

Prime-time television viewing in general is declining, as people turn to DVRs, streaming, and video on demand; prime-time ads also are losing some of their appeal for companies.¹⁴

Preferred channels reflect age categories. Americans 50 and older prefer traditional channels—television, radio, and print newspapers. Americans under 30 prefer digital sources. Comedy news shows such as *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah* attract younger audiences; cable talk shows, such as *Hannity*, attract viewers 65 and older.¹⁵

Some channels also reflect gender difference. Audiences for business publications such as the *Wall Street Journal*, *Economist*, and *Bloomberg Businessweek* are more than 70% male, while audiences for daytime talk shows such as Ellen DeGeneres's show and *The View* are more than 70% female.¹⁶

Creative uses of channels are appearing everywhere:

- Ads are appearing on subway tunnels, fire hydrants, grocery checkout conveyors, sidewalks, toilet stall doors, and cardboard shirt hangers used by cleaners.¹⁷
- Toy maker Mattel used Facebook, Twitter, and a series of eight webisodes to celebrate the 50th birthday of Ken, Barbie's boyfriend. The webisodes allowed Mattel to extend the audience to teenagers and adults who have an emotional tie with the toy and may be collectors.¹⁸
- CBS used 35 million eggs printed with show logos and related puns; they called the endeavor "egg-vertising."¹⁹
- The USA Network used 50,000 \$1 bills bearing stickers for one of its miniseries.²⁰
- Scientists are using computer games to enlist the help of nonscientists. EyeWire enlists players to map neural connections in the eye; Foldit enlists players to help solve the question of how proteins fold.²¹
- Vienna, Austria, raised money for the main public library with a phone sex hotline. Pay by the minute and you got to hear a famous Austrian actress reading passages from the library's collection of erotic fiction from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries.²²

Using Audience Analysis to Adapt Your Message

LO 2-4

Zeroing in on the right audience with the right message is frequently a formula for success. If you know your audience well and if you use words well, much of your audience analysis and adaptation will be unconscious. If you don't know your audience or if the message is very important, take the time to analyze your audience formally and to revise your message with your analysis in mind. Remember that audiences change, sometimes drastically, over time. Just think how much college students have changed since the 1950s and 1960s. The questions in Figure 2.2 will help guide a careful audience analysis.

Figure 2.2

Analyzing Your Audience

These questions will help you analyze your audience:

1. How will the audience initially react to the message?
2. How much information does the audience need?
3. What obstacles must you overcome?
4. What positive aspects can you emphasize?
5. What are the audience's expectations about the appropriate language, content, and organization of messages?
6. How will the audience use the document?

As you answer these questions for a specific audience, think about the organizational culture in which the person works. At every point, your audience's reaction is affected not only by his or her personal feelings and preferences but also by the political environment of the organization, the economy, and current events.

1. How Will the Audience Initially React to the Message?

- a. **Will the audience see this message as important?** Audiences will read and act on messages they see as important to their own careers; they may ignore messages that seem unimportant to them.

When the audience may see your message as unimportant, you need to

-
- Use a subject line or first paragraph that shows your reader this message is important and relevant.
 - Make the action as easy as possible.
 - Suggest a realistic deadline for action.
 - Keep the message as short as possible.
-

- b. **How will the fact that the message is from you affect the audience's reaction?** The audience's experience with you and your organization shapes the response to this new message. Someone who thinks well of you and your organization will be prepared to receive your message favorably; someone who thinks poorly of you and the organization will be quick to find fault with what you say and the way you say it.

When your audience has negative feelings about your organization, your position, or you personally, you need to

-
- Make a special effort to avoid phrases that could seem condescending, arrogant, rude, hostile, or uncaring.
 - Use positive emphasis (see Chapter 3) to counteract the natural tendency to sound defensive.
 - Develop logic and benefits fully.
-

2. How Much Information Does the Audience Need?

- a. **How much does the audience already know about this subject?** It's easy to overestimate the knowledge an audience has. People outside your own immediate unit may not really know what it is you do. Even people who once worked in your unit may have forgotten specific details now that their daily work is in management. People outside your organization won't know how *your* organization does things.

When some of your information is new to the audience, you need to

-
- Make a special effort to be clear. Define terms, explain concepts, use examples, and avoid acronyms.
 - Link new information to old information that the audience already knows.
 - Use paragraphs and headings to break up new information into related chunks so that the information is easier to digest.
 - Test a draft of your document with your reader or a subset of your intended audience to see whether the audience can understand and use what you've written.
-