

Overall Psychology of Your Audience

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about understanding the psychology of your audience. Specifically, this lesson will focus on:

1. Psychographics of a Given Audience
2. Values
3. Beliefs
4. Attitudes
5. Needs

1. Psychographics of a Given Audience

The demographics of the audience give the speaker one type of picture based on variables such as age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, culture, race, and ethnicity; however, there is another equally important picture based on the overall psychological make-up of the audience, or the **psychographics** of the audience.

Psychographics can be used to describe and develop a profile of the individuals in a given audience. Speakers can also use psychographics to select an audience that meets a certain profile, and then tailor a message specifically to that profile.

Psychology is commonly defined as the science of behavior and mental processes. The speaker can look at the psychology of the individual audience members to determine how they might respond as a group to his or her ideas. The speaker wants to look at the current state of values, beliefs, attitudes, and needs, and not consider how the person developed them.

What is the current disposition of the audience toward the speech's topic and purpose? If the speaker is attempting to persuade the audience to accept a particular idea or take an action, it is important to understand the starting point.

What are the dominant values, beliefs, attitudes, and needs of the audience? The speaker must know how to use that knowledge to tailor the speech to the audience. Consider values, beliefs, attitudes, and needs as factors in the psychological make-up of the audience.



TERM TO KNOW

Psychographics

The study of personality, values, attitudes, interests, and lifestyles; not to be confused with demographic variables such as age and gender.

2. Values

Values can be defined as broad preferences concerning appropriate courses of action or outcomes. As such, values reflect a person's sense of right and wrong or what "ought" to be.

➦ **EXAMPLE** "Equal rights for all", "Excellence deserves admiration", and "People should be treated with respect and dignity" are statements of values.

Values tend to influence attitudes and behavior.

➦ **EXAMPLE** Someone who values equal rights for all goes to work for an organization that treats its managers much better than it does its workers, he or she may form the attitude that the company is an unfair place to work; consequently, this person may not produce well or may perhaps leave the company. It is likely that if the company had a more egalitarian policy, his or her attitude and behaviors would have been more positive.

Something that the speaker perceives as good may not be perceived as very good by members of the audience. Something that the speaker perceives as beautiful may not appear the same to the audience. A course of action that the speaker believes is right may not be endorsed by the audience. It is important to consider what the audience values as part of the overall psychological make up of the audience.

3. Beliefs

The speaker should consider how close the audience's beliefs in something or someone or about the world, both physical and spiritual, are to his or her own beliefs.

Members of the audience may believe that certain things exist or certain ideas are true. The speaker should attempt to identify and build upon shared beliefs to get the audience to consider or accept a particular belief which may be different from the ones they hold.

The speaker can often build upon shared beliefs to establish common ground with the audience before advancing a new idea.

4. Attitudes

Attitudes can play a very important role in speech preparation. An attitude is a positive or negative evaluation of people, objects, event, activities, ideas, or just about anything in the environment.

If the speaker knows the audience's attitude toward the topic or thesis before the speech, he or she can make sure to address these attitudes during the speech preparation.

Some ways to find out the audience's attitude beforehand include rating scales or direct statements from

5. Needs

If members of the audience need certain things either physically or psychologically, the speaker should consider how to satisfy those needs.

One classical breakdown of needs is Maslow's hierarchy of needs. If the speaker understands where the members of the audience are on Maslow's hierarchy, he or she can show how his or her ideas help the audience satisfy those needs.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that you can look at the psychology of the individual audience members to determine how they might respond as a group to the speech's ideas. The overall **psychographics of the audience** include the current state of the audience members' **values, beliefs, attitudes, and needs**, but not how the audience members developed them. Use knowledge of the values, attitudes, beliefs, and needs of members of your audience to develop and describe a psychographic profile in order to tailor a message specifically to the audience.

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