

Resource: **Know Your Audience**

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1. **How big will the group be? Who will be absent?** Are you expecting 5, 15 or 50 people? The size of the audience affects the type of presentation you'll give and the resources you'll need. Keep track of who can't attend. Absent stakeholders are stakeholders nonetheless; you'll want to follow up with them afterward.
2. **What roles do your audience members perform in the organization?** To whom are they accountable? Having a basic understanding of their responsibilities will help you engage them. Consider why your message matters to them and how you can make their lives easier. Highlight those things when you present.
3. **What does the audience already know?** What do people need to know? Don't state the obvious, but give people enough background information to understand what you're saying and how it affects them.
4. **What are people likely to assume?** Which of those assumptions are correct and which incorrect. Anticipating your audience's assumptions helps you make better choices about how to present your content. If there's a misperception you need to correct, this might be the time to do it. For example, if your audience believes that the new system you're proposing will take too much time and effort to learn, explain how you'll help ease the transition with training and support.
5. **How well does the audience know you?** If you don't already have strong relationships with the participants, you'll need to establish credibility with them early on. For instance, you might open with a funny story about your struggles with the old system. Show you share the group's frustrations with the way things are.
6. **Will some attendees' goals conflict with others'?** If so, acknowledge that up front and explain how what you have to offer may help.
7. **What types of presentations are your audience members accustomed to?** Think about what's likely to get their attention, given what's worked in the past (data, demos, personal stories). If you're doing something that's new to them, find ways to make them comfortable with it. Talking to a group of number crunchers? Open with a relevant story to give your presentation greater personal meaning, but make it one that they can relate to.
8. **Is someone requiring them to be there?** This will affect how receptive people are to your message. You may need to overcome apathy or even hostility.
9. **Will you or someone else hold them accountable for what happens during or after the presentation?** Consult with the attendees' managers about the feedback or deliverables you'll be soliciting, to make sure your goals align with theirs.