

Audience and Purpose

An audience refers to viewer of a performance, listeners of a speech, and intended readers of a writing. In workplace communication, the audience is the person or people we want to communicate with to effect an intended action. The main aim of any communication is to clearly communicate the message to the audience and carry out the intended action. Therefore, it is very important to consider different aspects of audiences to make our communication more effective. A message can be made best fit for our audience by knowing about their knowledge level, role, interest, personality etc.

For effective communication, the answers to the following questions are of great importance.

- Are all the readers alike or are they a mixed group?
- What do they know already about the topic?
- What do they need to know?
- What are the psychological and physical contexts within which the new information will be received?

⊗ Meeting the Needs of Audience:

Technical writing should be audience centered, that is, what the audience needs. That is why the following rule often dominates in technical writing: The needs and wants of your audience dictate every decision you make as a writer. A technical writer is like a behind-the-scenes operator whose primary obligation is to satisfy the audience's need for information. To fulfill the needs of audience, the writer should make every possible effort to accommodate them. Therefore, the writer should learn a lot about the audience's background. The technical writer should use the language that the audience easily understands. It is important for a writer to have information about knowledge level, roles, interest, cultural background and personality of audience.

Knowledge level: A technical writer should learn what the members of the audience already know and what they need to know. If the information is beyond the reach of audience's knowledge level then it puzzles them. Therefore, a skillful writer should use subject matter depending on the knowledge level of the audiences.

Role: Role here means someone's area of responsibility. It is the job that someone performs. A good technical writer includes information that the audience's role requires.

Interest: A technical writer should know what the audience is interested in and what not. If we find common interest of the readers we have to take advantage of it. If diversity of interest is noticed, we have to try to create common grounds.

Cultural Background: Culture, in simple words, is the total way of life. It is the lifestyle of particular group of people. People from different cultures have different patterns of thoughts and communicate in different ways. A good writer tries to understand the differences in communication patterns in different cultures and uses appropriate patterns of communication so that no audience is offended and the goal is fulfilled.

Personality: Personality of a person is the characteristics or personal qualities that give an individual a distinctive identity. People with different personality prefer different communication patterns. Some readers love message in direct style including facts while some love only bottom line of the information, but not the details. A good writer should consider the audience's capacity to absorb the information.

* Planning Documents Purpose:

persuade → meaning trust
target

Purpose is defined as a specific end or outcome to be obtained. In technical writing it is what a writer wants readers to do after reading a document. The purpose of any technical writing is to inform and to persuade the readers to carry out actions as action is the end of the writing. The information should lead the readers to persuasion and completion of the technical task or implementation of the decision made. Actions cannot be carried out without persuasion, therefore, it is very important that a writer should be able to device the message that fits the type of audience and their interest so that they are convinced to perform as desired.

Therefore, a technical writer always bears in mind the answers to the following questions:

- What is information to be given about?
- What is the audience to be persuaded or convinced of?
- What is the desired action as a result of that document?

* Scope: Scope in technical writing is the extent of the area or subject matter that something deals with or to which it is relevant. It is the coverage of the subject matter in the document. A good technical writer always thinks of the volume of information to be given. He/She should decide what information should be included and what omitted. Therefore it is very important to follow the essence of audience analysis and statement of purpose. For example, if a writer is writing directions about how to make a cup of tea, he/she should include all the things needed and the processes involved in it, but not where to buy the tea. The writer uses anything that motivates the readers to perform the action. Too little information cannot convince the reader, and desired performance is not possible. Therefore a technical writing should only include what is ideal according to the type of the audience.

⊗ Medium: The medium is a means by which information is conveyed. For example, television, radio, email, letters etc. are some of the media of conveying information. Today technology has given us many options. After deciding the type of information and purpose, a technical writer should decide what medium will appeal his/her audience and accomplish the purpose. Three things are of special importance:

- 1) Appropriateness of the medium.
- 2) Amount of time and money needed for the medium.
- 3) Availability of the medium.