



# Pointers

## Presentation

A Publication of Dag Knudsen, Inc.

## BECOMING AUDIENCE FOCUSED

by Robert E. Perry

### **Audience Analysis forms the Foundation for Effective Presentations of All Kinds**

Believe that presentations are significant, and that they are important to you and to your organization. Accept the fact that presentations are not peripheral to your career interests: they can sometimes determine whether or not you have a career.

Recognize that "technical professional," and "sales person" are not mutually exclusive terms. All of us, all of the time, are selling something. It's just that when it comes to a presentation, we have a specific time, target, purpose and topic to consider. These four points must always be considered. No exceptions! Even "tutorial," and "status" presentations should work to persuade the audience to "buy" the facts and the speaker's competence. Research the audience. Evaluate:

- Audience Capabilities—what do they know about your topic?
- Hierarchies—who ranks whom, and who makes the decision?
- Attitudes—hostile? Receptive? Passive?
- Relevance—how do their goals match your goals?
- Motivation—what will turn them on?
- Interest—what do they want to hear about?
- Negatives—anticipate their objections.
- Goals—what do they want to accomplish?

Appraise audience characteristics, consider the time you have for the presentation, and then determine what you can reasonably expect to accomplish.

Accept the notion that since a presentation is necessarily a silver bullet device, it is best crafted to hit one designated target. To try to cover too many topics, in effect to shot gun or

fire-hose, means you will be ineffectual across the board.

Walk in your audience's moccasins for a bit: that is, accent the Benefit to them, above the Features that interest you. For instance, if you are talking to an audience of audiophiles, emphasize your amplifier's sound, not the circuit: to diners, accent the taste, not the recipe: to air passengers, accent aircraft reliability, not the stress analysis it has undergone: to Naval Officers, accent interdiction improvement, not your system analysis of the radar you are proposing. Accept the fact that the effective presentation is a benefit-exchange presentation. Clearly establish in your own mind just what benefits you can offer for the specific benefits you hope to receive.

Consolidate your topic, the principal audience benefit, and the presentation objective in one trenchant thematic sentence. That thesis will be the title of your presentation and will control and guide presentation development.

Avoid proving that the Principle of Least Effort is a universal truth. Don't try to retread old presentations and old graphics for a new presentation unless your preplanning has clearly shown that they are specifically applicable. That means an identical audience and identical objectives.

"Ahh," you say, "it is easy to detail what should be done, but it's just smoke unless it can be done. Practically, what occasional presenter (and most of us are) is motivated to consider all of these preplanning elements?"

Well, to be really practical we find that presentation designers frequently skip preplanning altogether. Why? Because they don't need it. Why? Because the easiest presentation to design is the one that pleases the presentation

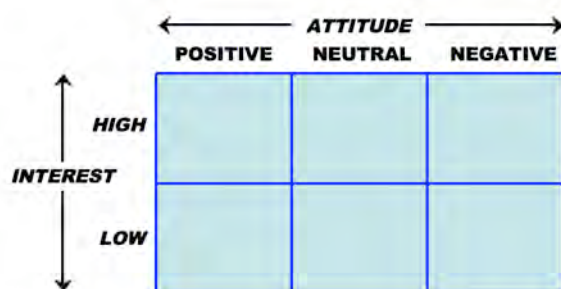
designer. They already know their own attitudes, interest, and capabilities. Creating a presentation to please an enigmatic and unknown audience is far more difficult. Presentation designers are not the first to be seduced by the Easy Way Out.

Suppose, however, the easy way to initiate and develop a presentation was also the right way? The Theme-Modular method, taught by Dag Knudsen, can provide even the occasional presenter with the tools and techniques that insure that what should be considered, will be considered. Since the structured design effort is easier and faster than the fumble and hope approach, once known, it is invariably used, and presentations invariably improve.

