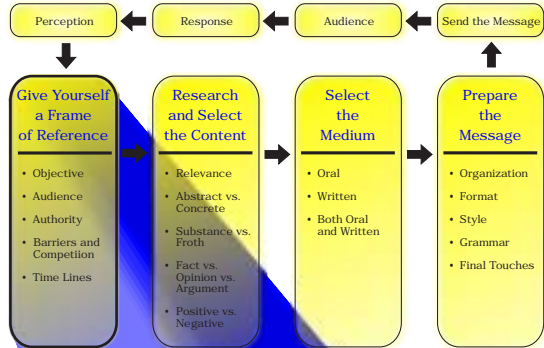


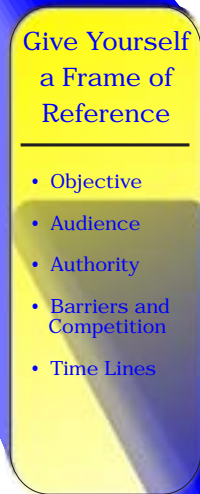
Writing for Results

A Step-by-Step Model for Successful Briefings



Chapter I-2

Audience



The audience is the most revered member of the theater. Without an audience there is no theater.

Viola Spolin

Audience

CONTENTS

Options and Strategies	I-2-3
Intermediate Audiences	I-2-4
Secondary Audiences	I-2-5
Unintended Audiences	I-2-5

In many cases, the audience for your message will be obvious to you. In other cases, however, you might have to consider options and identify the audience best suited to the other elements of your frame of reference.

There might also be times when you need to place your audience in the context of a larger process. An example of this is found in [Figure 0.3](#), How to Use the Step-by-Step Model.

OPTIONS AND STRATEGIES

Depending on how challenging your ultimate goal is, you may need to be strategic in defining your audience. This, in turn, could affect the objective of your message, the authority needed for it, the barriers and competition it must overcome, and the time lines involved.

For example, your ultimate goal might be for the government to change environmental regulations that are making it difficult for your company to compete abroad. At your level in your company, you might have the authority to write to a working-level bureaucrat yourself to express concern. However, you might also conclude that such a letter would have no impact.

To make real progress, a letter from your company's president might be required. That leads to the questions of to whom the president should write and why. He or she might write to:

- the head of the Environmental Protection Agency;
- the local member of Congress;
- the chair of the congressional committee that would be concerned with the regulations;
- the president of the company's industry association;
- the presidents of other companies that are similarly hampered by the environmental regulations; or
- the editors of newspapers or magazines.

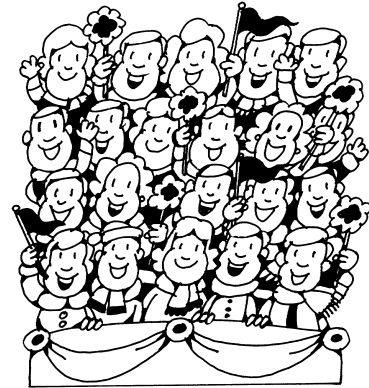
Letters to any or all of those audiences might be required, each with its own objectives that would have to be defined in the context of a larger strategy for getting the regulations changed. It could well be, then, that what you really need is to secure the president's approval of such a strategy. That, in turn, could mean that

your initial task would be to draft a memo to the president to seek approval of the strategy, with the signing authority being the executive vice president.

INTERMEDIATE AUDIENCES

In some cases, you the writer may be several levels removed from the ultimate audience for your message. If you are drafting a memo from your president to your chairman, for example, you will need to bear in mind that there will be many intermediate audiences along the way. They could include:

- your supervisor;
- your unit head;
- your manager;
- your deputy director;
- your director;
- your assistant vice-president's executive assistant;
- your assistant vice-president;
- your divisional vice-president's executive assistant;
- your divisional vice-president;
- your executive vice-president's briefing coordinator;
- your executive vice president's executive assistant
- your executive vice president;
- your president's portfolio advisor;
- your president's chief of staff;
- your chairman's policy advisor; and
- your chairman's chief of staff.



Each of those audiences has a legitimate role in reviewing and possibly requesting revisions to the memo. That's 16 hurdles that your memo must overcome before it reaches its ultimate audience. It might also need to be cleared by any number of committees or other stakeholders along the way. If you are tempted to cut corners to save yourself a few minutes here and there, ask whether those few minutes won't be lost many times over by the intermediate audiences if they have difficulty understanding your message — or if they reject it.

SECONDARY AUDIENCES

You should always assume that your primary audience will pass your message on to secondary audiences. This could happen immediately, or it could happen at some distant time in the future. Give some thought to who those audiences might be and what impact your message will have on them.

UNINTENDED AUDIENCES

In government, many executive documents are subject to release to the public under freedom of information laws, and they are requested often. In the private sector, executive documents might be subpoenaed for legal proceedings (or leaked to the press). Therefore, you will need to bear in mind that an additional audience might be the general public or the courts at some point.

It can be quite sobering to think that what you write might be plastered across the front page of *The New York Times* one day. That should not deter you from offering frank advice in your internal memos. It is, however, an added incentive to ensure that what you put on paper is defensible under close scrutiny.