

## PLANNING YOUR PRESENTATION

### Profile Your Audience

What do you especially need to learn about your specific audience to be sure that your message goes right to the heart of what they care about and want or need to know?

You need to create a group portrait to be able to predict what their goals, needs, and expectations are; what style and at what level your presentation should be delivered.

#### *An Unfamiliar Audience*

Demographics sound so market-research-oriented, but in truth— isn't that what we want? With a disparate group of strangers, you need to start narrowing your sights about who's coming to hear you in order to be effective with them. You need to learn about:

- *Age and sex*

The age (under X, X to Y, over Y) and sex (all male, mixed, all female) of your audience matter because they will affect the choices you make: choices in language, allusion, metaphor, allegory, reference points, and so on. Not useful to talk of the current heavy-metal rage to a group of over-forties. Not effective to bring up the old Hollywood morality plays to a group of thirty-year-olds. Sports analogies, family issues, historical references, old-boy networks, disenfranchisement: all these have more or less interest, aptness, and symbolic meaning for one age or sex than another, based on where people are in their lives. Therefore, knowing about these two general categories begins to help you winnow the range of choices you make in preparing your speech.

Please understand that this is only a start in *generalizing* about who's in your audience and what they probably care about and respond to. (No letters about women football fans and male needlepointers, please. I know they're there!)

- *Professional level*

- Are you sharing new data?
- Introducing them to your methods?
- Altering an existing belief?
- Solving a common problem?