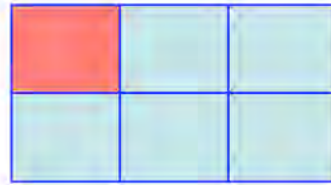
**Audience Classification Model  
Provides the Basis for  
Focusing a Presentation to  
the Needs of the Audience**

A presenter should be aware that each audience brings a different set of attitudes and different level of interest to a presentation. Prior to a talk, the speaker should analyze the audience and its perspectives on the topic in relation to these two independent variables.

Here is a model, along with examples and suggestions, which can significantly help in focusing a presentation to the needs of the audience, thereby enhancing its acceptance.



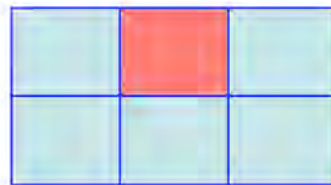
**HIGH INTEREST/POSITIVE ATTITUDE**



- Political convention hearing a keynote speech.
- Project manager reporting success in obtaining funds.

Don't bother with elaborate proofs or motivational statements. They're already sold and motivated. Go light on pure information and heavy on color and emotion. Have fun. Fire up the audience toward a specific, simple action to make use of all the enthusiasm.

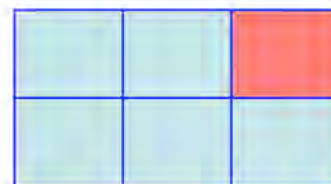
**HIGH INTEREST/NEUTRAL ATTITUDE**



- Group interviews of vendors/consultants prior to selection.
- Subcommittee report to the full committee.

The audience expects you to prove your case clearly and thoroughly and defend it against attack. Show benefits to them. Be prepared to discuss all options objectively and to handle questions. Have your facts well backed up. Present your case on a factual, non-emotional basis.

**HIGH INTEREST/NEGATIVE ATTITUDE**

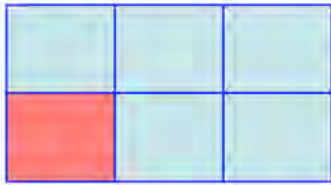


- Addressing an anti-nuclear group on the subject of reactor safety.
- Reporting to managers the negative results of an inspection of their area.

This audience needs to be approached carefully, like an unexploded bomb. If you

come on strong for your cause, the tomatoes will start to fly immediately. They may listen if you come on low key, yet with firmness (if you're a pushover, they'll like you even less than if you're a rabblouser). Establish a common area of concern first and show you understand and respect their views (without agreeing). Move from there toward your own position. Handle questions and interruptions calmly. Lose your temper and they'll go for the jugular.

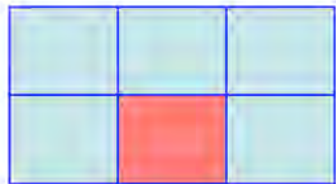
**LOW INTEREST/POSITIVE ATTITUDE**



- New, young employees hearing about retirement plans.
- Presentations urging United Way participation.

They're pleasant but lethargic. You don't have to convince them, but you do have to stir them to life. Use motivational techniques. Touch their hearts. Visualize. Show how your proposition will benefit them and the world or whatever else they hold dear. Let them know their contribution will make a difference and their nonaction will cause real hardship somewhere. Once you got them aroused, make the action easy for them to do and immediate (they may lose their inspiration overnight, or after the coffee break).

**LOW INTEREST/NEUTRAL ATTITUDE**

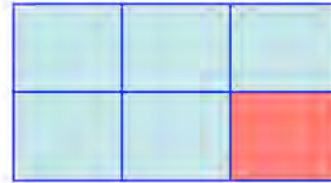


- Employee group hearing security orientation.
- Mandatory safety meetings.

