

Ensure successful speeches, events and campaigns by Avoiding these communication issues...

Three things you can do with just a little bit of preparation....

Dear Fellow Sales Heroes:

A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to hear a speech by a likeable, intelligent and respected person in their very specific area of subject matter expertise.

Based on the feedback after the event, it could have been more successful. Here's some background...

The advertised topic had a very powerful appeal and the audience was homogenous, all having similar background, attending the event for the same purpose, and absent annoying hidden agendas that can be so difficult to navigate.

Sounds like the ingredients for success, doesn't it?

However, it was immediately clear there were at least three problems the communicator could have avoided. Let me explain...

Dictionaries and definition of terms were not handed out before the speech-- This educated audience could tell that the person speaking was even more educated than they were... every other word was multi-syllabic and uncommon in everyday writing and speaking. Every sentence had several back-to-back monstrously sized words.

The speaker came to speak about one thing; the audience to hear about another-- While the topic, on face value, was recognizable and had appeal, it was ambiguous. The more the speaker spoke, the more the audience struggled to figure out if they were at the right event and at minimum where the speaker was going.

The audience fought through detailed stories and the very large words hoping it was all background to understand the topic they were sure they had come to hear and believed the speaker would get to eventually.

There was no promise or purpose at the beginning ; no conclusion, opinion, advice or call-to-action at the end-- In fairness, the speaker told the audience what they were going to hear about (it was the title of the speech)... it just wasn't specific enough to set the right expectations. For the audience, the opening remarks lacked definition and purpose.

Other than hearing that the speaker had experience and some very specific knowledge to share with the audience, the audience didn't have a roadmap of what to expect. They didn't have a statement of the purpose or reason this subject is important and more importantly why it is, or should be, important to them. And the audience didn't know what, if anything, they could or should do about it.

Whether you are writing or speaking, follow these guidelines to ensure your success...

Do a little a research on the audience-- Try to understand the audience's background and their frame of reference. Ask the organizer questions about the audience, past events or campaigns, the purpose and goal of this event or campaign, and the promotion strategy. Make sure you and the organizer are on the same page and moving in the same direction.

See things from the audience viewpoint-- Your material might need tweaking or a full-blown revision for an audience if written for people with the same technical background you possess.

Ask yourself questions and develop your material from the audience's perspective. What is it they need to hear, and in what way do they need to hear it to understand what you are communicating for it to be important to them.

Use regular everyday language. Avoid jargon, words specific to your business or area of expertise, whenever possible. When you want or need to use more complicated language (and there are occasions when it is called for), you should do it sparingly, explaining the word without sounding superior. I did it in the second paragraph when I used the word homogenous and again in this paragraph with jargon.

Tell your audience where you're going-- You wouldn't typically jump into a car without knowing at least your destination, how long it will take you to get there, how you are going to get there, how long you will be there, why you are going there... You get the point.

You would at least take a map (I guess today you could punch it in on your GPS or call it up on your cell phone). At minimum, you would need to know where you intended to go and how you know when you arrived. So does your audience.

Let your audience know what your topic is-- avoid ambiguity. Let them know why it is, or you think it is, important to them... and to you. Construct your message to connect back to that important reason... it leads your audience further along in your presentation.

If you come prepared to speak about one topic and your audience seems to be prepared to hear about something entirely different you will be setting the right

expectation. Your audience will relax and ease into your message by clearly communicating what you are presenting at the start.

Finally, be sure to have a conclusion that has a call-to-action if the purpose of the message was not strictly informational.

Your audience is there, generally, because they want to be... and they want you to be successful. They want you to be a hero. And you can be with a little preparation.

Be The Hero,
Mark

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