

Considering the Audience:
Air Force Recruiting Presentations

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Abstract

Each Air Force recruiter is formally trained in public speaking and the art of salesmanship or persuasion. These recruiters communicate to thousands of high school students each year through presentations in classrooms, auditoriums and other venues as part of their assigned duties. Persuasive presentations are public speaking events specifically designed to generate new prospects and obtain interviewing appointments with qualified applicants. This training program is designed to enhance these recruiters' current public speaking skills by focusing on the first step of presentation research: Consider the Audience. Included here is a detailed Training Plan and examples of group discussion activities. Supplemental documents and the Power Point slides are located in the appendix.

Skill Task Analysis

Objective 1: At the end of this session, students should be able to analyze an Air Force recruiting scenario and list at least three relevant audience demographics.

Objective 2: At the end of this session, students should be able to analyze an Air Force recruiting scenario and list at least three relevant environmental conditions.

Objective 3: At the end of this session, students should be able to analyze an Air Force recruiting scenario and list at least three possible audience needs.

Training Schedule (2 Hours):

1. Pre-Assessment (Needs) – (10 Minutes)

2. Lecture Discussion - (40 minutes) – Power Point
3. Watch Instruction Videos – (10 Minutes) - PowerPoint
4. Group Activity: Read Scenarios and Open Discussion – (40 Minutes)
5. Assessment – (10 Minutes)
6. Feedback – (10 Minutes)

Lecture Discussion

1. Introduction. (Slide #1)
2. Air Force recruiters utilize presentations and other public speaking events for the following reasons (Slide #2):
 - a. Any event where a recruiter is an opportunity to describe the Air Force in such a manner that persuades potential applicants to seek further information.
 - b. Recruiters are knowledgeable of all features and benefits within the Air Force and should be skilled to describe these concepts to all audiences.
 - c. Recruiters are ambassadors to the civilian public and must be able to demonstrate competent communication in multiple mediums when engaging with anyone outside of the Armed Forces (Sadler, 2012).
 - d. Often recruiters are asked to present awards at ceremonies and must give speeches in recognition of these recipients.
 - e. Air Force recruiters can be asked to teach students on various subjects and train them in accordance with military customs and courtesies.

- f. The primary objective for all Air Force recruiters is to meet assigned recruiting goals. Presentation is one tool to accomplish this mission. Recruiters must be able to appreciate the value of presentation and enhance their skills to give persuasive presentations by considering their audience.
3. To begin, we must define communication (Slide #3). Every speech, which is communicating to an audience, that a recruiter delivers contains two separate messages (Lucas, 2007):
- a. The first is the message sent by the speaker, which is transmitted (encoded) language that fits into the recruiter's reasoning.
 - b. The second is the message received (decoded) by the audience, which could or could not result in the same reasoning or acceptance. It is important to consider that just because a recruiter says something that the audience is not required to believe it, especially from a military recruiter, who must overcome a widespread social stigma.
 - c. There are two forms of communication:
 - i. Verbal communication is what the recruiter actually says, or the content of the language delivered.
 - ii. Non-verbal communication is essentially any communication that is delivered by the speaker without the use of spoken words. Examples include:
 - 1. Body language, such as the use of facial expressions or hand movement.

2. Eye content, which helps establish credibility and lets the audience know you are sincere about the topic.
 3. And many others, like positioning, tone, posture, etc.
4. Before you can consider the audience, recruiters must first define who you are by the following methods (Slide #4):
- a. Define your role. Were you asked to speak as a recruiter, a military member, a community leader, a technical expert, a career advisor, a combination of identities, or any other request by the authority that allowed you to present to the audience? Knowing what position you are playing allows recruiters to structure their message into mutually agreed parameters. For example, if a high school principal asks you to give a speech to recognize a student for a special achievement, then you present as a military professional rather than a recruiter (Sadler, 2012).
 - b. Define your purpose. What is your intent? Why are you speaking? A presentation needs to have a purpose that coincides with the audience's expectations. For example, if a history teacher requests that a recruiter gives a presentation about the role of the Air Force during Operation: Iraqi Freedom, the recruiter should not give a persuasive speech to convince students to become aircraft mechanics. Doing so would hurt your credibility (Poff, 2012).
 - c. Next, establish your credibility. Recruiters are typically geographically separated from military installations and located in areas that may be

unfamiliar with the military in general. It is the recruiter's responsibility to establish and maintain credibility to all civilians to ensure the public trust. This is accomplished through the following:

