

CHAPTER ONE

AUDIENCE

In this chapter we will locate the start of the writing process long before composition. Everything is leading up to the central argument and there is much work that needs to be done before we get to that point. Before you are ready to begin you need to be sure that you really do want to make a speech, rather than take part in a panel session. You need to commit the time but, crucially, do not be tempted to start too soon. Once you have determined to proceed, you need to begin to get to know your audience. There are three ways of doing this – thinking, researching and asking. The best tactic, if you can, is to speak to people who are planning to attend. Then there are five questions you should ask yourself, as a further guide to what will be required of you.

1. What title have you been given?
2. How large an audience can you expect?
3. On what occasion will the speech take place?
4. How much does your audience already know about the topic of the day and do they have a prior prejudice?
5. Are you speaking to a larger audience than those who are gathered in the hall?

You will by now know enough about your audience that you are ready to think about what you expect from this speech.

Before You Begin

As the task of writing a good speech unfolds in this book, you will see that the pivotal moment, the fulcrum of the whole process, is the clarification of a resilient central argument. Everything prior to that point leads up to it and everything subsequent to that point follows from it.

In other words, there is a good deal of work to do before you start to write. Before you begin, you should stop and ask yourself the following question: how far away is the speech? Most people start their preparation far too early. The natural response to trepidation is to start working. Lots of people use activity to displace nervous tension. They think it will help to start writing two months before the event and have it completed and ready to be delivered with a week still to go.

This is a mistake and you will just need to be braver about it. There is no speech that has ever been delivered that could not have been done in a month, from start to finish. Starting too soon leaves too much time for your material to go stale and for you to lose confidence in what you have done. People start to make poor editorial decisions the more time that passes. You also run the risk that too many people get involved in the process and the speech loses its central thrust.

If that schedule sounds tight and you want to protest immediately that you are too busy for that kind of regime, then you need to ask yourself a more fundamental question: do I really have the time for this speech?

If you thought the speech was worth doing in the first place, then you will need to put aside the requisite time. Turning

up poorly prepared is a discourtesy to your audience, as well as a foolish missing of an opportunity on your part. But perhaps your reluctance is pointing to a more basic concern. The sense of unease lurking underneath your bravado may be pointing to the fact that you have nothing to say.

That isn't quite the knock-down insult that it sounds. It doesn't mean that, if engaged on a topic of conversation, you would sit there in embarrassed silence. It means that you do not, just at the moment, have something sufficiently new and important to impart that it warrants organizing a whole event around it, to which people will be asked to interrupt their day to attend.

Be careful that your diary is not exercising a kind of tyranny over your time. Most speeches are just dates in the diary that you feel you cannot avoid. Many of these events will have been put into your diary by someone else, with only the merest indication to you. They probably thought it was corporate necessity that you attend and they may well be right. In other words, this is an event at which nobody involved actually wants to make a speech and this is a really inauspicious beginning. The annual industry conference is on the horizon and, as a big cheese in the trade, you can hardly not show up. But the obligation to attend is not the same as the need to make the keynote speech.

There are other ways to appear that release you from the obligation to be the main event. You could suggest a panel event in which leading figures answer questions from the audience. If those questions are submitted by agreement in advance of the event, you will not be ambushed by any nasty surprises. The presence of others on a panel always provides

cover, in any case. You could arrange to have a structured conversation on stage, led by an interviewer, with whom you have discussed the course of the discussion in advance.

There are many occasions on which your task is simply to make the corporate case that you have made before. There is nothing wrong with that. The world does not change fundamentally for most of us in a matter of months. So, if that is the task you have, think hard before you accept the invitation to do a set-piece speech. You may be asking for a lot of hard work you will wish you had avoided. Not that you should automatically suppose that submitting to a structured interview, a panel or a question and answer session will release you from the requirement to prepare. Even if you are familiar with the standard material you have to impart, each of these occasions contains pitfalls that preparation can help you to avoid. It is also worth adding, too, that after you have done a few of these events you will have honed your answers and you probably have a set response to certain questions. That is fine as long as you are sure to interrogate your own patter every few months. Lines can date quickly and your delivery can betray the fact that you have become bored with saying it. You can be sure the audience will be if you are.

How Do I Get to Know My Audience?

A speech is sometimes known as an address and an address has to be addressed to someone. An argument has to be given to someone in particular. It is impossible to work out your speech in the abstract. So, the place to start is with an assessment of the occasion for your speech or presentation and the audience who will be there to hear you.

