

# Personalizing Your Message Is Critical

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The mistake that many speakers make is to speak generically. Regardless of the audience, they always say the same things about their topic. In order to win people over, your listeners must feel you understand and have taken into consideration their unique situation and issues. In her book, *How to Present Like a Pro*, Lani Arredondo says, "Presentations are like letters. They have to be addressed to the right person or they end up in the dead-letter box." Thus, if you want your presentation to really resonate, you have to frame it around the audience in front of you. The presentation has to be personal or special to them. The question, you may be wondering, is how to do it- how to make it personal.

## Personalize your opening remarks:

It starts with the first words out of your mouth. In your opening statement, begin with what you have learned about the organization, the department, or the individual. If you know that the organization is expanding, directly state it. If you know that various departments have to consolidate or that the individual is new on the job, again be sure to tell what you know and verify if what you have heard from your sources is correct.

*Example:*

*From what we have learned by working with your IT Department, you are looking to consolidate your back office procedures. Is that correct?*

*Example:*

*Congratulations on your new position as head of Global Operations. From what I have heard you say in interviews, expanding into the Asian Pacific is key. Did I get that right?*

*Example:*

*From what you stated on your registration sheet, you have a need to be more organized,*

*that it is difficult for you to put your fingers on important information quickly. Is that correct?*

By verifying what you know in your opening remarks, listeners conclude that you have done your homework. It makes them feel that you are on the same page with them. Until they get a sense you have taken their issues to heart, they are skeptical of any solutions or information that you are offering.

## Give relevant examples as you discuss key points:

Throughout your prepared remarks, examine whether or not the examples you give are germane to these particular individuals. If you have an audience within an audience, or people with differing roles and responsibilities, be sure you are making adjustments in your examples so that all audience groups would find them pertinent.

*Example:*

*I am sure as the Chief Operating Officer of this Medical Center, your primary concern is the care and well being of the patients you serve. The Z Scanner provides your physicians with 64 views of the heart as compared with your existing equipment that provides only a limited number and necessitates the patient having multiple tests and lengthy delays before a diagnosis can be made.*

*For those of you that are physicians, I am sure you will feel more confident giving a diagnosis and prescribing an accurate course of treatment without stressful delays for the patient.*

*Example:*

*I know as the controller, consolidation of processes is critical to achieving the cost savings you need. With our software, manual implementation of data each month is elimi-*

*Continued on page 2*

*nated. For you folks who have spent whole days gathering and inputting data, your time can be better spent on other mission critical tasks.*

**Use people's names or personal pronouns:**

When addressing your examples or your points, don't overlook the power of a name. If you know how a particular point or process will help a particular individual, be sure to point that out by using the person's name. If the audience is large, consider using personal pronouns.

*Example:*

*Harry, as the person in charge of the call center, I imagine that one eye is always on the number of callers in cue. Right?*

*Example:*

*What we find with sales people like yourselves is a need to call at higher levels of the organization. If you are like most people, you are wondering how to do it.*

There is nothing that makes a person feel more special than using their name. But if you aren't able to use a name, personal pronouns will suffice as it shows that you are thinking from the group's perspective.

**Speak in words they understand:**

Lastly, Audiences appreciate when you use words they understand. They don't want to second guess what you have said. Sometimes, as presenters, we get very comfortable with jargon and acronyms. What's appropriate to us in our particular role may not be appropriate to this audience and can leave them frustrated or down right annoyed.

Making a presentation personal is essential. Speakers who consciously give time to making the appropriate adjustments are far more likely to be successful. The time it takes is well worth the investment.

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