- i. A recruiter's appearance must be professional and appropriate for the occasion. The military uniform is a symbol of pride that must be communicated to the audience (Sadler, 2012).
 - ii. A recruiter's skills are demonstrated through behavior. Our words and actions leave a lasting impression on the audience so it is extremely important to practice our communication skills to ensure the proper messages are being delivered and received correctly (Sadler, 2012).
 - iii. A recruiter is a seasoned veteran, meaning that he or she has spent at least four years in military service before becoming a recruiter. Your experience is essential to establishing your credibility, so tell others about yourself, your background, and why you became a recruiter (Poff, 2012).
5. Good speakers have qualities that set them apart from other speakers, such as (Slide #5):
- a. They are audience centered, meaning that recruiters should understand and appreciate that the audience is the most important factor during the presentation.
 - b. Understanding the psychology of the audience is something that most recruiters have a difficult time grasping. Thoughts, feelings and beliefs

come into play during communication. Recruiters need to be able to decipher both how their message might be received and reactions from the audience.

- c. Good speakers make the audience want to hear the speech by utilizing motivation skills and showing the audience the benefit for their participation. Ask yourself, “What’s in it for me?” (Iman, n.d.)
 - d. Recruiter must be able to adapt to the audience. During some presentations, situations occur where there is an interruption or someone asks an off-the-wall question, and the recruiter loses focus on the topic. The mood of the audience could shift. Either way, a recruiter adapts as needed to keep the audience on track, whether it is by refocusing on the topic or even stopping the presentation to address the issue at hand.
 - e. Lastly, good speakers (and leaders) relate message to an audience’s existing knowledge and beliefs. In plain words, recruiter must speak to audiences at their knowledge level with respect to their identities, both self and culture (Hackman & Johnson, 2004). For example, a recruiter should not focus on advanced jet engine propulsion mechanics while presenting to a high school freshman home economics class.
6. Lenny Laskowskli (1996), an international professional speaker, developed the following acronym to help analyze the audience (Slide #6):
- a. (A)nalysis - Who are they? How many will be there? For example, you will be speaking to 20 students.

- b. (U)nderstanding - What is their knowledge level? These students are high school seniors.
 - c. (D)emographics - What is their age, sex, background? These students are all 17 year old white males.
 - d. (I)nterest - Why are they there? These students are all on the basketball team.
 - e. (E)nvironment – What are the external conditions? You will be speaking to these students at the gym on campus.
 - f. (N)eeds - What are their needs? What are your needs? These students have expressed a desire to hear about Air Force special tactics fields.
 - g. (C)ustomized - What needs should you address? You should address how the Air Force has needs for new people in these fields.
 - h. (E)xpectations - What do they expect to hear from you? These students expect to hear that the recruiter can provide them with information about these fields and how to become a special tactics operator.
7. Since Air Force recruiters follow a set of authorized sales techniques, called Professional Selling Skills (PSS), we will focus on the following three audience analysis factors that best mirror PSS (Slides #7-9):
- a. Demographic analysis is the basic analysis for a recruiter (Slide #7). Demographics answers the question “Who is the audience?”, and can

determine the acceptability of some types of content. Demographics can be broken down by the following:

- i. Age is the first factor to consider. Most Air Force enlisted recruiters present to audiences that meet the age qualification standards of 18 through 26, so more speeches are geared specifically for this age range. But, there are times when recruiters will present to what we call “influencers”, who are teachers, parents, community leaders, and so on, who it is important to acknowledge this and tailor presentation topics specifically for the appropriate age groups.
- ii. Gender is a factor that most recruiter typically overlook because the majority of Air Force applicants are male, as well are the majority of Air Force recruiters. Tailoring a topic to suit a particular gender can be quite tricky and requires some practice to ensure that both genders are represented equally in a mixed gender audience. In situations when only one gender is present, the tactic may favor a more masculine or feminine approach. For example, since females are not permitted in most battlefield combat specialties, there is no reason to discuss this topic while presenting to a group of nurses that happen to be all women (Poff, 2012). Doing so would probably incite a conflict that would detract from the recruiter’s objective.

- iii. The audience's background should also be carefully considered. Race, nationality, ethnicity and other factors should be neutral in the speech but considered when evaluating the culture to determine what motivates them (iman, n.d.)
- iv. Education level is quite important when determining the content of a speech, such as the topic and language used. Audiences with higher levels of education may be able to decipher more complex content and understand certain concepts where those in high school may not.
- v. Religion should be considered to ensure no offense is made. Since our occupation requires us to engage in violence to protect others, some regions may consider this lifestyle as a direct violation with their beliefs.
- vi. Considering the membership in particular groups, such as a sports team or honor society, can determine both topic and approach.
- vii. Professions such as medical, administrative, engineering, and others can determine whether a recruiter incorporates more jargon in the speech or provides an opportunity to relate to the audience through shared experiences in that profession.
- viii. There are many other factors that are indigenous to a recruiter's geographic zone. There is no real way to consider all these

factors without being present in that particular zone and conducting research.

b. Environmental conditions analysis incorporates all the factors outside of the audience and are typically things beyond their control, such as (Slide #8)

i. The size of the audience can have an impact on any speech.

