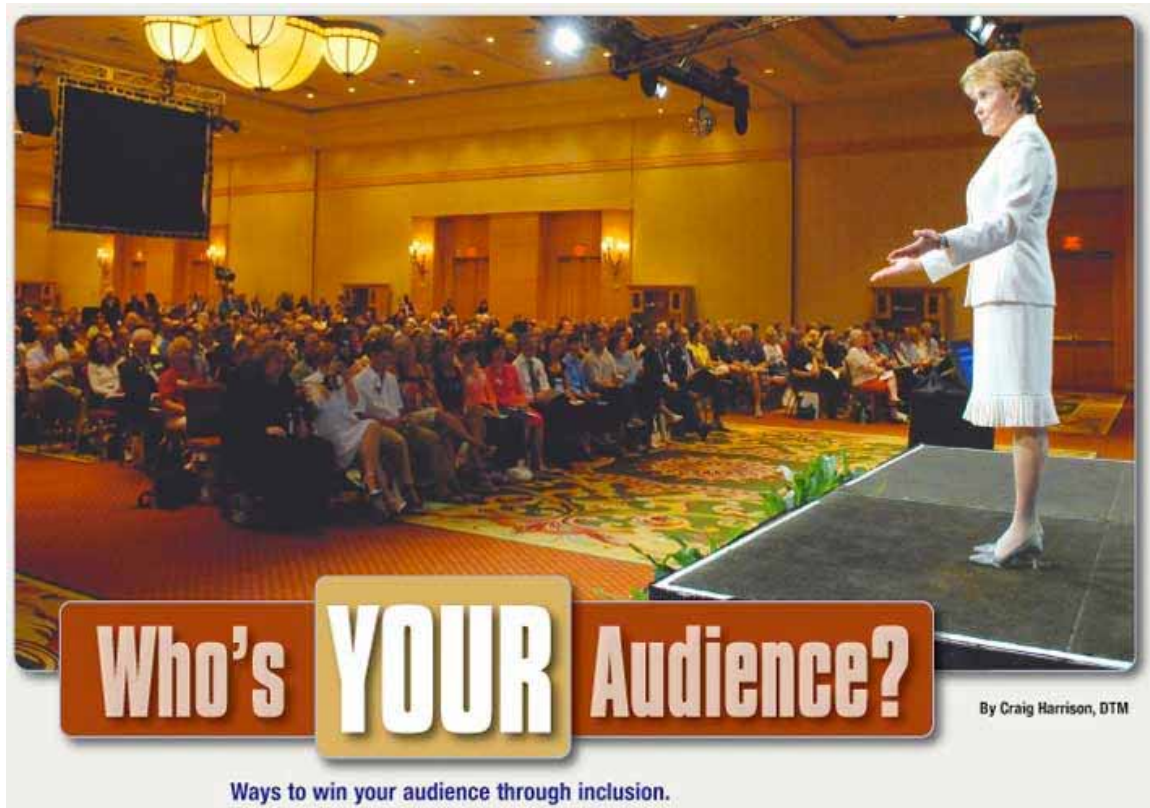


Unite and Conquer!



It's most speakers' desire to win over their audiences, in their entirety. Who wouldn't want unanimous approval, a standing ovation and all the advantages that accrue from a successful speech? Yet more times than not, speakers sabotage themselves in their quest to connect. Sometimes unbeknownst to them, they've divided, alienated or even polarized an audience through ill-conceived remarks or lack of sensitivity. The results: lukewarm receptions, sparse applause and in the case of contests, a seat outside the winner's circle.

Assumptions, Presumptions

Often speakers presume that audiences think as they do, or share their belief systems, values or political preferences. Sometimes it's because their audience members look like they do, or because in their city, town or region, most people do share said beliefs. But often looks belie reality. You may be able to ascertain the gender of audience members by sight, but you can't see under people's skin. You cannot see inside their hearts or minds. And thus when you *presume* you run the risk of offending, if not insulting, audience members without even knowing it.