Before looking at what you need to ask of your audience, you need to think carefully about how you intend to go about unearthing the information. There are three ways you can get to learn more about your audience.

1. You can sit there and think
2. You can do some research from your desk
3. You can ask people

If you sit and think for a while you will usually find that you already know quite a lot about the speech you have been invited to give. It is likely that you know the occasion and the organization that has asked you to speak. If the presentation is internal you will probably know some, if not all, of the audience members. You will probably have a good sense of the educational level of your audience, its basic income and also know the context of the conference or occasion. Incidentally, there are some books and websites on speech writing which implore you to make a great deal of this kind of psychological musing. There are others too that ask you to do a certain amount of what they call “demographic” analysis of the audience. You should be careful with this. There is a limit to the psychological attitudes that can easily be read off from somebody’s biography or the place you impute to them in the social structure. It’s unlikely that extended study of this kind will repay the investment of time. There are events which demand a certain tone (such as a conference exclusively for women) but that will be clear in the title of the event and requires no great insight into demography. You almost certainly understand the purpose of the meeting you will address. It goes without saying that, if you don’t know the answers to any of these questions, you

certainly need to. But you will find that a clear picture of the event is already available in your mind if you just spend half an hour sketching it.

Now, the sketch you have ready-made in your mind is highly impressionistic. So let's paint in some of the details. If you know nothing else at all about the forthcoming event, you will presumably know who you have been invited by. Start by investigating who they are, if you do not already know.

The best way to begin this investigation is to ask what this organization stands for. As a guide, you can use the following questions:

- What question does this organization exist to answer?
- How would you characterize this organization, from what you can see on its website and the literature that you will find there?
- What problems do you imagine they encounter?
- Why do you think they are interested in the topic that you have been given?
- Imagine the meeting they had, at their headquarters, when your name came up. They had other options, yet they chose you. Why did they do that, do you think?
- Why did they imagine that you had any of the answers to what they need to know?

There is another way of ascertaining the answer. You could just ask them. You must have at least one contact at the organization that has issued the invitation, namely the person who contacted you. If they are at all efficient, they will already have attached some information about the event. In

fact, it is more likely that they will have sent you too much rather than too little. Make sure that the accompanying material you have contains something about the prospective audience, a projected line-up of speakers for the day and something akin to the statement that sets out the purpose of the day.

If you are missing any of these elements, just ask. Then, while you are asking, inquire whether there is an archive of previous events online. You can usually watch speeches from previous years which will give you a sense of the type of occasion you have in store and of the type of speech to which this audience will be accustomed. Finally, ask your contact if there is anyone you could talk to at a later date for a fuller briefing on the nature and mission of the event. If you frame this as wanting to be sure that the organizers get exactly what they want from the event, people are invariably delighted that you should be so interested.

So far, you will have gained some useful information about the event but not very much about the people who really matter – the audience. Your contact may have been helpful but there is still a lot more you can do. The best strategy of all is to talk to the audience before the event. Of course, unless it is a small-scale event, it won't be possible to talk to everyone who will attend but that is not a counsel of despair. You can still unearth the information you need.

There are books on speech writing which suggest that you send a short questionnaire to the audience, assuming that you have been able to get hold of an invitation list from the organizer. The problem with this is that you are liable to annoy a large proportion of your audience, while gaining

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information of quite poor quality. Survey questions are usually too general and do not allow for the revealing follow-up question from which genuinely useful information often comes. There is something impersonal and perfunctory about a list of generic questions turning up in your inbox. As an audience member, I am apt to be more irritated than impressed.

There really is no substitute for actually talking to people directly. It will rarely be possible to talk to more than a small fraction of your audience. But assume that, on the day, you will be speaking to 100 people. If your research has yielded an account of the audience's character, you should be able to construct a small representative sample. Good research should allow you to locate five people who will be reasonably representative of the whole. Don't hesitate to contact them, if you can get their number or email address. Most people are flattered to hear from you, flattered that you should care at all and flattered in particular that you care what they think.

When you find these people ask them what single question they most urgently need you to supply the answer to. What single thing could they learn from your speech that they really need to know?

Though you are planning to talk to just five people, it is possible that each one of them will know others who are also planning to attend. You can be sure, too, that those five people will mention it to others, either before the event or on the day.

