

Audience

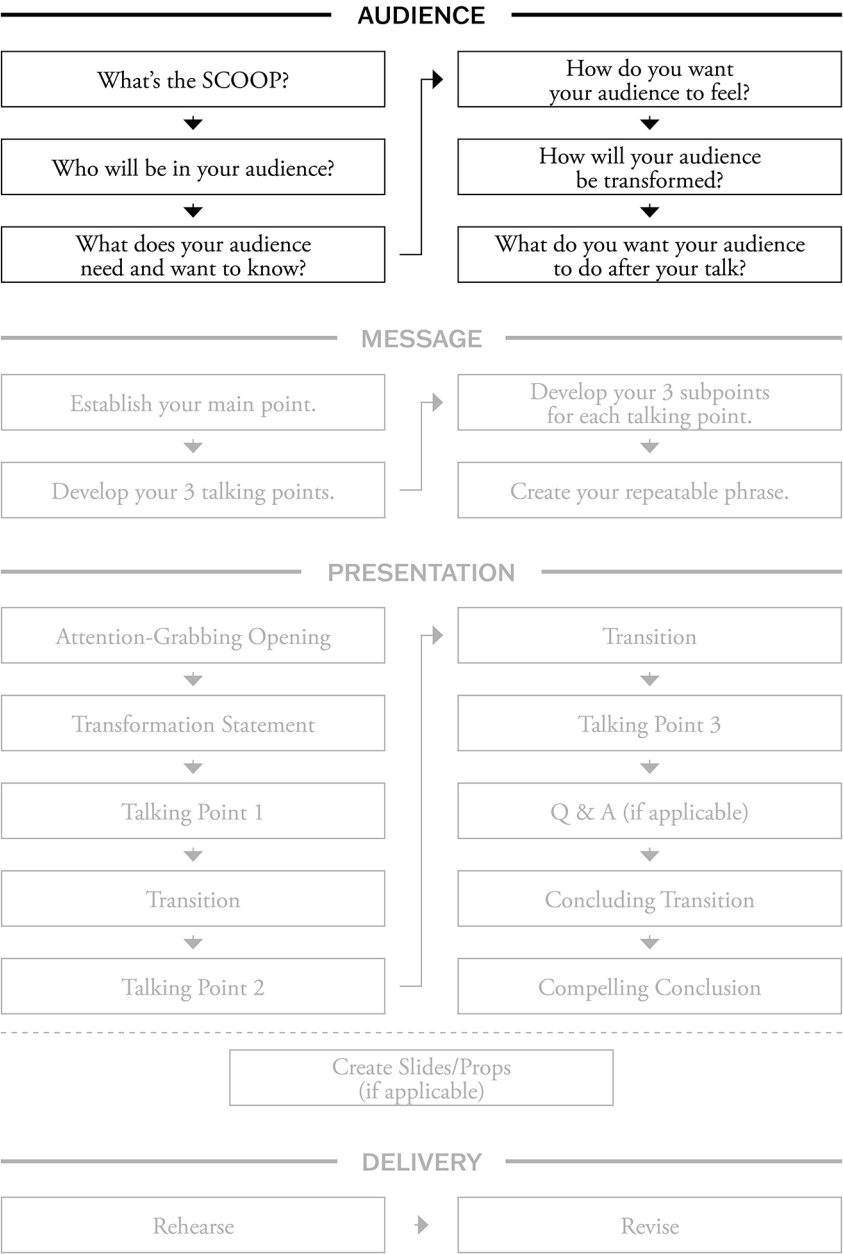
Message

Presentation

Delivery



AMP'D Framework™



RESEARCH YOUR AUDIENCE

It's the foundation of your talk

*“Designing a presentation without an audience in mind
is like writing a love letter and addressing it:
To Whom It May Concern.”*

– Ken Haemer –

What a beautiful day to have lunch down by the harbor with Melissa, a sales trainer, novice speaker, and longtime friend. Just as the waiter arrives with our meals, she says, “I’ll be speaking at my alma mater in November.”

“Congratulations!”