I've listened to speeches where the speaker presumed everyone in the room voted for the same candidate in the most recent national or local election, or that everyone in the club shared his belief about an upcoming holiday, or her stance on a war or domestic policy. Upon further review, it turned out there was anything but unanimity of opinion among the audience. Those holding divergent views from the speaker were less than 100% receptive to the speaker because the speaker presumed he or she spoke for everyone. Not so!

Speaking In The Lion's Den

Sometimes we find ourselves speaking to an audience with different beliefs, perspectives or experiences. In the United States you might be:

- ❖ A lone Republican speaking to an audience of Democrats, or vice versa
- ❖ A manager speaking to employees
- ❖ A Northerner speaking in the deep South
- ❖ A woman speaking to an all-male audience

Internationally, you may find yourself across a fence from an audience for a variety of reasons:

- ❖ A Muslim speaking to a Christian audience, or vice versa
- ❖ An Aborigine speaking to Australians of English heritage
- ❖ A Korean speaking to a largely Japanese audience
- ❖ A Ghanaian addressing a predominantly Nigerian audience

In each case, there may be differing customs, values and even accents. To ignore such differences would be like ignoring an elephant in the room. The lack of acknowledgement would distract from your actual message. The wise approach is to acknowledge differences in a respectful way.

Inclusivity

Think for a moment about the way Toastmasters often open their speeches: "Mr./Madame Toastmaster, Fellow Toastmasters and Most Welcomed Guests." This opening is designed to include all who may find themselves in your audience, and it welcomes each. That's good! We want to similarly cast a wide net when speaking to audiences who may be skeptical, doubtful or reluctant to embrace our message because of their own background, disposition or past experiences. Craft your opening to engage all, especially those who may be in the minority in terms of gender, religion, age, political preference, etc.

Reputations Help and Hinder

I grew up and continue to reside in Berkeley, CA, home of the University of California, and the free speech movement, protests and riots of the 1960's. Was I a part of the riots of the late 60s? I was seven years old. I was busy selling lemonade on the corner like any child of my age. Yet some audiences presume people from Berkeley are long-haired hippies who are rebels, radicals and draft dodgers with no respect for authority. Some dislike me before I've spoken a word, based on reputation. (I dispel their fears with humor and self-effacement in my speech's introduction.)

The Elephant In The Room

Speechwriter Tom Roberts of Oakland, California hails from Arkansas, where as a college professor he taught public speaking, oral interpretation, broadcast journalism. Audiences always have two questions: "Why don't you sound like you're from the South?" And, "Do you know President Bill Clinton?" After 17 years as a national broadcaster Tom has trimmed his regional accent, yet based on credentials, these questions color peoples' introductory impressions of him. Tom anticipates the questions and answers them at the outset to refocus his audiences.

Dynamic professional speaker Mikki Williams of Chicago, with her big hair and big jewelry, has audiences pondering the resemblance Barbara Streisand, Laynie Kazan or Bette Midler. Knowing this, at the outset, she eggs the audience on: "OK, who do I look like?" She vogues a little and the audience shouts out names. In her speaking school she coaches all speakers to "go with the obvious. Call on your attributes. If you're bald, pregnant or have a pronounced accent, reference it. Use self-directed humor to connect with your audience." If you're vertically challenged you might open with "Can you see me now?" Then, stand on your tip-toes and ask again!

Blues musicians Howlin' Wolf and Willie Dixon long ago taught that "you can't judge a book by lookin' at its cover" yet initially that is all audience members have to go on. Your mission, if you choose to accept it, is to help audiences get to know, trust and like you through your graciousness, inclusive engagement and appropriate disclosures. Especially at the beginning of your speech, these qualities help you bond with your audience, who sees you're more alike than different from them.