You will be appreciated for taking the pains to discover the needs of your audience, especially if someone recognizes a

morsel of information which they think derives from the conversation that you had with them. Sometimes the people you speak to will not quite know what they are looking for from the day. They may be looking to you to answer that question. Sometimes the thing they are looking for is exactly what you know you cannot offer them, either because you don't know the answer or because you disagree with them. But at least you will know the ground on which you stand and that will help a great deal in the preparation of your text.

What Do I Need to Know About My Audience?

Now that you have steeled yourself to make contact with your audience, you need to make sure that you do not waste their time. The following section sets out what, ideally, you need to know. For ease of reference, the information you need to contemplate before you are ready to start writing can be broken down into five questions.

1. What is the title that you have been asked to address?
2. What is the likely size of the audience you will have?
3. What is the occasion on which you will speak and where will the speech take place?
4. How much does your audience already know and what is their view on your topic?
5. Are you speaking to more audiences than you can see before you in the hall?

Question One: The Title of Your Speech

To start with the title of the speech is such an obvious first question that it is remarkable how frequently people forget to ask it. You can make some basic errors at this point, which will ramify all the way through the preparation process, so it is as well to get the title of the speech correct from the beginning.

Your title ought to be narrow, clear and precise. It should not be “Developments in the delivery of milk over the last few years” or “Trends in the production of cricket bats”. Those are broad subject matters, not topics for a speech. Your title needs to be one of two things:

- (i) an assertive statement, which you will set out to substantiate or confound, or
- (ii) a clear question, which you will set out to answer.

“Five years from now, the rise of the supermarkets will have finished off milk delivery for ever” is a statement of intent, around which a speech can be organized. Likewise, “is the current consumer trend towards cheaper brands likely to persist even when the country returns to healthier growth rates?” gives you something to answer.

Beware the grand, vague title. It is a trap that will lead you to platitudes that, in the vain attempt to cover too much ground, cover too little. Saying nothing loftily is always easy but never impressive. If the organizers have landed you with a title without specific content, impose your own. Let them know early what you intend to talk about. Perhaps at this initial stage you will not be in a position to declaim the aggressive statement that you will prove on the day. If not,

you should know the question that will need to be answered. A speech organized around a question always leads to a definitive statement in any case. The two approaches are, in fact, one. The question leads evidently to the answer.

There is one more word of warning needed. Be sure you do not set yourself a question that is unanswerable. You cannot hope to do too much in an address of 20 minutes (which is the time you ought to be aiming at). A good speech should rarely be longer than 25 minutes. Most allocations are longer than this but there is no need. It is a rare subject that cannot be explained fully and vividly in 25 minutes. Indeed, you should be quicker if you can be. Make sure the question you pose has clear and easy answers. You may not know which answer to choose but it is easy to identify a question that leads to such an answer. For example, in my speech suppose I set myself the task of answering the question: "Is the modern world changing faster than it changed in previous eras of history?" It is possible to envisage an endless seminar on this question which might occasionally yield some interesting insights. It is less likely that you have the time to assemble a crisp and coherent answer to this question by the time your annual conference comes around. It's just too big, too generic, too imprecise and too far removed from what you and your audience actually do. This question may well be the backdrop to the majority of your business activity and I am not suggesting it is not an important question.

It's just not the most important question for you right now, and that is what we are looking for.

Compare this question: "Does the financial crisis compel us to change course as a company?" You can tell a good, genera-

tive question when both the answer “yes” and the answer “no” suggest further lines of inquiry. To answer “yes” to this question invites us at once to say why such a change of course is necessary and what it will actually require of us in practice. That suggests a rudimentary speech structure straight away:

- (i) What has happened? (Details of the crash)
- (ii) Why does that mean our strategy has to change?
(Set out the strategy and the elements that will no longer work)
- (iii) What do we do next? (Set out the new strategy and why it will work in the new environment)

So, be clear, be precise and be narrow. Nobody ever complained that a speech was not general enough. If at a later date you decide, after you have learnt a little more about your audience, that you do need to range more widely, that is always easy to do. It is always true in the course of writing that it is easier to expand from a narrow subject matter than it is to winnow down from a general subject matter.

In philosophical terms, speech writing is a form of induction (moving from the particular to the general) rather than a species of deduction (deriving the particular from the general).