The more people in the audience, the more possibility of reactions (Lucas, 2007). Recruiters should prepare for audience size by considering the method of delivery. For example, amplified sound is typically required in large auditorium that accommodates hundreds of participants, but if this is not available, a recruiter must be able to anticipate and compensate so that the entire audience can hear his or her words.

ii. Time and duration of speech is also a crucial factor. Audiences may be tired after lunch. A longer presentation might cause them to get sleepy.

iii. Virtually all potential recruits have family member and close friends that influence their decisions. Recruiters must take this into consideration and avoid making statements that contradict information obtained from trusted sources. If this happens, you must be prepared to provide credible evidence in a manner that promotes trust to both the potential applicant and others.

- iv. Physical setting ties closely with the size of the audience, but should be given equal consideration. A speech given in a classroom might be completely different than a speech given on a football field.
 - v. Local factors such as economy, unemployment rates, cultural attitudes, and more others can heavily influence an audience perception.
 - vi. Some audiences have unique limitations, such as inability to answer questions due to peer pressure, or they cannot afford to pay attention because they are cramming for a test.
 - vii. Other factors may include the weather, special events, or what audiences see on the news to name a few.
- c. Audience needs analysis closely resembles PSS, our preferred sales methodology (Slide #9). These include:
- i. Determining the disposition of the audience requires skills in observation and analysis. Audiences can be fixated on particular things or be quite fickle. Recruiters must prepare for any situation by carefully considering that some, if not most, audiences will have a preconceived disposition toward the following:
 1. First, what are you going to talk about? The topic must address the audience's needs, and it is the recruiter's

responsibility to discover and capitalize on those needs to keep the audience engaged.

2. Second, who are you to be talking to us? There may be many barriers to overcome due to social stigma attached to military recruiters. Again, it is the responsibility of the recruiter to establish trust, rapport and credibility to change the disposition of the audience toward the recruiter as a person, not a conceptual negativity.
 3. Last, why am I hear listen to you? Some audiences attend because they have not, not because they want to. It is the recruiter's responsibility to give the audience reason to believe they need to be there and they been to pay attention to the content of the presentation.
- ii. The best way to get answers is to ask questions before the event, possibly during the event, and even after the event. This can be done through surveys, also called a questionnaire, which is a series of written questions or statements for which you seek responses from audience members to learn about their knowledge, attitudes, or behavior relating to your chosen topic (Beebe, Mottet, & Roach, 2013, p. 62). Sometimes, it is good to ask questions through the presentation itself, but be prepared to:

1. Pay attention to responses. If you are going to ask a question, be genuine and listen to the answer.
 2. Reframe the question for clarification so the entire audience can benefit from the answer.
 3. Look for opportunities to engage the audience to participate or hit on a point that the audience will remember as highly important (Sadler, 2012).
- iii. To reiterate about the audience approach, keep asking yourself “Why is this important to me?” but answer it from the audience’s perspective (Nirenberg, 2009)
8. Here are some other useful questions to ask yourself (Slide #11)
- a. What do you and your audience have in common?
 - b. What differences do you have with your audience?
 - c. What ideas in your speech might your audience identify with?
 - d. How can your topic or the information benefit your audience?
 - e. How can your audience use the information?
 - f. Will this information help them?
 - g. What is your audience's amount of interest toward your topic?
 - h. What does your audience know about your topic?
 - i. What might they want to know about your topic? (St. John, 2002).
9. Failure to consider your audience can have repercussions that affect not only your reputation, but the reputation of the Air Force, the military in general, and

the recruiters to come after you (Poff, 2012). Here are some example of audience reactions (Slide #12):

- a. Alienated – this happens when recruiters offend the audience’s value system, such as giving more attention to a particular demographic or making inappropriate jokes.
- b. Insulted – this demeans the audience’s knowledge and experience, such as misrepresenting facts or offering personal options without merit.
- c. Confused – misinterpreting knowledge or expertise level can stray audiences from the topic and focus negativity to the recruiter.
- d. Bored – this happens when recruiters are unable relate to the needs of the audience, such as talking about travel opportunities when they want to hear about educational programs.
- e. Patronized – inappropriate style, such as being authoritative or too whimsical, can make audience feel less important than they should.
- f. Frustrated – this occurs when the recruiter does not offer the audience an opportunity to contribute to the discussion and make them feel like they are being “talked down to”.
- g. Fatigued – the presentation timing is wrong or lengthy.
- h. Distracted – the recruiter is not worthy of focus because their behavior does not warrant attention.

