Title:
Get Evaluations to Grow

Word Count:
361

Summary:
You know what you're saying or writing; but what is the audience hearing or reading? The tips in this article will help you get feedback, and get you feedback you can use.

Keywords:
writing, presentation, public speaking, communication

Article Body:
You're speaking, so you know what you're saying. But, do you know what your audience is hearing?

Or perhaps you're writing. Do you know what your audience is reading?

I know many speakers who've been surprised when they discovered the distance between the message they sent and the message the audience received. That's not really unexpected. After all, we really can't gauge how our content or delivery comes across to others unless we've had the evaluations of others.

For example, I've learned from speaking evaluations that I'm often too serious, and that I should lighten up. That's not something that was obvious to me, but after several formal and informal evaluations, I now recognize the truth of that observation.

In the same way, I've learned to reduce the amount of content in my speeches. When I'm writing a speech, I now know I'm not writing a book. By that, I mean the listener can take in much less than a reader, and it's up to the speaker to make the content fit. That, too, I learned from the evaluations of others.

If you can get someone to evaluate your speech or presentation, ask for specific assessments on several criteria, rather than just general comments. These specific criteria might include:
* content suitability for the audience
* vocal variety and pacing
* posture and general bearing

* gestures and body language
* eye contact.

Make your list as long or as short as you wish, and remember that the more specific the criteria, the easier it will be to get information you can you use for improvement.

Much of what we've discussed about speaking works for writing as well. Again, ask for specific assessments rather than general comments. While it's nice to be told, "Your memo was great," it's much more useful to get feedback on specific criteria, such as:
* writing style (too formal or too casual, for example)
* word usage
* amount of content
* suitability of content
* overall readability by target audience.

Many friends and colleagues will happily give you feedback if you ask for it; now you need to approach the subject strategically, and make sure you get feedback you can use to improve your performance.