This can be a real confidence sapper. They won't even throw tomatoes and, in fact, don't care if you don't show up. On the other hand, you could provide some light amusement for a normally boring activity. So with this crowd, put on a show. If you have a talking dog and a

trick pony, bring them with you. Your first and continuing task is to get these people to listen to you. Put them into the story quickly, verbally and physically. You may get them loosened up enough to actually hear some of the serious parts of your message—and they may vote for your cause because you livened up their day, if nothing else.

**LOW INTEREST/NEGATIVE ATTITUDE**



- Quality assurance procedure briefing for basic scientists.
- Welfare recipients hearing presentation on motivation.

This can be the group that causes you to turn in your uniform or jump off the bridge. These people can totally ignore you or make life rough for you, mostly while doing other things, like throwing spitballs. this is a great assignment to delegate to a subordinate, as a terrific training experience. failing that, quickly reassess your purpose in coming. A total change in signals may be in order. It will help if you can figure out what they're negative about and see if something off the wall can calm them down. Maybe they just need a break or a hard-nosed challenge. If you can calm them down, you may find them willing to listen to you. And you already know they are people with energy and spirit. If you can get that energy redirected your way, you may have a juggernaut.

©Robert E. Perry Used with permission.

# Presentation **POINTERS**

VOLUME 11, NUMBER ONE, WINTER 1998

## **Robert E. Perry: How he saw himself, emphasizes the man and his work.**

Mr. Perry was Principal officer of Robert E. Perry, Inc., Fullerton, California—a concern specializing in training and consulting services in technical marketing communications. Mr. Perry was educated in engineering at the Illinois Institute of Technology, and received his degree in physics from the University of Chicago. Prior to establishing his business in 1969, he directed technical communications, marketing and public relations programs at a senior management level for Sperry-Rand, Aeronutronic-Ford and Hughes Aircraft Company. His roster of hundreds of clients ranged from the New York Stock Exchange to the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory, from Standard Oil to Stanford Research Institute, from Monsanto to GTE, and from IBM to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. He lectured at the University of California at Los Angeles, the University of British Columbia, the University of Calgary and the University of Missouri. Videotapes of his concepts were used at Georgia Institute of Technology. In addition, Mr. Perry provided communications guidance to such technical societies as the American Federation of Information Processing Societies, the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers, the Operations Research Society of America, and the American Society of Metal.

This is the eulogy he prepared for himself.



## **In Memory of Robert E. Perry Designer of the Theme-Modular Method.**

Bob Perry was an inventor, a marketing professional and the creator of the Theme-Modular persuasive presentations and communications methodology.

His Theme-Modular Method of designing presentations and proposals is used by thousands of people throughout the United States and Canada.

**Bob Perry held an unwavering  
desire to help others succeed.  
The Theme-Modular method  
is the golden outcome  
of that desire.**

## **Robert E. Perry: How others saw him, emphasizes how his work impacted others.**

Those of you who have learned his presentation process know what I am talking about when I say, "He was a most brilliant marketing man." "His process changed my life," is a comment many of you have made. "His philosophy forms the cornerstone of our client centered business development approach," is another comment often expressed.

Those who worked closely with Bob remember him as a strong task master, an incredible mentor and a wonderful coach. Phil, Bob's son, remembers him as his best friend, a father to whom he could always come. His friend and co-worker, Dick Cote, told how he had created a brochure which included a picture without a caption. Proudly he submitted it to Bob, his boss, for comment. The comment was a terse, "A picture without a caption is like eggs without salt." With one stroke, Bob taught Dick an invaluable lesson for ever remembered. To me, Bob was a true mentor who didn't give me the right answers to my questions, but gave me the right questions for me to ponder. He was a true friend, always ready to take the time to listen.

The world has lost a brilliant man. His work will continue to benefit tens of thousands of technical professionals.

Feel free to duplicate and distribute  
*Presentation Pointers* to your staff.  
Only a limited number in your  
organization receive this periodical.

Dag Knudsen, P.E. Conducts In-House Seminars on  
*Design and Delivery of Winning Short-List Presentations (and Proposals).*

