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Turn **YOUR** Audience *ON or OFF* With **YOUR** Words

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HUMAN BEHAVIOR

FACTORS AFFECTING DECISION MAKING

Session Number: 2

Monday August 16, 1:00

As a press secretary and legislative assistant for a U.S. Congressman, I will teach you the importance of translating technical information into a form that is compelling and cogent so that it attracts your current audience to LISTEN and UNDERSTAND why the information is important to them and why they should implement your recommendations for action.

Political Communication is like Entertainment

- *It's discretionary.*
- People have to WANT to listen/act upon your information.

Who is Your Audience?

- **It's YOUR job as a speaker to present yourself as ONE OF THEM and your proposal as relevant TO them and worthy of support BY them.**
- Is your audience your boss or a representative of the President? Is that person a political appointee or a professional colleague who knows you as "one of them" and shares your knowledge/goals?
- Is your audience a choir? Fellow team members on your agency?
- Is your audience loyal or hostile opposition? Intra or interagency colleagues or rivals?
- Is your audience a lay audience outside of your "club"?

IF Congress is Your Audience

- Whether Members or Congressional Staff, they're either Democratic, Republican or both.
- ***PARTISANS!***
- There are no political agnostics or atheists in the Congress.
- Independents caucus with a party.

Establish a Common Bond

- **Introduce yourself**
- **Break the ice and establish a connection by noting ANY common bond(s) with your audience.**

What's the Problem?

- **First Impressions Matter. Get their attention.**
Establish fast, within one minute, *why should your audience care about your proposal?*
- **Example: Quantitative Impacts – Follow the money!**
What is the impact of the status quo v. your proposal on your audience and what they care about most?
Members of Congress care about the pocketbook impact on their constituents – esp. VOTERS who will act to re-hire or fire them.

What's the To Do Item?

What's Your End Game?

- Reassure your audience that you respect their time and schedule demands. **Outline your agenda.** Just as quickly, within the second minute, **identify what specific action by the audience concerning your proposal will fix the problem that you identified up front. Make sure the to-do item(s) are something that your audience CAN DO!**
- **Example: Congress.** Members/staff legislate. What is the legislative action they can take? Write a letter/cosponsor/vote/make a phone call in support of a specific bill that will advance your proposal.

Build Your Case for Action

- **Personalize your argument for your audience.**
- **What's your audience's currency?**
- **How can acting upon your proposal help your audience achieve their goals?**

A Case for Action: Congress

- **Only a FEW members write the bills**
authorizers/appropriators/leadership
chairmen (majority) ranking (minority)

The majority determine the agenda.

All staff work for SPECIFIC MEMBERS.

Highlight the impacts of proposals on THEIR constituents who can vote for or against them.

Secondarily, but MOST visibly – highlight the impact upon the PEOPLE: specific coalitions, advocacy organizations/representatives/industries WHO ARE directly affected by your proposal.

Words Matter!

- Purposefully or inadvertently if you use the *RIGHT/WRONG* code words with an audience, *they'll love you or leave you.*
- *TURN YOUR AUDIENCE ON* by *Striking a "Responsive Chord"*
- *TURN YOUR AUDIENCE OFF* by *provoking "Cognitive Dissonance"*

TURN YOUR AUDIENCE ON by Striking a “Responsive Chord”

- [THE RESPONSIVE CHORD](#) by Tony Schwartz defined the **resonance principle** in communications (1973 paperback).
- Said **Marshall McLuhan**, "This book is the only one...which even begins to approach **the problem of human scale in relation to electronic media.**"
- MEDIA PIONEER, AUDIO DOCUMENTARIAN
- August 19, 1923 - June 15, 2008
- **The LBJ “Daisy” Ad**

TURN YOUR AUDIENCE OFF by provoking “Cognitive Dissonance”

- In 1957, Leon Festinger published *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, Stanford University, Stanford, Calif., 1957
- People do not like to reconcile conflicting thoughts or “dissonant cognitions.” When someone does experience two or more conflicting thoughts they will attempt to do away with the dissonance.
- **Hear What You Want to Hear**

“Cognitive Dissonance” and Politics

- If an audience is exposed *by a speaker* to the presentation of an idea that conflicts in some way with a pre-existent strongly held conviction, the audience closes their ears and minds and rejects this “new” idea, *no matter how compelling it might otherwise be.*

Avoiding Rhetorical IED's

You Say *This*, BUT Republicans Hear *THAT*

Greenhouse Gas Emissions = National Energy Tax

Cap and Trade = National Energy Tax

Price on Carbon = National Energy Tax

BUT EVERYONE HATES OPEC

Energy Security = Less Dependence on OPEC

Energy Security = More Money Stays in the US

Energy Security = More Jobs in the US

KISS – Keep It Simple, Stupid!

- Respect the high intelligence, admirable motives and good will of your audience.
- **TRANSLATE ACRONYMS & JARGON**
- **USE ANALOGIES - *familiar to audience* BEST**
- **Stories *are* memorable, facts are not.**
- **Don't demean or demonize opposite views**
- **Second Pair of Eyes Proofreading: INTERNS!**
- **Reserve technical information for Q and A**

Repetition is the *Soul* of Learning

Reiterate and summarize the problem and why your audience *can* implement your proposal to solve the problem.

Use Feedback to Strengthen Your Argument

- Leave time for Q and A.
- Listen and learn from audience reactions to your presentation.

Follow-Up

- **Make sure you have a way of measuring your audience's behavioral response to your requested to-do actions.**

W.C. Fields

- **Persistence and Perseverance**
- If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.
- If you still don't succeed, don't keep hitting your head against a wall:
REVISE AND RETOOL!