Question Two: The Size of the Audience

The rules of good writing and effective communication do not really vary. To this extent, the guidelines that we will encounter in Chapter Three (Topic) apply universally. The laws of good writing are akin to physical laws. They cannot be suspended. Clarity of argument matters if you are talking to three people in a room at work and it matters if you are

leader of the Labour Party giving your speech to the annual conference.

But these two events do obviously differ markedly in every other respect and it would be odd if there were no requirements particular to either. There are relevant differences in the way you should approach the composition of a speech that depend on the size of the audience that you are about to encounter.

The degree of formality that is appropriate varies according to your relationship with that audience and the size of the audience. If you know the people in the room well, if you talk to them informally every day for example, then it would seem decidedly odd to come over all formal just because you are now delivering a presentation. The satire of your colleagues is usually enough to keep you honest on these occasions.

The other useful rule of thumb is that the greater the size of the audience, the more formal the presentation should become. Or, rather than say “should” become, it would be more accurate to say “could” become. There is no requirement to be very formal. Indeed, excessive formality of diction is one of the ways in which people lose their personality once they take to the stage. Formality here is not intended to suggest stilted prose. It just means that the speech is a little more crafted, a little more rhetorical.

Good speech writing is like ordinary speech, heightened. Imagine all the wittiest things you have ever said, spontaneously. Then imagine you managed to say them all one after another, tied up in a clever argument. That’s a speech. It’s not different from your everyday conversation; it’s just better

than you. It's you at just a bit more than your very best. It is you with the dull bits edited out. For some people this means that quite a lot of editing is required.

The smaller the audience the more that even rhetorical crafting of this kind will seem artificial and odd. Declaiming your text as if you were Ian McKellen reading the battlefield soliloquy from *Henry V* will really have you marked down as an oddball if your audience is Barry, Andy and Steve from the Weymouth office.

It is useful to distinguish three audience sizes, each one of which demands a subtly different response from the speaker.

1. Room: an audience of fewer than 10 people. This is the most intimate setting you will speak in. Every member of your audience will be individually visible. You will probably be closer to them than you would be in a grander setting and any reaction the audience betrays will be immediately obvious. Formality in this setting is going to seem strained and peculiar.

2. Hall: holding somewhere between 10 and 100 people. This is the most common type of address. As soon as the audience gets over 10 people, and certainly when it begins to climb close to 100, individual contact with each member will prove to be impossible. The audience, in a strange way, starts to become a single audience, rather than a group of identifiable individuals (which you should try to remember they remain).

3. Auditorium: over 100 people, all the way up to playing Madison Square Garden. This is the highest level of formality. The sort of performance required to play a larger venue

is an exaggerated and heightened version of what is required in smaller settings. When you have a large audience there is the possibility of contagion. A good story can gain a laugh which can ring around a venue.

It needs to be repeated, though, that the basic precepts of writing do not change according to the venue. A large audience can spot a poor argument just as easily as a small audience.

Question Three: The Setting and the Occasion

The idea of the occasion is about more than the title of the conference. The occasion, which has some overlap with what, in his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle calls “*patnos*”, is better described as everything in the background to the event which is relevant to the speech you might give.

It is important, of course, to think about the setting in which you will deliver the speech. The location, the town, a famous resident or historical event – they might all furnish a reference, even if it is no more than the courtesies and pleasant-ries that are uttered at the beginning. So, for example, a speech in Liverpool, in which a speaker has to make the case for investment in biochemical engineering, might profitably make use of the fact that the UK’s first biochemical engineering department opened at Liverpool University in 1902.

It is also advisable to check when you are down to speak. Ask yourself where you are on the bill. The ideal spot in a conference is about 11am in the morning. The delegates have warmed up by then but they are not yet desperate for lunch.

Immediately after lunch is the worst slot, with people not yet ready to get going again.

Then, consider the particular context into which this event will fall. What has happened in the time since the last event? Or, if this is a singular conference, why has it been called? Why does the world need this conference at all? What question is it designed to answer? Try to imagine this conference in a wider setting and work out what relation it plays to larger issues.

The occasion is what gives your speech its resonance. Try to assess how momentous your occasion is. Do you expect that this will be an event which is remembered in years to come? Does it fall at a very important juncture in the development of your profession? Is there anything unusual about this particular moment that would demand something unusual from you?

Question Four: The Knowledge Level of Your Audience

The more you can learn about your audience, the better. There are two big things you need to know. First, how much do they know and, second, what do they think about your topic as they enter the hall to hear you speak? Let's take them in turn.