“Thanks. I’m excited ... and more than a little nervous. I’ve never spoken to college students before. Peter, you speak at colleges, right?”

“Occasionally.”

“That’s what I thought. Would you help me with one thing?”

“I’m happy to, Melissa. What is it?”

“Well, I’ve been working on my talk for a while, but it never seems to be quite right. I start in one direction and then go off in another.

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Now, I'm second-guessing everything. Peter, you know what I speak about. What do you think my talk should focus on?"

"I have no idea, Melissa, but I know who does. Have you researched your audience yet?"

"Umm ... no, I haven't."

"Then, I suggest you start there. Once you've done your research, you'll have all the information you need. If you're still having trouble after that, give me a call."

Later that week, Melissa starts her research. First, she speaks with her alma mater's Dean of Students and several students likely to attend her event. Then, with a wealth of information in hand, she feels much more confident in her topic and talking points, allowing her to create and deliver an insightful talk.

First Things First

Yay! You've got a new gig. That's fantastic! What's the first thing you're going to do? Come up with an opening line? See what slides you have saved on your computer? Perhaps browse the guest list?

As far as I'm concerned, you should celebrate first. Making a difference in other people's lives is an honor and should never be taken lightly. This is true whether you're new to speaking or have been doing it for years.

Once you're done celebrating, you have work to do, and that begins with following Melissa's lead and researching your audience.

I'm not going to try to convince you that researching your audience is the fun part of being a public speaker, but I will try to impress upon you that it's necessary. How else would you be able to know exactly who you're talking to? How else would you be able to engage them, resonate with them, and provide them with a relevant takeaway? How else would you be absolutely confident in your message and yourself?

You might be thinking, "But Peter, my audiences are very similar. I don't need to go through this each time."

Okay, your audiences are similar. However, being similar doesn't make them identical. Characteristics of the audience you're preparing for now make it at least slightly different from those of the past and future. No matter how subtle the differences may be, knowing these differences will help transform you from a run-of-the-mill speaker to one who touches your audiences' hearts, minds, and lives.

What's the SCOOP?

The first question you want answered is, "Why is the event taking place?" or, as I ask, "What's the SCOOP?" SCOOP stands for Situation, Challenge, Occasion, Opportunity, or Problem.

Usually, the purpose of an event falls into one or more of these categories. For instance, if an organization is celebrating its 25th anniversary, it is an occasion. If a company is bringing you in to speak about time management, depending on the outcome the hiring team is looking for, it may be a problem matched with an opportunity. In another scenario, a business might be challenging its sales team to increase sales, and they want you to pump them up.

Along with determining the SCOOP, this is an ideal time to research the company, organization, or industry. Doing so may provide you with information that will come in handy when fleshing out your talk.

Who Will Be in Your Audience?

Not every audience is the same, which means what you say, how you say it, and even your stories and examples may need to change. For instance, when I speak to college students about the benefits of developing powerful public speaking skills, everything from my main point to my stories is different from when I speak about the same subject to mid-level managers at a major corporation. Trying to craft a talk that would serve both would result in one that would benefit neither.

When researching your audience, you may want to ask: “What are the demographics?” “What is the audience’s familiarity with the subject?” “What is the audience’s level of enthusiasm?” You’ll find many more questions that you might ask in the companion worksheets at PeterGeorgePublicSpeaking.com/worksheets.

What Does Your Audience Need and Want to Know?

Many speakers focus only on what the people need to know, which is to the detriment of their audience. Instead, I believe you can achieve a deeper level of engagement by including what they want to know.

Think of it this way. If you went to see your favorite band in concert, eager to hear songs from the past, and they only sang their new songs, you would probably be disappointed. Fortunately, this seldom happens. Most top recording artists understand that they need to balance their latest works and their standards—what people need to hear and what they want to hear.

Often, circumstances or the people who hire you will dictate what the audience needs to know. Don’t stop there. Please do your research to discover what your audience wants to know.

How Do You Want Your Audience to Feel?

Carl W. Buehner said, “They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel.” He was spot on. Yet, many speakers give little consideration to how they want their audiences to feel. This is because they concentrate so intently on the tangible aspects that it never occurs to them to consider the emotional side.