What presumptions do you possess about people from certain regions, of other religions, a certain age or orientation? What presumptions might people have of you, based solely by your age, gender, ethnicity, orientation or occupation? Accurate or not it's affecting how you are heard, seen and perceived. It also affects how you, as speaker, see and perceive your audience.

The Olive Branch

The best speeches are ones that are inclusive, bring audiences together or else offer something for multiple perspectives, beliefs or preferences. In cases where you are speaking to a hostile or opposition party, praise them! It will disarm them. You can kill them with kindness. When you are conciliatory or otherwise generous with your acknowledgement their respect for you grows. By being magnanimous, you show yourself to be worthy of further consideration.

A Toast to Differing Tastes

A great, if exaggerated, example of catering to multiple factions within an audience can be found in the famous "whisky" speech of Judge Noah S. "Soggy" Sweat Jr. Delivered to the Mississippi legislature on April 4, 1952, this speech takes a stand on the controversial prohibition topic of legalizing liquor (then illegal in that state). In successive paragraphs he appears to be either pummeling or praising the effects of alcohol. He seemingly appealed to both sides while maintaining his neutrality. (See sidebar.)

Appealing to Our Commonalities

When speaking to audiences who appear to be different than you, seek that which you have in common and build upon that. For instance, you may be speaking to an audience comprised predominantly of those whose political beliefs are opposite yours, and this is known to all. Your opening greeting may begin "Good evening friends and fellow citizens..." Indeed you are all citizens. Other things you may have in common: you are all taxpayers, voters and survivors of that evening's Chicken á la Firestone. Look for common ground to launch your speech and you and your audience will start the journey together.

When you speak to audiences from other countries take the time to learn enough of their language to welcome them and help them feel at home. Whether you are using sign language for the deaf, colloquialisms that reflect the locality your audience is from, or you dress the part through a hat, tie, scarf or other sartorial garnishes, you are embracing the audience for who they are, and they will appreciate it, when it's done with sincerity.

Lisa Jeffery, a Miami Beach, Florida speech professor, corporate trainer and coach, explains: "consider a female health care professional speaking to Baptist ministers on the controversial topic of abortion. She's got to start out on common ground. Likeability is important. She should strive to garner some 'amens' early in her speech through praise, respect and a focus on that which is shared by the speaker and audience." Jeffery continues: "Otherwise cognitive dissonance intercedes." Lisa coaches her clients and students to focus on achievable goals. In this case, getting the ministers to open their minds to a divergent point of view may be attainable. Converting them through her speech alone to change their belief system is far less likely.

For the Benefit of A Few

Many times in a speech you may speak about an event, experience or phenomenon that most, but not everyone knows, understands or is familiar with. Consider the phrase "blue moon." Rather than assume everyone knows it, or worse yet, asking:

"Is there anyone here who *doesn't* know what a 'blue moon' is?"

explain if for all:

"...for those of you unfamiliar with expression 'once in a blue moon,' it refers to the second moon in a month, a rare occurrence."

That way you don't embarrass, demean or ostracize the person who doesn't understand or hasn't been versed in your history, points of reference or colloquialism. Few people wish to admit in a crowd that they don't understand something. Yet it may inhibit their ability (or desire) to follow your speech, embrace your argument or support your cause.

Insights on Inside Jokes

Another way speakers alienate their audiences is through excessive use of "inside jokes" or references to events or knowledge known by some — but not most — of the audience. Your goal is to help everyone feel like an insider. Too many references to people unknown to most, or to topics not known to most, estrange the listener from the speaker.

Help people feel included, not excluded. There's little satisfaction in feeling you're in the "out" group when listening to a speaker.

Speak to Win!