First, is this an expert gathering or a crowd of the uninitiated? Is this an audience likely to know a lot about the topic you will be speaking on or are they relative (to you, at least) novices? It is probable that the audience will be a mix, containing some members who know a great deal and some who

know very little about the subject under discussion. Finding a pitch that interests the latter without patronizing the former then becomes your delicate task.

Getting the tone wrong because you are pitching your address at the wrong level of knowledge is a common error. An audience that already knows everything you are telling them will feel bored as well as patronized. An audience that cannot follow your technical exposition will switch off and feel alienated by someone who made them feel stupid. Of course, you will sometimes discover that the audience is made up both of people accomplished at a high level of specialized sophistication and those who are a good deal less familiar with the material.

In these circumstances you have three options. The first option is to summarize the more technical aspects of the presentation, with an explicit apology to those who already know what you are about to tell them. Your second option is to seek the highest ground which is common to both sets of people. This is not bad advice at all but it can be difficult to know what, in practice, it entails.

For that reason, the third option is much the best. That is to speak so plainly that you explain all the difficult concepts in words that an intelligent layperson can understand. This is a general principle which will recur frequently in this book. Try, as far as possible, to speak plainly, without unnecessary technical language or deliberate, pretentious flourishes and flights of poetic fancy like this one. It is always possible to talk about difficult things in a simple way and that way the initiated will not feel patronized and those who are new to the subject will feel that they have learned something.

Once you have come to some sense of what your audience will think, the second question is to consider that view in a little more detail. In particular, ask yourself about the general mood in the audience.

Is this a voluntary audience or a compelled audience? It is not uncommon for an audience to have little interest in the subject under discussion. This does not reflect badly on you as a speaker (well it might but it doesn't necessarily). Remember that some members of some audiences are attending the conference not because they especially want to but because it is expected of them. It's just a job and, frankly, they'd rather be somewhere else. The first task with an involuntary audience is to get their attention. Do not assume the audience is interested. It's your job to make them so.

If the audience is interested, or if you can prick their interest, they will either be favourable or hostile to your approach. You do not as yet have even a main argument, let alone a script. But in most cases you will already know whether, in broad terms, you are being cast in this setting as an advocate or a critic. You will usually have a good feeling for the sorts of things you think will find an echo in the views that will be present in the room.

Picture yourself before an audience, arguing the case for a high speed rail link between Manchester and Leeds. You have assembled your best possible case, replete with facts and projections about the future benefits. You have done your audience research well so you know what to expect. The man from the "No to High Speed Rail Campaign" is in the front row. He is sitting next to a rotund businessman whose lapel

badge says he is from “We Need Better Transport”. The two of them are making it easy for you but not everyone wears their allegiance on their lapel. Most members of the audience sit quietly and attentively, wearing badges that bear the names of organizations that sound studiously neutral.

However, your research has revealed that a large number in the audience object to the despoliation of the countryside between Manchester and Leeds, which is likely to be an incidental outcome of such a scheme. That is why the main burden of your speech has therefore been to reassure your audience that, contrary to misleading newspaper reports, the areas of outstanding beauty will either be tunnelled or by-passed altogether.

You had planned at first to make a speech in response to a paper by academics at Manchester University which purported to demolish the business case for the scheme. Your first draft contained a wholly different speech (which taught you the lesson of not starting before you know what you have to say). That first draft was more factual, full of the gains to economic growth that would be generated by improved infrastructure in the North West. It was a good speech, for a different occasion. It would have bombed if you’d done it, though. Your audience research has equipped you with a good speech for this occasion.

If you are faced with an audience which is sceptical, or even hostile, you may be in for a testing time. You will need to bear this latent hostility in mind as you select your arguments and supporting evidence. Conversely, you are not necessarily off the hook if you conclude that the audience will, in general, be favourable to your point of view. A speech that

panders to the already-existing prejudice of an audience is usually dull and leaves people dissatisfied even as they concede that what you said was essentially right. You should still consider the following set of questions:

- What motivates this audience when it comes to this topic?
- What arguments will they find irritating and unconvincing?
- What are their biggest concerns and unanswered questions?
- How much of a factual basis is there for their general beliefs?
- Will those beliefs be based primarily on personal experience or on study?
- To what extent have they definitively made up their mind?

