

Speech Evaluation

We constantly evaluate what is around us. We hope that techniques of constructive evaluation will help us to improve our skills. This section analyses some of the important aspects of evaluation. It presents some ideas to help you to become a better communicator, through your evaluation work and your acceptance of others' evaluations.

You should evaluate the content, organisation and delivery of the speech. Here is an example list of questions that you should consider when evaluation a speech:

- Was there a title?
- What was the key message?
- Was there an introduction?
- Was the content original?
- Were there any personal examples, stories or case studies?
- Were you interested during the presentation?
- Was there a conclusion?
- Did the presentation stay within the time limit?
- Did the presenter use notes and/or cue cards?
- Was the speakers voice loud enough?
- Did they speak slow enough?
- Did they speak clearly?
- Did they use any junk words?
- Did the speaker have confident body language?
- Were there any signs of stage fright?
- Did they use gestures correctly?
- Did they give you the correct amount of eye-contact?
- Did they use visual aids?
- Where the visual aids relevant to what they were talking about?
- Where the visual aids clear and simple?
- What were the Good points?
- What were the Weak points and give ways to improve them?

Audience

In order to understand the situation or context of your presentation, ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the broader concern underlying the need for the presentation?
- What primary issues underlie the presentation?
- How does your presentation relate to these issues?
- What will be happening in the organization when you make your presentation?
- How does your presentation fit into the organizational situation?
- If you are one of several speakers, what kinds of presentations will the other speakers be making?
- In what surroundings will you be making the presentation?
- What will happen in the situation before and after your talk?
- How does your talk relate to other participants' actions?

For example, delivering a presentation at a meeting of project directors is different from briefing other people in your team about what you've been doing. Making a presentation at a company picnic is different from delivering a presentation at the annual meeting of a professional society. Knowing the **situation** is as important as knowing your audience and your purpose. In many cases, **situation** will be inextricably bound up with questions of audience attitude and the way you shape your purpose. Audience attitude frequently results from **situational** problems or current issues within the organization, and what you can or should say in your presentation, your purpose and the content you choose to present may be dictated by the **context** surrounding your presentation and the perspective that your audience brings.

Analyze your Audience

Analyzing your situation is often difficult to separate from analyzing your audience; in fact, audience is one facet of the larger situation.

Just as readers determine the success of written communication, audiences determine the success of oral presentations. Writing or speaking is successful if the reader or listener responds the way you desire: the reader or listener is informed, persuaded, or instructed as you intend and then responds the way you want with good will throughout.

Just as writing effectively depends on you understanding your reader as thoroughly as possible, effective speaking depends on you understanding your listener. You cannot speak or write effectively to people without first understanding their perspective. You must know how your audience will likely respond based on its members' educational and cultural background, knowledge of the subject, technical expertise, and position in the organization.

When you analyze your audience, focus on its members' professional as well as personal attributes. Your audience members will pay attention to some things because they belong to a specific department or class; they'll react to other things because of their likes, dislikes, and uncertainties. You have to keep both profiles in mind. Your analysis will suggest what you should say or write, what you should not say, and the tone you should use.

To help you analyze your audience, ask the following questions:

- How much do my audience members know about the subject?
- How much do they know about me?
- What do they expect from me?
- How interested will they be in what I say?
- What is their attitude toward me?
- What is their attitude toward my subject?
- What is their age group?
- What positions do they occupy in the organization?
- What is their educational background?
- What is their cultural/ethnic background?
- What is their economic background?
- What are their political and religious views?
- What kinds of cultural biases will they likely have toward me and my topic?

In viewing this list, you will note the prevalence of questions on **attitude**--the audience's attitude toward you as well as the subject. Some attitudes will matter more than others, according to the situation.

These questions are particularly crucial ones, since you need to know, **before** you begin planning your presentation, whether your audience will consider you trustworthy and credible. To be an effective speaker, you must know your audience, establish a relationship by being sincere and knowledgeable about the subject, then conform to their expectations about dress, demeanor, choice of language, and attitude toward them and the topic.

When you speak to people from other countries, you should plan to do research on the culture of that country. Be aware that hand gestures you use routinely with US audiences may have different meanings in other cultures. Also, the clothing you choose to wear should also be selected with the culture of the audience in mind. If the audience and situation call for more formal clothing than you usually wear, practice your talk wearing the clothes you'll be wearing at the presentation.