10. Video (Slide #13). Open discussion about the speaker, the message she delivered, and who the students believed was in her audience.

Group Activity: Scenario Handouts – (40 Minutes). Students are given scenario handouts and given five minute to read followed by ten or more minutes for analysis through open group discussion approach:

1. What is the most important demographic? Why? Discuss.
2. What other demographics are relevant? Why? Discuss.
3. How will you apply this knowledge in your presentation? Why?
4. What is the most important environmental condition? Why?
5. What other environmental conditions are relevant? Why?
6. How will you apply this knowledge in your presentation? Why?
7. What do you think is the most important audience need? Why?
8. What other audience needs are possible? Why?
9. How will you apply this knowledge in your presentation? Why?

Scenario Handout #1:

You are tasked by your supervisor with selling the mechanical aptitude area to high school students. You are allowed 30 minutes to present to senior students at Claremont High School, which is comprised of primarily white students from middle-class families that work in agriculture. The presentation will be held in a classroom that seats about 20 students, and the instructor only has time available during the last two classes of the day following their end of term exams. More than half of the students have expressed interest in college to pursue business degrees and say that their parents will pay for tuition. Several females are exempt from participation due to cheerleader practice. The classroom is not set up to allow for electronic presentations. There is only one community college in the area that has a 30% non-return rate for student after their freshman year. The unemployment rates have risen each year for the last five years running, and a largest employer in the area is considering moving to another location within the next two years. The area is also experienced record high temperatures and severe drought that has ruined many crops and forced many families to use their children's college savings.

NOTES: _____

Scenario Handout #2:

A local nursing school has asked you to do a presentation to their freshman class because some have expressed interest in joining the Air Force after graduation. The school has the highest diversity mix out of all your schools and accepts a large amount of foreign students, who typically go back to their country after graduation. Over 90% of the students are female and raised some concerns about military deployments during times of conflict. The department chair is a former Air Force nurse and very supportive of your efforts. Many of the students have paid for their tuition by taking student loans and are concerned with finding a job that offers opportunities for loan repayment and job security. You will present this presentation tomorrow after getting the request late today. The school is located in a small town over a hundred miles away, and the only time available to speak is during the first class of the day. One student has already contacted you and asked to set up an interview after the presentation. She insisted that you do not address her during the presentation because she is afraid of what the other students will think of her. Your supervisor has given you permission not to wear your uniform for this event if you choose. It is supposed to rain heavily that day.

NOTES: _____

Scenario Handout #3:

You received a call from a technical college student association vice-president to do a presentation about computer engineering jobs in the Air Force. You will be speaking to a freshman group that has volunteered to take the ASVAB test and have scored in the top 3% according to the nationwide statistics. The group is very knowledgeable about the Air Force due to a recent science project assigned by their teacher last semester, who also had informed you that some have expressed interest to follow their families' proud military heritage. Several students have family relatives that have fought in recent wars and returned home with severe injuries. The association vice-president asked that you bring some videos explaining the technical career fields but not any of combat operations because several students come from religious families that object to participation of war or violence of any kind. The presentation will be held in an auditorium seating around 80 students, and multimedia equipment will be setup and ready by the students. You will be providing lunch, which you have already coordinated for pizza and bottled water to be delivered 15 minutes before the start of the event. You will be given an hour for the lunch, presentation and Q&A session.

NOTES: _____

Assessment

Read the following scenario and answer the questions at the end:

You will be giving a speech using PowerPoint to a group of 30 students at a local technical junior college. The group consists of all males with ages ranging from 19 to 27. The professor allowing you to give this presentation in his classroom has three times available on Friday: 0900-1030, 1300-1400, or 1600-1800. The majority of these students pay tuition through loans, and the rate of graduation to direct hire is below 30% due to the stagnant local economy. The freshman dropout rate is 15%. Most students will likely work in retail, food service, or warehouse jobs after graduation and not move on to pursue higher degrees. There is no four-year university nearby. The closest military base is over 500 miles away, and many students do not have any family members affiliated with the military.