Professional speaker Simma Lieberman of Berkeley, CA is known as The Inclusionist. She trains organizations worldwide in how to succeed through inclusion. Lieberman knows the value of helping audiences feel better about themselves. "To be an inclusive speaker means that you know how to create community in the short time you are in front of people, by engaging them and making them feel like you are talking to (all of) them." Simma takes great pains to learn as much about her audience as possible. Beforehand she asks questions. Then she greets them upon arrival and uses questions in her opening remarks to engage and include everyone. As a result, she wins their attention, respect and adoration. You can too! When you unite your audience your applause will be unanimous!

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Professional Speaker Craig Harrison DTM, AL, founded Laugh Lovers Toastmasters (596430-57) of Oakland CA to help speakers connect to their audiences through laughter. For more communication tips visit his website www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com.

Tips for Better Knowing Your Audience

- Learn about your audience before you speak. Ask questions, meet them informally, use polls, surveys and questionnaires.
- Meet your audience members on their way into the room. Chat with them one-on-one and in small groups to learn more about them, identify commonalities.
- Use the African technique of "Call and Response" to engage and include your audience. "How many of you have children? (Wait for response.) How many of you ARE children?" (Wait for laughter!)
- Include your audience through generous eye contact that shows them you see them as individuals.
- Within your audience, speak to a person in the front, in the middle, and the back; speak to people on the left, to the right, in the center. Alternate where you direct your remarks.
- Remember, the shortest distance between people is often a smile. When you smile at someone they should smile back.
- If you're from out of town, reference something local about the town, region or state.
- Topical references often connect you with your audience. Reference the local weather (which we all experience), the traffic jam on the way to the program, a recent event, etc.
- Remember, you're not a speaker without an audience. They are the most valuable people in the room. Speaking is a collaborative experience. Share the spotlight with them and they'll respond appreciatively!
- Embrace humor that derives organically from the room, audience, setting, etc. Sometimes the best humor is accidental or originates from audience members. Indulge and embrace this form of co-created magic.

Whisky Sour or Whisky Sweet?

THE "WHISKEY" SPEECH, given by Judge Noah S. "Soggy" Sweat Jr. on April 4, 1952 to the Mississippi legislature:

"My friends,

"I had not intended to discuss this controversial subject at this particular time. However, I want you to know that I do not shun controversy. On the contrary, I will take a stand on any issue at any time, regardless of how fraught with controversy it might be. You have asked me how I feel about whiskey. All right, here is how I feel about whiskey.

"If when you say whiskey you mean the devil's brew, the poison scourge, the bloody monster, that defiles innocence, dethrones reason, destroys the home, creates misery and poverty, yea, literally takes the bread from the mouths of little children; if you mean the evil drink that topples the Christian man and woman from the pinnacle of righteous, gracious living into the bottomless pit of degradation, and despair, and shame and helplessness, and hopelessness, then certainly I am against it.

"But;

"If when you say whiskey you mean the oil of conversation, the philosophic wine, the ale that is consumed when good fellows get together, that puts a song in their hearts and laughter on their lips, and the warm glow of contentment in their eyes; if you mean Christmas cheer; if you mean the stimulating drink that puts the spring in the old gentleman's step on a frosty, crispy morning; if you mean the drink which enables a man to magnify his joy, and his happiness, and to forget, if only for a little while, life's great tragedies, and heartaches, and sorrows; if you mean that drink, the sale of which pours into our treasuries untold millions of dollars, which are used to provide tender care for our little crippled children, our blind, our deaf, our dumb, our pitiful aged and infirm; to build highways and hospitals and schools, then certainly I am for it.

"This is my stand. I will not retreat from it. I will not compromise."

— Noah S. "Soggy" Sweat Jr.



TELL THE WORLD!

Leveraging Your Toastmasters Experience To Make A Difference

CRAIG HARRISON DTM, PDG



TOASTMASTERS HELPS US FIND OUR VOICE.

It also helps us find our confidence. But a bigger challenge looms. How do we find our calling? Each of us has a purpose, a message, a gift and a raison d'être. Have you found yours yet? Toastmasters is just the beginning. With increased communication and leadership skills you have tools to transform your world. Are you ready to apply these powerful skills? Are you ready to expand your sphere of influence? It's your move!

