

What's Your Mindset Newsletter

from **Helena Radeson - Your Partner to GET YOU WHERE YOU WANT!**



Who do you think you're talking to???

Or: How to reach through to your audience

One of the most painful things I know is watching or listening to a speaker or presenter and they just can't seem to get through to their audience. You can feel how there's no vibe, how it's not working, it's like what's being said hits deaf ears. It's particularly painful when you know the person has put a lot of work in, the content is really good and the idea worth sharing. Even more painful when the audience is starting to show signs of disinterest.

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Interestingly, this topic is one of the most common amongst the executive leaders I work with – How do I get my message through? How do I make sure the things I say are heard?

It's ironically one of the topics where many otherwise well accomplished leaders feel the most insecure and where self-doubt comes creeping up fast.

Mind you, these are people who've spent a lot of time and resources building the content. Years of research, entire careers, full organisations behind what's being presented. The content, the 'what', is not in question, instead, they worry about seeing it go to waste because they can't reach through. Many have already had the experience of a non-responsive audience and get even more anxious.

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Getting through to an audience has always thrilled me and through my corporate career I've spent substantial time in training and working on my own skills. In my current leadership practice I often engage with top leaders on how to capture an audience, what we call audience presence, a distinct part of the more general label executive presence.

The most powerful practice is when I tag along and listen to and see my clients speaking to an audience IRL. It's a vulnerable position for the person, to have someone there to evaluate them live, but on the other hand, it's the ultimate show of strength: people evaluate them all the time, but they have stopped pretending it's not happening, acknowledged they need help and have actually taken steps to be evaluated professionally, so they can learn and get better. Pretty smart and not that vulnerable anymore, huh?

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But let's broaden the scope, shall we?

This applies to everyone and everywhere. Although it is easy to imagine top leaders on a stage or board room presenting or speaking, we all do it. All the time. At work. At school. With friends and family. We are constantly presenting our cases to one audience or the other, sometimes bigger, sometimes smaller. Capturing an audience is key to getting our messages across no matter who we are and what we do.

So, what's the silver bullet?

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My conclusion and tip number one is this:

Know who you're talking to.

Whether you're a big business leader, a newly employed graduate or a teacher - know your audience.

And then adapt to it.

In that order.

“Know who you're talking to.” (...) “And then adapt to it.”

To succeed in reaching through with the same message, the big business leader will have to use one approach towards the company investors and another one to the company employees. The newly graduated will need a different style when approaching the

management team than when saying the same thing to their peers. And the teacher will no doubt speak differently in front of the parent teacher association than the class of students, and yet again different depending on the age of the children.

See where we're going here?

1. Know who you're talking to
2. Adapt your style to that audience

Recognize the theme? Knowingly or not you probably do, it's classic marketing theory: target group adaptation. That's why there's so many different types of shampoo from the same brand, different people will think their hair needs different treatment and therefore be more receptive to certain shampoo variants than others. In the end it increases chances for sales which is what the shampoo company is ultimately after, right? They're aiming to reach through to their audience. Same as you.

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Once you have acknowledged and accepted this starting point you can go deep deep deep and have loads of fun adapting your style to your different audiences; tone of voice, jargon or use of words, appearance, clothing, where you reach your audience, what time of day are they most receptive? The list goes on and on, up to you how far you take it in each case.

But the point is this: You can't always do the same.

You have to know who you're talking to.

"But the point is this: You can't always do the same."

Why is this important again?

Because if what you have to say doesn't come across, you may as well not say it.

And the world deserves to hear that very special thing that you have to say, don't you think?

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