A. List three relevant audience demographics:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

B. List three relevant environmental conditions:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

C. List three possible audience needs:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Learning Materials

Power Point slides



Considering The Audience: Air Force Recruiting Presentations



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Considering the Audience

- Purpose of Air Force Recruiting Presentations:
 - Prospect new applicants
 - Sell specific Air Force opportunities & benefits
 - Public awareness
 - Awards & Recognition
 - Education & Training
- Primary Objective: Meet Recruiting Goals



Considering the Audience

- Every Speech Contains Two Messages:
 - Sent by Speaker
 - Received By The Audience
- Communication:
 - Verbal
 - Non-Verbal





Considering the Audience

- Who are you?
 - Define your role
 - Define your purpose
 - Establish your credibility
- Consider:
 - Your appearance
 - Your skills
 - Your experience





Considering the Audience

- Good Speakers:
 - Are Audience Centered
 - Understand The Psychology Of Audiences
 - Make This Audience Want To Hear the Speech
 - Adapts To The Audience
 - Relate messages to an audience's existing knowledge & beliefs





Considering the Audience

- **A**nalysis - Who are they? How many will be there?
- **U**nderstanding - What is their knowledge level?
- **D**emographics - What is their age, sex, background?
- **I**nterest - Why are they there?
- **E**nvironment – What are the external conditions?
- **N**eeds - What are their needs? What are your needs?
- **C**ustomized - What needs should you address?
- **E**xpectations - What do they expect to hear from you?



Considering the Audience

- Today, we will focus on:
 - Demographic Analysis
 - Environmental Conditions Analysis
 - Audience Needs Analysis





Considering the Audience

- Demographic Analysis
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Racial, Ethnic, & Cultural Background
 - Education Level
 - Religion
 - Group Membership
 - Profession
 - Other Factors...





Considering the Audience

- Environmental Conditions Analysis
 - Size
 - Time / Duration
 - Family / Friends
 - Physical Setting
 - Local Factors
 - Limitations
 - Other...





Considering the Audience

- Audience Needs Analysis
 - Consider Disposition Toward:
 - The Topic, the Speaker, & the Occasion
 - Ask Questions:
 - Pay Attention to Responses
 - Reframe for Clarification
 - Look for Opportunities
 - Audience Approach:
 - “Why Is This Important To Me?”





Considering the Audience

- Questions to ask yourself:
 - What do you and your audience have in common?
 - What differences do you have with your audience?
 - What ideas in your speech might your audience identify with?
 - How can your topic or the information benefit your audience?
 - How can your audience use the information?
 - Will this information help them?
 - What is your audience's amount of interest toward your topic?
 - What does your audience know about your topic?
 - What might they want to know about your topic?



Considering the Audience

- Failure to consider your audience:
 - Alienated – offend value system
 - Insulted – demean knowledge and experience
 - Confused – misinterpret knowledge or expertise level
 - Bored – unable relate to their needs
 - Patronized – inappropriate style
 - Frustrated – no opportunity to contribute
 - Fatigued – timing is wrong or lengthy
 - Distracted – not worthy of focus



Video



Any Questions?





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This textbook provides “how-to” strategies for training and for designing training programs based upon trainee needs.

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This textbook is an excellent resource for communication and leadership theories and principles.

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She is an Air Force Master Sergeant and senior health professions flight chief with over ten year experience as a recruiting subject matter expert.

Iman, S. (n.d.). *Persuasive speaking tips*. Retrieved from

<http://www.csupomona.edu/~sciman/classes/324/organizer/persuaSpeech.html>

This website provides some good tips to improve persuasive speaking during public speaking events and how to appeal to the audience.

Laskowskli, L. (1996). *A.U.D.I.E.N.C.E. Analysis - It's your key to success*. Retrieved from <http://www.ljlseminars.com/audience.htm>.

This website provides a list of questions that corresponds to the word Audience,

and breaks down each letter as a guide on how to analyze an audience. The author is a credible public speaker that hosts many seminars.

Lucas, S. E. (2007). *The art of public speaking*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

This book is the leading text for public speaking courses and provides a wealth of information on how to improve public speaking skills and persuasive presentations.

Nirenberg, A. (2009). *Refreshing your presentations skills: Audience analysis*. Video retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TyP0z6fW204>

This is an excellent instructional video from the President of The Nirenberg Group that gives several great tips on how to accurately analyze an audience for presentation.

Sadler, D. (2012). Personal testimony.

He is an Air Force Senior Master Sergeant and senior recruiting trainer at the 367th Recruiting Squadron. He has more than 20 years experience as a recruiting subject matter expert.

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Community College Speech Department, University of Hawai'i Maui. Retrieved from http://www.hawaii.edu/mauispeech/html/analyzing_your_audience.html

This website features some great tips on audience analysis and provides a sample questionnaire, as well as questions for a presenter to ask themselves when determining the presentation delivery approach.