample rate* and is very much like a video track's frame rate. The more sound samples per second, the higher the quality of the resulting sound. However, more sound samples also take up more space on disk and mean that more data need to be processed during every second of playback. (The amount of data that must be processed every second is called the *data rate.*)
Analogy Highlighted text Implications	Sound samples can be of different sizes. Just as you can reproduce a photograph more faithfully by storing it as a 24-bit (full-color) image than as an 8-bit image, 16-bit sound samples represent audio more accurately than 8-bit sound samples. We refer to the size of those samples as a sound's *sample size.* As with the sample rate, a larger sample size increases the accuracy of the sound at the expense of more storage space and a higher data rate.

Figure 2.2 Writing for a Less Knowledgeable Audience

- Consider the audience's position. If you know the duties and responsibilities of the audience members, you can often estimate which concepts they will be familiar with.
- Consider prior contacts. If you have had dealings with the audience before, recall the extent of their knowledge about the topic.

What Factors Influence the Situation?

In addition to the personal factors mentioned earlier in relation to role, many business or bureaucratic situations have factors external to both the reader and the writer that will affect the design of a document. These factors can powerfully affect the way readers read. Common questions (based on Odell et al.) to answer are

Important to know what is driving the situation

- What consequences will occur from this idea?
- What is the history of this idea?
- How much power does the reader have?
- How formal is the situation?
- Is there more than one audience?

What Consequences Will Occur from This Idea?

Consequences are the effects of a person's actions on the organization. If the effect of your suggestion would be to violate an OSHA standard, your suggestion will be turned down. If the effect would be to make a profit, the idea probably will be accepted.

What Is the History of This Idea?

History is the situation prior to your writing. You need to show that you understand that situation; otherwise, you will be dismissed as someone who does not understand the implications of what you are saying. If your suggestion to change a procedure indicates that you do not know that a similar change failed several years ago, your suggestion probably will be rejected.

How Much Power Does the Reader Have?

Power is the supervisory relationship of the author and the reader. Supervisors have more power. Orders flow from supervisors to subordinates, and suggestions move in the reverse. The more powerful the reader, the less likely the document is to give orders and the more likely it is to make suggestions (Driskill; Fielden; Selzer).

How Formal Is the Situation?

Formality is the degree of impersonality in the document. In many situations, you are expected to act in an official capacity rather than as a personality. For an oral presentation to a board meeting concerning a multimillion-dollar planning decision, you would simply act as the person who knows about widgets. You would try to submerge personal idiosyncrasies, such as joking or sarcasm. Generally, the more formal the situation, the more impersonal the document.

Is There More Than One Audience?

Sometimes a document has more than one audience. In these situations, you must decide whether to write for the primary or secondary audience. The primary audience is the person actually addressed in the document. A secondary audience is someone other than the intended receiver who will also read the document. Often you must write with such a reader in mind. The secondary reader is often not immediately involved with the writer, so the document must be formal. The following two examples illustrate how a writer changes a document to accommodate primary and secondary audiences.

Suppose you have to write an e-mail to your supervisor requesting money to travel to a convention so that you can give a speech. This e-mail is just for your supervisor's reference; all he needs is a brief notice for his records. As an informal e-mail intended for a primary audience, it might read like Figure 2.3.

If this brief note is all your supervisor needs, neither a long, formal proposal with a title page and table of contents nor a formal business letter would be appropriate. The needs of the primary audience dictate the form and content of this e-mail.

Suppose, however, that your supervisor has to forward the e-mail to his manager for her approval. In that case, a brief, informal e-mail would be inappropriate. His manager might not understand the significance of the trip or

Brief subject line	Upcoming Trip to SME
Informal use of name	John
No formatting of document	This is my formal request for $750 in travel money to give my speech about widgets to the annual Society of Manufacturing Engineers convention in San Antonio in May. Thanks for your help with this.
	Fred

Figure 2.3 Informal E-mail for a One-Person Audience

A more official format, including explanatory subject line:	Travel money for my speech to Society of Manufacturing Engineers convention
Orients reader to background and makes request	Hi John, As I mentioned to you in December, I will be the keynote speaker at the Annual Convention of the Society of Manufacturing Engineers in San Antonio. I would like to request $750 to defray part of my expenses for that trip.
Explains background of request	This group, the major manufacturing engineering society in the country, has agreed to print the speech in the conference proceedings so that our work in widget quality control will receive wide readership in M.E. circles. The society has agreed to pay $250 toward expenses, but the whole trip will cost about $1000.
Adds detail that primary audience knows	I will be gone four days, May 1–4; Warren Lang has agreed to cover my normal duties during that time. Work on the Acme Widget project is in such good shape that I can leave it for those few days. May I make an appointment to discuss this with you? Fred Paulson

Figure 2.4 More Formal E-mail Written for Multiple Audiences

might need to know that your work activities will be covered. In this new situation, your document might look like Figure 2.4.

As you can see, this document differs considerably from the first e-mail. It treats the relationship and the request much more formally. It also explains the significance of the trip so that the manager, your secondary audience, will have all the information she needs to respond to the request.

Creating Audience Profiles

Before you begin to write, you need to use the concerns outlined in this chapter to create an audience profile, a description of the characteristics of your audience. The profile is an image of a person who lives in a situation. You use that description as the basis for decisions you make as you create your document (Lazzaro; Rockley).

In order to create a profile, you need to ask specific questions and use an information-gathering strategy.

Questions for an Audience Profile

To create the profile, ask the questions discussed in this chapter:

- Who is the audience?
  - What are their demographic characteristics?
  - What is the audience's role?
  - How does the reader feel about the subject?
  - How does the reader feel about the sender?
  - What form does the reader expect?
- What is the audience's task?
- What is the audience's knowledge level?
- What factors influence the situation?

Information-Gathering Strategies

To create these answers, use one of two methods—create a typical user or involve the actual audience at some point in your planning (Schriver 154–163).

Create a Typical User

Creating a typical user means to imagine an actual person about whom you answer all the profile questions. Suppose that you have to write a set of instructions for uploading a document to a Web server. You could create a typical user whom you follow in your mind as he or she enacts the instructions.

Here is such a creation: Marie Williamson, a sophomore and a Mac user (*demographics*) arrives in the lab (*situation*) with the assignment to upload several files to the Web using a PC (*task*). She is taking her first course that exclusively uses PCs and needs to upload the files to the Web so that she receives credit (*role*). She intensely dislikes PCs (*attitude toward the subject*) and has never really liked using manuals (*expectation about sender and form*). She has never done this before by herself (*knowledge level*). She is stressed because she has only 20 minutes in the lab to do this before she has to go to work, and she still has no babysitter lined up for her child (*other factors*) (see Garret 54–56).

To write the manual, you try to accommodate all the "realities" that you feel will affect "Marie's" or any user's ability to carry out the instructions. Your goal is to write an inviting, seductive manual, one that entices her to read and to act. If you can write a manual that would help "Marie," it is a good guess that it will help other people also. Using "Marie" you can make decisions that will help create a document that enables any reader to accomplish his or her task and enhance his or her relationships with teachers, coworkers, and children.