

Speaking that Connects

Present With Confidence and
Engage Your Audience

By Eileen N. Sinett



Open Door PublicationsSM, LLC

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Published by
Open Door PublicationsSM, LLC
27 Carla Way
Lawrenceville, NJ 08648
www.OpenDoorPublications.com

ISBN: 9780982891889

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SPEAKING THAT CONNECTS

Did you ever try out a new restaurant, totally enjoy the meal and not be able to stop telling all your friends how good it was?

Have you ever had a partner who understood what you liked and made you feel heavenly?

And, did you ever listen to a professor, speaker or favorite performing artist who left you feeling excited and wanting more?

In each of these scenarios the focus is on the recipients: of the meal, the intimacy, the performance or presentation. But, what about the “givers,” the chef, the partner, the presenter, the performer? How did they feel?

Pleasing your audience is important, but the true measure of speaking success is when listeners **and** speakers feel satisfied. Speaking that Connects shows you how to achieve both.



Chapter 2

Why YOU and Audience WHO?

Step 2: Analyze your Audience; Know Why You are Speaking

You may be thinking that once the matter of mindset has been managed, it is time to focus on your presentation message. However, don't be in too much of a hurry. There's still some presentation foreplay required that will ultimately support your presentation performance!

It is smart, logical and necessary to spend some time reflecting on questions relating to you as a speaker and to the audience who will be listening to you. This is your Thinking Step 2.

Actually, when it comes to thinking about your audience, you automatically think about yourself. You rarely have one without the other. If either the speaker or audience is absent, there may be speech, but no communication. The nature of presentations is the dynamic between speaker and audience. Creating a speech without considering your audience is like preparing a vegetarian gourmet meal for a hardcore carnivore or giving your partner a loving backrub when she really wants a passionate kiss.



Let's begin with questions about you. You have been asked to speak for a reason. **What makes you credible to speak to this audience?**

Write out your answers to anchor the information deeply into your cells, or if you prefer, answer the questions aloud. Voicing your responses and writing them down both transform thought into action.



Exercise: Questions about You, the Speaker

Reflect on these questions. Then write your responses.

What is my area of expertise?

Why am I speaking to this particular group?

Was I selected, or did I seek this opportunity?

What is my relationship to the topic, to the audience, to the event?

As a result of speaking, what outcomes are possible?

Once you get clear on the *why you*, ask strategic questions about your audience. Though you may not know everyone who will be attending your presentation, reflecting on what you do know about your audience is integral to your presentation preparation.



Exercise: Questions about Your Audience

Reflect on these questions. Then write your responses below relative to a particular presentation you plan to present.

Who is my audience?

What do I know about them? Age, Gender, Race, Professional level, Disciplines

Why are they coming to the presentation?

What do they need to know and why?

How many people are expected?

In what ways am I similar to this audience? (What do I have/know/like in common with the audience?)

In what ways are we different?

Who am I threatened by and why?

Your Own Listening Preferences

Besides understanding your specific audience, why and how they listen, you will benefit from thinking about your own experience when you are part of an audience. Consider what makes **you** listen to a presenter. What holds **your** attention? What works for **you**?

These are some things that keep listeners listening:

- New information
- Information that can be applied immediately
- Logical organization of information
- Not too much detail
- A clear message
- Understanding how this information affects me
- Enthusiasm and passion
- Credibility and name recognition
- Interesting storyline

- ❑ A creative opening
- ❑ Humor
- ❑ Confidence and charisma
- ❑ Interesting PowerPoint slides
- ❑ Good handouts
- ❑ A speaker who cares
- ❑ An attractive speaking voice

Some people like information they can use. Others require enthusiasm to make them pay attention. Some stop listening if they don't like the speaker's hairstyle, and others will listen to the speaker's every word with the intent of finding fault.

Thinking about what satisfies you as a listener will help you satisfy your audience.