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Topic: Message Planning and Organization

Subtopic: Message Planning: Audience

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Mutliple-Choice Question Type

<question type="mc">

1. How does it help you to know that every person you are addressing is thinking “What’s in it for me?”
 - a. Knowing that allows you to answer that question directly, at the beginning of your message.
 - b. Knowing that people are all self-serving gives you the moral high ground.
 - c. Knowing what they are thinking can make you seem omniscient to them.
 - d. Knowing what they are thinking also tells you what they are not thinking, which can help you to surprise them by taking another tack.

Analysis:

- a. Correct. Knowing that everyone approaches any new information thinking about how they can personally use that information allows you to address the question of “what is in it for them” directly at the top of your message.
- b. Incorrect. You think exactly the same thing too, so you have not attained any moral high ground.
- c. Incorrect. You will not seem omniscient to anyone, even if you can predict what they might be thinking when approached with new information.
- d. Incorrect. You have no idea what else they may be thinking. Besides, you do not want to take another tack, you want to address their questions and concerns directly.

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Level of difficulty: Easy

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2. If you do not know the specific individuals you are addressing can you get some idea of what they are probably like.
 - a. Stalk them on the Internet
 - b. Take all of the information you have about them and create a composite in your mind.
 - c. Don’t bother, people are people and if you don’t have this information there is nothing you can do about that.
 - d. Hope for the best, but assume the worst about them.

Analysis:

- a. Incorrect. Do not stalk anyone on the Internet.
- b. Correct. Take whatever information you do have about them and make whatever assumptions you can, based on that knowledge. That will lead you to a closer understanding of them than you had before, which will allow you to tailor your message to them particularly.
- c. Incorrect. People are not all the same, and the more information you have about the people you are addressing, the better you will be able to speak their same language and reach them.
- d. Incorrect. Neither hope nor assume, but take whatever facts you have or can gather, and build a profile from there.

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Level of difficulty: Medium

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3. You are addressing a message to your IT Department dealing with transitioning from one software platform to another. Which of the following facts is LEAST important in considering how you are going to shape your communication?

- a. Every member of the IT team has a high degree of technical knowledge.
- b. Members of your IT team, while all US citizens, lie in all different parts of the US, many telecommute.
- c. Members of the IT team all belong to generation-Z.
- d. IT people tend to notoriously have a poor sense of style and fashion

Analysis:

- a. Incorrect. Knowing that all members of your audience are highly technically proficient allows you to go into depth on any and all details of the old platform and the new platform in order to make your points clear. This is very important information for you to have.
- b. Incorrect. Knowing that you are addressing a geographically diverse audience tells you to minimize references to local places or institutions and to avoid regional expressions or allusions. This is useful information.
- c. Incorrect. Knowing that you are speaking to people who were all born with the Internet, cell phones, and are comfortable with social media can inform not only how you shape your message, but will definitely inform what medium you adopt to deliver your message.
- d. Correct. The fashion or style sense of your audience is relatively unimportant when profiling your audience.

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Level of difficulty: Medium

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4. You have been charged with telling top executives in your satellite offices in Philadelphia, Seattle, Austin, and Boston that your corporation has just been the victim of a hostile takeover. It is important that they maintain their high work standards in order to assure that all offices remain open. Which of the following sentences should probably appear as early as possible in your communication?

- a. The new organization currently plans on retaining all executives in all current locations.
- b. We, at corporate, understand that this is a difficult and trying time and we are here for you.
- c. The new organization currently plans on retaining all junior executives and staff in all current locations.
- d. You need to step up now and show the incoming upper level management how valuable you and your team are.

Analysis:

- a. Correct. Every person receiving your message will begin by thinking, what is in it for me? Is my job safe? Once you have assured them that their job is safe you will be able to address all of the other important issues.
- b. Incorrect. You do not want to start this message by letting everyone know how difficult this time is. You might want to conclude with some words of reassurance, but even then this wording would be a very poor choice.
- c. Incorrect. You need to assure that top executives that their jobs are secure before you assure them that the jobs of those working under them are secure.
- d. Incorrect. You do not want to pose this kind of veiled threat, and certainly not at the beginning of this communication. This would be a very poor choice.

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Level of difficulty: Medium

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5. Many factors about the age of your audience effect how you should shape and deliver your message. Which of the following reasons is the LEAST important?

- a. Different generations have different slang and speak the language differently. Knowing the language and slang of the generation you are speaking to can help shape the content of your message.
- b. Different generations encounter the means of delivery of a message differently. Messages sent in written form, electronically, social media and so forth are received differently by different generations.
- c. Frequently by the time people have reached upper management they have been at it a while and are older. Younger workers tend to be further down on the corporate ladder. Understanding this can help you identify your target market.
- d. Different generations view their work and the workplace differently. An understanding of this can help you to shape your message appropriately.

Analysis:

- a. Incorrect. It is true that different generations use language differently and have their own unique slang. Understanding how your audience speaks can help you to shape your message in the most appropriate and effective way.
- b. Incorrect. Different generations do encounter different media differently. As a rule younger generations tend to be increasingly more comfortable with various electronic and social media as it has always been a part of their lives. Understanding how your audience receives different media can effect what media you choose as a deliver mechanism for your message.
- c. Correct. While the generalization may have some marginal truth to it, this will have no effect on the shaping or delivery of your message.
- d. Incorrect. There are quantified differences in how baby boomers, gen-Xers, gen-Ys, and so on engage their work and their workplace. Having a clear understanding of who is in your target audience and what their relationship is with their work and their workplace can help to shape your message.

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Level of difficulty: Difficult

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6. Which of the following would not be an example of a secondary audience?

- a. You created a presentation showing the new branding strategy and delivered it to the executive board. Several members of the board finessed your power point and converted it into a brief internal memo, passing it along to the director of sales.
- b. In attempting to effect a merger you have prepared letter to the company you plan to merge with. The CEO of that company shared this document with her legal team.
- c. You sent a message suggesting new procedures to a department head who sent it on intact to her regional director.
- d. You created and delivered a message about streamlining your delivery methods to your director of sales, who then passed it directly down to all sales managers and sales teams.

Analysis:

- a. Correct. While the board did share some of the ideas and information you had presented to them, they took the message and reframed it before passing it along. This does not reflect an example of a secondary audience.
- b. Incorrect. By passing your letter directly to the legal team intact, members of that team become a secondary audience.
- c. Incorrect. By sending your message directly along intact, the department head has turned the regional director into a secondary audience.
- d. Incorrect. By passing your message directly along to the sales managers and sales teams, your director of sales has made them a secondary audience.

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<question type="true-false">

8. You should never adapt any message you have to the particulars of your audience, particularly if that means changing the viewpoint or delivery mechanism.

T

Incorrect. Any information you have about your audience and how you can most effectively communicate with them should be but to use by adapting the message specifically to be effect to them.

F

Incorrect. Tailoring your message in its content and deliver is essential to effective communication in business or anywhere else.

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Level of difficulty: Medium
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<question type="true-false">

8. You will frequently know the person or people who will be the audience for your business messages. You should use everything you know about these people as individuals in shaping and delivering your message to them.

T

Correct. Any knowledge of who they are, how they communicate, how they respond to different media, or what might be effective in communicating with them.

F

Incorrect. You should use any knowledge or information you have in creating and delivering effective business communications.

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Level of difficulty: Medium
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