

Result? If it's a presentation, you may not notice that others are bored, unconvinced, or restless with the length, the preachiness, the predictability, or the sheer "talkiness" of your message. Just as with your family, you feel you can get away with a lot. After all, you're a *member*! And as they say, "Membership has its privileges" . . .

If it's a one-on-one meeting or even an informal phoned request, familiarity can cause you to cut out all the usual niceties (the ones that really *count* in communicating) and to get right down to the task at hand.

So you may find that Fore-Thought and planning are often not your priority with a familiar audience. Too bad. You may be losing them more often than you think . . .

An Unfamiliar Audience

Here the opposite obtains: They're strangers; no automatic love and welcome. You have to be on your best behavior and try *very* hard. You know right away why you need to question who your audience is and what they like and need.

- *What's easy to know*

The unfamiliarity of your audience makes it easier for you to answer the deeper questions about them. Because you start already removed from them, be it one or many listeners, it's easier for you to be able to see the whole picture, to generalize objectively about some basic truths. You can more readily imagine what they probably care most about, what their goals and needs are, how they would probably take your message as you deliver it or as they sit across a table from you.

- *What's hard to know*

What you don't know, and often *can't* know, are their individual traits and unique characteristics. But you don't need to know those yet in order to plan.

What You Need to Know

- *Larger audiences*

For purposes of planning a presentation to a group, you're looking for the largest possible common denominators in order to include them all. Therefore, knowing the general facts about them as a *group* is exactly what's called for.