

expect next and where and how the pieces fit into your whole scheme is a vital requirement for anyone trying to understand you. Since they don't know your *material*, at least they feel grounded in the *logical order* in which you give it.

Knowing Your Order Increases Attention

If the structure of your oral presentation is clearly explained and easily followed, then the listener can use all his/her time and energy just absorbing and understanding your message. Otherwise, much of the listener's attention will be spent on just figuring out where you are and where you're going and how the different pieces fit together.

People Have a VERY Short Attention Span

Here's some bad news for all "tellers," you who need to keep your audiences listening:

Language is so exact that the human brain requires only *15 percent* of its power to understand language, if we're both using the same one. Eighty-five percent of the brain is actually not needed for your listener to grasp what you mean.

Implication? *Eighty-five percent* of your listener's brainpower is left, like a loose cannon, to do whatever it wishes! That doesn't necessarily include listening to you . . .

Think about what *you* do: When you're not really absorbed by what's happening, your brain goes on vacation. It's free to (and does) daydream, worry about other things, make lists of various duties, wonder about dinner, the weekend, who's winning the ball game—in short, *anything* but the business at hand, being earnestly presented by a . . . a . . . (dare I say it?) a bore!

Therefore, *never* take your audience for granted. It's a continual uphill struggle to keep them with you, to fight for more than the 15 percent you automatically get when you begin. You must build in new devices to keep *100 percent* of the listener's brain occupied.

Clear Introductions and Transitions Are a Must

Unless you let your audience know when you begin a new topic or end it, your whole presentation can sound like one endless paragraph. In order to help your audience follow, you must make verbal indents, endings, chapter headings, paragraphs, and transitions.

Remembering how vital a clearly self-evident structure is in helping