Learn how to leverage the Toastmasters program and its Communication and Leadership tracks to make a difference in the lives of others.

Through your Toastmasters experience you have been taught skills to help you enlist others in your success, use newfound self-confidence to transcend your own barriers. It's time to set your sights on making a difference: in your company, community and even within your family.

Craig's Story

Craig Harrison knows the Toastmasters experience! He joined a club in 1992 after a humiliating public experience. The pre-Toastmasters Craig was shy, self-conscious and suffered from low self-esteem. By his own mother's account Craig "mumbled, stumbled, fumbled and stooped."

After four months of Toastmasters Craig began to stand taller. After four speeches he began to speak louder. After a few more months he was elected President, by default. Was he ready? Not at all! Did he get help? Yes he did! Success begot success. Milestones became stepping stones in the Toastmaster program. He won contests, elections and the support of his District, serving as District Governor.

Craig's world opened up.. Hasn't yours opened up through Toastmasters? Craig shows us how to pursue both the communication and leadership tracks. He demonstrates how Mentors accelerate our growth. He also shows how Speakers are Leaders, and how Toastmasters skills directly translate into external success. He also models the power of recognition, showing how appreciation and encouragement can move mountains as well as members. Then he shows us how to apply these skills in the world at large.

His Story is Your Story Too

Craig transformed a fear of public speaking into a professional speaking career helping others overcome their fears. He owes it all to Toastmasters. Whatever your goals, Craig shows you how Toastmasters can support your ambitions.

About Your Presenter

CRAIG HARRISON is a Distinguished Toastmaster, Advanced Leader, a past District Governor, contributor of three dozen articles to *The Toastmaster*, and now a professional speaker and corporate trainer. He is author of *Cultivating the Leader in You*, and the 2004-05 president of the NATIONAL SPEAKERS ASSOCIATION for Northern California.



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LISTENING: The Forgotten Communication skill



Contrary to popular opinion, the key to communication is not what you say, but what you hear. LISTENING skills, not speaking skills, hold the key to your success. How does that sound to you?

Miscommunication as a result of poor listening skills costs millions of dollars, countless hours of wasted time, and even the lives of others. Have I gotten your attention yet?

Author Lewis Carroll opined that “the problem with communication is the illusion it’s been achieved.” How do you know others hear your message? Are you hearing theirs? How well is listening valued in your organization?



Learning Objectives

LISTENING isn’t a passive skill. It takes intention, concentration and practice. Yet its benefits are tangible: better productivity, improved teamwork, less dissension, higher retention and much much more. In this program you will:

- ▶ Learn the difference between hearing and listening
- ▶ Become expert at active listening
- ▶ Uncover meta-messages embedded within each message
- ▶ Understand gender differences in communication styles
- ▶ Enhance your stature with peers as a powerful listener
- ▶ Master listening skills in meeting situations



How This Presentation Is Delivered

Role plays, scripts, stories, fun assessments and exercises all make this training fun, interactive and replicable.



About Your Presenter

CRAIG HARRISON founded EXPRESSIONS OF EXCELLENCE!™ to help professionals express their sales and service leadership. Through dynamic keynotes, interactive training, consulting, coaching and special events Craig inspires and motivates professionals to shine. Results are immediate and lasting too.

Craig is past president of the Northern California chapters of the INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE ASSOCIATION and the NATIONAL SPEAKERS ASSOCIATION. His clients include PFIZER, WILSON SPORTING GOODS, SBC and HITACHI AMERICA.

Craig’s service articles and columns for *Transaction World Magazine* and *Customer Service Newsletter* appear regularly. He’s also been profiled in the WALL STREET JOURNAL, quoted by BUSINESS WEEK, interviewed by BBC RADIO and published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *Orange County Register*.

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