

## Key Words, Key Concepts

**To be a better, more successful communicator: focus on the following issues.**

### Personal factors – skills, habits, attitudes

Many complex skills and habits come together in a successful communicator including:

- ability – and patience – to write clearly and forcefully;
- willingness to negotiate and compromise (politics, diplomacy);
- marketing skills (sociology and psychology).

### Process factors – planning and consultation

What we lack in skills and experience we can make up with a sound process:

- Consult carefully with all will influence and use your communications piece.
- Ask them to help you analyze the needs and attitudes of your audience.
- Establish one primary action-oriented objective, keeping secondary goals in mind.
- Consult and update your committee (or boss) frequently as the project progresses.

### Audience

The audience is your ultimate boss, engaging and motivating them your ultimate objective. So:

- Who is the audience? – demographics, knowledge level, literacy, attitudes
- What does the audience want or need?
- What does the audience know and need to know about your organization or subject?
- What prejudices or misconceptions might lead the audience to tune you out?

### Objectives

Formulate a primary objective in 15 words or less.

- Think less about what you want to say, and more about what your material must accomplish.
- Focus on what action you want the audience to take after they have read or seen your material.

### Content – what you want to say

Defining the audience and objectives helps to determine what content, what information, will get the job done. Choose the content judiciously, and remember:

- Motivation leads to action: define your features as benefits.
- What central idea do you want them to remember three months from now?
- Cut it back. If it takes more than five minutes to read, people will skim or put it aside.
- Words often convey less, emotionally, than good photos or graphics.
- “Embrace Your Inner perfectionist” – Edit, edit, edit – don’t settle for “That’s good enough!”