The first of these questions may offer a clue to the others. If you can locate the motive force of an audience you have a good chance of constructing a persuasive argument. For example, an audience of finance directors is likely to respond to a different emphasis than an audience of marketing executives. This will be true even if they work for the same company, with the same basic set of interests. Your basic argument will also be the same in both cases. But the manner in which you make it should correspond to what you have learnt about what motivates the people in question.

It is evidently a crude reduction of people to say that finance directors will automatically respond to a more arithmetical

argument about the return on capital and marketing executives will require something a little more rhetorically polished and vivid. I know there are some creative finance directors out there (although not always in a good way). But there is plenty of time for adding layers of complexity and sophistication to the message. At this stage, we are just looking for pointers, assembling the information we need that will allow us to begin writing at the right place.

Question Five: The Problem of Plural Audiences

For almost every speech, there are two audiences. There is the audience you can see and the audience you cannot see. First of all, there is, of course, the set of people who are actually in the auditorium or the room before you and no speaker can afford to neglect them.

But something that has been true of political speeches for a long time has now become true of presentations more broadly. Ever since Roosevelt made the first political radio broadcast in 1924, the written word has travelled over the airwaves. Lots of speeches now have at least two audiences and by far the more important is the invisible cast of thousands, sometimes running into millions, who will see some part of the speech, or at least hear it reported, on television and radio.

The multi-media dissemination of the speech has spread from national politics into corporate life. Now that a presentation can be instantly uploaded onto a company intranet or even, if something especially intriguing or embarrassing has taken place, onto YouTube, the potential audience for

your words far exceeds the numbers who receive an embossed invitation or the lucky bunch of colleagues who crowd into the presentation suite.

In many cases, the speech itself is merely the perfunctory performance that makes electronic repetition possible. Many political speeches have essentially happened before the speaker says a word. The best bits – or the least bad bits – are briefed to the newspapers and broadcasters in advance. That morning's newspapers will usually carry a report that Mr Brown will say that Mr Blue is a fool today. That will be picked up by the radio and television programmes, find its way onto political blogs and will start to be traded between the political obsessives. By the time the speech actually takes place, it feels like ancient history. Most people who ever know anything of the speech will have heard of it before it actually takes place. Some speeches are so well trailed that reading them out is like a chore. Everyone has already heard it.

Most corporate speeches are not like this but even the presentation in which there is no media interest can be made available to be watched at any point. The way that the speech is consumed is changing in a way that is beyond the control of the speaker. There is a lot less that we can do to anticipate how people will see the speech if we have no real idea when (or if) they will choose to watch it, who they will be with at the time, whether they will also be doing something else, what mood they are in while watching and so on. The usual ways of influencing the mood of a speech simply do not apply when the audience is fragmented into a long series of single people, watching a recording alone at their desk or later that evening at home.

At this stage, you just need to be aware of how extensive your audience will be. That requires you to know not just whether there is any prospect of the proceedings being disseminated as they unfold. You also need to know whether a transcript of the event will be circulated and, if so, to whom. You should also seek to work out whether there are any plans to put the event on film or videotape and upload it onto the website. Is that an internal site, which is protected and therefore will have limited traffic, or is it open, in which case the potential audience could be substantially larger? But who, in fact, is this uploading designed for? Who are the regular visitors to that site and which group of people would it be wise for you to number among your audience? It can be hard to count all these nameless, invisible people as part of your audience. It is natural to concentrate on those in the hall, and not unreasonable either. But you cannot afford to forget the rest of us, watching at home, listening to music at the same time.

Conclusion: You Know Who You Are Talking To

You may not yet know what you are talking about. But you will at least know by now who you are talking to. We are not done with your audience yet, as you will see in the next chapter. But we have done the basics and, if you have followed the argument so far, you should be well informed about who you can expect to have in front of you and what, in broad outline, they think.

It does not follow from this that you ought simply to reflect to that audience those things you feel it wants to hear. The

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material that an audience wants to hear is not always the thing that they need to hear or the thing that you specifically have to tell them. A speech which panders to an audience will usually be exposed. An audience rarely likes an obviously ingratiating speaker. If an audience feels that all you are doing is flattering them they will not, paradoxically, feel flattered.

They will feel patronized. Your audience research is designed to inform you of who you are speaking to and what they think. It is perfectly legitimate in some circumstances to then decide to tell them something they neither think already nor agree with. But that will depend on the expectations that they, and you, have for this speech, which is the subject of the next chapter.

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