

Understand Who Asks Questions

- Some people really are confused and want to know.
- Some people will feel competitive with anyone in the spotlight; they're interested in the by-product, not the product.
- Some people are classic opposers, needing to find fault with anything new, or not their idea.
- Some people have a tenacious, thorough way of thinking and **will** pursue a point relentlessly.
- Some people came to disagree and make a public statement of their own.

Identifying why they're asking as you hear their questions helps you fit your answer to what the byplay is *really* about.

Understand Your Adversaries

Next—you need to prepare for disagreement. Know that as impassioned as you are about your topic, there are others who feel just as keenly that you're dead wrong and that their way is *the* way. The key here is to expect this and to see those people not as thorns in your side but from their point of view. Spend a moment thinking *why* they would feel as they do. Imagine believing in something that strongly. Don't you?

You need to understand what your adversary's goals and inner needs are (the ole Fore-Thought Chart again) in order to defuse him/her. (There'll be more on this in Handling Hostility in the next section.)

Understand Your Feelings

To develop good skills for fielding questions extemporaneously, you need to first find out how you truly feel about doing it. Let's look at the most common feelings I've discovered in my private consulting work:

- *Loss of control*

Having just been in total control of your subject, the subject will now be determined by the questioner. The style of presentation will be sent by him/her; the spotlight now shines on the questioner, who can then shine a possibly harsh and unflattering light on you. You will be forced to cede your sense of power. Or so it seems . . .

A major problem in answering questions is feeling put upon and powerless. This erodes your ability to think (how can you if you think you