

## How To Make Your Audience and Material Fit Like A Glove

### So Your Speech is More Powerful & Effective

By Peter J. Fogel

Ever hear the old adage, one size fits all? Well, it might work if you're buying something off the rack at Macy's with the hope that "I'll take in the seam later at the tailors," but it won't cut it in the competitive world of public speaking.

If you want your content to enlighten and make a profound difference with your targeted audience, then you have to do your due diligence and make sure your material is focused on what is important to them. *It all comes down to their wants, needs, and desires.*

#### Not All Audiences Are Created Equal

And yes, I know you're an authority in your field. And you know you're an authority in your field... and even the event planner that hired you knows you're a respected guru in your field. But YOUR audience doesn't care.

All they're worried about is how is your specific skills and background and the information you're going to present to them is going to effect and improve THEIR personal life, THEIR business performance, or increase THEIR net worth.

Yes, this is indeed "the me" generation. Your audience has invested their time with you. The one thing employees loathe at work (and I am told this time and time again) is having to go to "another" meeting and having to listen to yet "another" speaker.

Your job Mr. Phelps (to quote from the program "Mission Impossible") is to surprise your audience with your uncanny speaking prowess and content and make the last boring speaker the company brought in to speak to them at 8:30 am... a distant memory.

#### Want To Go the Extra Mile For Your Client? Then Do Your Research!

So how can you accomplish this task just like the superstar speakers do it? Well, we know that no two snowflakes are alike and we also know that no two companies (even ones in the same industry) are exactly the same. You should always go the extra mile and do your research as if its your business at stake. (because in a round about way it is—especially if you want to speak at your client's company again.)

For example, if you're talking on customer service – you might have your “generic-fail-safe-customer service” speech already in your head. But the A.A.M.P – The Amalgamated Association of Mormon Plumbers (and by the way—this group doesn't exist. And if they do... they're probably only in Utah) is going to have specific troubles that differ than that of the Contractors of Greater New England (noticed how I crisscrossed across the country just now?)

Every human being has their own DNA and every industry has their own angst, (so to speak.) Your goal is to embrace it as if it's your own and empathize with their plight. And the first thing you have to do is:

- 1) Do your research within the company. Get all the specific information from the “powers that be” on the trials and tribulations the company/business is having. Read articles about the company. Request files and case studies. (Look at corporate videos, annual reports, and dig into, with their permission of course, some company archives.)

Talk to folks that are in the trenches every day: middle managers, co-workers. Ask these folks to assist you. You want them to “help you... to help them.” (And when you go into a part of your speech—thank that particular person from the stage for their input---especially if they had a concern that needed to be answered. Do this in a playful and non-embarrassing way. Even reward the person that gave you this information with a little gag certificate saying they've been rewarded the CEO's parking space... for an hour.

- 2) Once you've exhausted your in-house research it's now time go and perform outside studies on the company that is paying you the big bucks to come up with a solution for their problem. Make a trip to the library, go on-line and gather as much ammunition as you can on that specific industry. Use specific quotes and statistics from industry magazines, books, and articles that you clipped out. Evidence... evidence... and more evidence. Find out about your client's competition and some how weave this “mucho importante” data into your speech copy. Hit a specific chord with your audience and they'll be impressed with the amount of homework you did on their company.)

- 3) Don't try to over sell your information or your audience will have content overload and their heads will explode. Pick three specific areas on your subject and discuss them in as much detail as you feel is necessary to accomplish your goal during your allotted speech time.

If your customer service speech is a “tad” dry. And let’s face it, employees when notified that they’re going to hear a lecture on customer service (again) don’t usually respond as if they’ve won Superbowl tickets, high-five each other and let out “whoops” of joy. And because they don’t, you should sprinkle within your speech some particular humorous story that had happened to you, or someone you knew who was involved in customer service. (the o’l irate customers say the “darndest things” type of stories.)

Or dig up from one of the company resources you’ve spoken to and unleash a humorous anecdote that the rank and file can relate to. (for a larger audience response use an employee’s name, with their permission of course. He’ll get some recognition along the way, too.)

4) For your audience to receive the maximum impact of your speech you want to be within the closest proximity of them. Find out the physical logistics of the hall or space you will be speaking in. Where will the audience be sitting? Close or so far back that they’re in another zip code and they’ll need binoculars to make out your facial features? For the maximum results you want your eager audience sitting as close to the stage area as possible.

Naturally, you want good sight lines and you want full room occupancy (in the perfect world, of course.) If you know in advance that your audience is going to be sparse—then ask the event planner (and politely plead if you must) to-get-a-smaller-space to present your speech in. (Also get there earlier to test the sound system. Do not assume it’s even set up. You know Murphy’s Law.)

You don’t want an auditorium that holds 1300 attendees—and 45 people show up. And you definitely don’t want those 45 people scattered all over the room. Because it’ll be your job, or someone in a position of authority to get those lucky attendees to sit as close to the stage area as possible. For your audience to enjoy the benefits of your speech you want intimacy. And here’s a tip that Bill Cosby has used for decades as a natural storyteller...

5) Make the audience feel as if you’re talking right to them. One of the most successful ways to do that is to make eye contact. Politicians accomplish that by “working” the room. Oh, sure, they might not have a reflection in the mirror, (he says with tongue firmly in cheek.) but they still make strong eye contact with whom ever they’re shaking hands with —and pretend for just that moment that they’re really interested in that person. (any politicians reading this... I kid, because I love.)

And when you're speaking, instead of looking over the heads of your audience, make eye contact for a brief moment (maybe five seconds) with someone in the front row. (do the best you can even if the lights are blinding you a bit.) Then repeat the procedure with the next person.

And if you can, try to get out in front of your podium. You're doing this so your audience can experience your complete body language which will allow your speech points to gain even more significance. And if you want to *reallllllllly* increase your audience response, get out of your comfort zone and use the whole stage area. (but this is the topic of another article.)

Do what I've outlined for you and you can't but help but give a more effective and forceful speech. The audience will remember your content, your confidence, how you transformed their lives... and best of all, they'll remember you! May the force be with you!

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