

Terracom Tips

Communicate Your Message by Considering Your Audience

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Whether you're pitching an idea, crafting a letter, writing an article or making a presentation, what's one way to engage your reader or listener? Make this your mantra every step of the way: "Consider your audience." Considering your audience helps your message cut through today's clutter of information and increases the likelihood that it will stick.

Here are some tips to help you do just that:

Speak their Language.

Look for opportunities to use terms pertinent to your audience. If you're unsure what audience members mean when they use a particular word, do some research and find out. Using language that is meaningful to your audience also extends to headlines and titles. Try to choose words that matter to them and will attract their attention.

Tune in to tone.

Make your readers feel at home by using a tone that matches theirs. If you're writing for an academic journal, a formal tone is more appropriate. A letter to the editor of your local paper can be more informal.

Choose examples carefully.

Use examples that matter to your audience. It's always tempting to save time by lifting examples from one piece you wrote to use in another. Unless it's the same type of audience, think twice about doing it. Choose examples that your audience can relate to, situations that apply to them specifically.

Resonate with them.

What does your audience care about? Integrate it into your material. Not only does that engage your readers and listeners, but it will also make them feel that you identify with them. That builds your credibility.

Respect their time.

Considering your audience includes respecting your readers' and listeners' time. That means being clear and concise. Make your writing easy to read. If in doubt, have someone review what you've written or plan to present, to make sure it's as crisp as possible.

Minimize frustration.

Be organized in what you write and present. Don't make your reader or listener have to work to figure out what you mean. And be sure to deliver what you've promised.

Capitalize on familiarity.

It's human nature to be drawn to what you're familiar with. If your message is from more than one person or organization, and your audience is more familiar with one of them, lead with that person or organization. So if it's a letter, have the signature of the more familiar person appear first. If logos are involved, lead with the logo of the organization that is better known to your audience.

Walk in their shoes.

You've just called a colleague to pitch an idea. You can tell she's in a rush. Rather than try to squeeze in a conversation, tell her you'll call back at a more convenient time for her. That shows her you understand and empathize with her situation, and enables you to give your idea the attention it deserves.

Break it up.

People spend less time reading today than ever before. Give your copy a chance to be read by making it visually inviting. Long paragraphs can be daunting; break them up into smaller ones. Use headings to further break up the copy.

Taking the time to consider members of your audience means a more enriching experience for them and a more successful communication for you.