

THE SPIN PROJECT

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Identifying Your Target Audience

There is an adage in communications: *start where your audience is*. The advice is simple to follow, but only if you know who your audience is.

Most organizations, when asked, "who is your audience?" will reply, "the general public." Indeed, when you watch a group's media coverage on the 11 o'clock news, it appears that the group is talking to the whole world, the public. But the whole world isn't watching the 11 o'clock news. Studies show those with college degrees and adults over the age of 55 watch the news more than anyone else. So, any organization that aims to get their event covered on the 11 o'clock news is most likely to reach college educated and senior adults as their demographic.


The general public is too vast. We will have to spend way beyond the limits of our budgets to target "the public." Note that even corporations with advertising budgets larger than

many countries do not attempt to target "the public." You need to think about the "public" in segments, *e.g.*, voters, youth of voting age, urban youth of voting age, urban young women of voting age, etc. You see how you can continue to refine each segment to a more specific or finer slice of the public? The process of refinement is known as finding your target audience.

Who is your target audience?

Your *target audience* are the individuals, groups, communities and bodies of decision-makers who can influence your target. Your *target* is the individual or individuals who have direct decision-making power over the issue your organization is working to address.

Sometimes your target audience is the target and sometimes it is not. For instance, a health clinic that is working to increase awareness about the growing rate of diabetes among the elderly by encouraging them to attend seminars

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at the clinic will likely have the same target and audience. Target: the elderly because they have direct decision-making power over their attendance at the seminars. Target Audience: the elderly, because they can influence the decision of the target, themselves. If the same clinic decides to increase awareness about the growing rate of diabetes among children, it is likely that the target and target audience are different. Target: children with diets that increases risk of diabetes. Target Audience: parents because they have a great influence over children's diets.

From the examples above, it's clear that defining your target audience requires you to have clear goals. Once you've clarified your goal, ask the following questions to help you identify your target audience:

- Who needs to hear your message?
- Who has influence over your target?
- Who must be moved to action so your goals will be met?
- Who has the greatest impact on the outcome of your campaign efforts?

It's okay to have more than one target audience.

Most nonprofit groups have at least two target audiences. The first is the organization's base, clients, or constituents. The

second is the organization's donors, funders and supporters. A third target audience might be a variety of individuals based on the specifics of the campaign and issue.

Next Steps – Getting to Know Your Target Audiences

The point of refining your audience is to zone in on the exact individuals and communities who can assist in making changes that your organization and your community desire. Refining your target audience ultimately saves time and resources because you can focus your campaign and efforts from the start.

To better understand your target audience – where they stand on an issue, what motivates and drives them – consider doing the following: research any data from ally organizations on the same target audiences; conduct your own focus group of a sample target audience; consult with surveys and polling results compiled by large polling and research firms, such as the Gallup poll, who polls on current events, as well as smaller polls conducted by local newspapers and local groups. Below is a list of sites where you might find valuable information about your target audience:

- Research International
www.riusa.com
- The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research
www.ropercenter.uconn.edu
- TNS Intersearch
www.tns-global.com

Once you've identified and come to understand your target audience, you're ready to develop the strategies and messages to reach them. Rest assured that your communications efforts from here on will be more focused and effective because you are getting your message to the right people!

- The Gallup Polling Company
www.gallup.com
- The Pew Research Center
www.people-press.org
- Public Agenda
www.publicagenda.org