How much more impactful could you be if you provoked a particular emotion in your listeners? For example, perhaps you want them to feel happy, content, confident, calm, determined, excited, or another sentiment. Each time you craft a presentation, determine how you

want your audience to feel and keep it in mind as you consider your words, tone, body language, and other aspects of your talk.

How Will Your Audience Be Transformed?

Transforming your audience should be your top priority as a speaker. When an audience isn't transformed in some way, a fascinating speaker is merely a fascinating speaker, a captivating presentation is merely a captivating presentation, and a witty talk is merely a witty talk.

A transformation might be:

- They will understand how to close more sales.
- They will be energized to increase productivity by 5%.
- They will support a cause.
- They will see something from a different perspective.
- They will know how to live in harmony when dividing time between family and work.

The transformation is based on the answers to the previous four questions in your research. Be sure to give it significant consideration because it is the nucleus of your presentation.

What Do You Want Your Audience to Do After Your Talk?

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step." This proverb from Chinese philosopher and poet Lao Tzu is fitting for answering this question. It's important to know what you want your audience members to do with the information and inspiration you share with them, so provide actionable steps.

If you speak about eating healthy, perhaps you want them to contact a nutritionist or download several new recipes. If you specialize in meditation, you might suggest that they wake up 30 minutes

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earlier than usual. Finally, if your goal is to inspire your audience to increase sales, you might have a three-step process for them to start implementing the next day.

No matter what you want your audience members to do, tell them. Otherwise, they might not take that one step needed to begin their journey.

Where to Start Your Research

The best place to start your audience research is your event contact. This person should be able to answer many of your questions. They might also be willing to connect you with the various champions, naysayers, and others who will be in attendance when you speak.

Why would you want to interview these other people? The quick answer is because you gain advantages.

Champions are beneficial because they generally spread positive views and ideas before and after an event. Naysayers, on the other hand, are twofold. For one, they can offer a unique perspective about an organization or speaking engagement, which can be a valuable tool as you craft your talk. But what's even more beneficial is that they may move closer to the champion end of the spectrum after speaking with you. And an added bit of amusement? They'll probably be surprised that you would even ask for their thoughts in the first place.

Include Your Other Audiences

Once you've gotten to know your audience, you can move on to your other audiences. Often, you'll have more than one at the same time. Your primary audience is, of course, the one we all think about—the one in the seats. However, your other two audiences are just as important yet often neglected—the person who hired you and the person who pays the person who hired you. Ultimately, these audiences need to have their objectives met, too.

Determining the goals of your second and third audiences isn't as involved as researching your first. Usually, the person who hires you, such as a meeting planner, can provide the information you need for their objective and that of the person who pays them.

Take It a Step Further

Speaking to your contact, champions, and naysayers has its advantages. But, imagine what you could accomplish if you implement what customer experience and distinction expert, Scott McKain, does before speaking to an audience.

For every new client, Scott's team schedules a conference call so they can learn about their objective and how he can customize his presentation to meet that objective. In his seventh business book, *Iconic*, Scott writes, "This is standard operating procedure for all speakers." So, if you're not doing what we've been reviewing here, you're actively putting yourself at a disadvantage in this very competitive industry.

Scott doesn't stop there. Before each event, he provides his client with a four-question survey that gets distributed to each person who will be in the audience. When Scott gets this information back, he customizes his presentation to specifically address the audience's concerns. Imagine the level of engagement generated when he tells the audience that he developed his presentation based on the responses they provided.

Other Sources

You can also obtain information from other sources, such as the organization's website. You might discover pertinent details on pages like About, Team, Products, Services, History, and News.

Another useful source is the news. Use Google Alerts to notify you of new information about the organization, its key people, or the event. Search online for Google Alerts and follow the instructions.

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Please don't underestimate the value of researching your audience. It's essential because it's the foundation for the following three framework sections.

Now that you understand just how influential your audience is, take a moment to celebrate. Then, move on to the next chapter, where you'll learn how to determine your message, specifically your main point and talking points.