

# *Answer 5 Crucial Questions to Focus a Topic:*

## *What does my audience want and need?*

Answering this question is fundamental for effective communication. The better one knows an audience and understands what they currently know, what they need to know, what they want to know, and how they can best put that knowledge into action, the better one can create content to meet the audience where they are and take them where they want and need to go.

## *What is current?*

As subject matter experts, it is our responsibility to keep up to date on research, trends, and hot topics in our area of professional expertise. When asked to communicate on a topic, unless an audience is totally uninformed, one way to narrow our focus is to concentrate on what is new.

Help them make sense of emerging research and separate fads from facts.

## *What is confusing or controversial?*

In addition to covering what is current, consider the most common misconceptions and misunderstandings of your audience. Clear up the confusion and provide clarity. Ask, are there two sides to the story or conflicting viewpoints? If so, present the evidence or lack thereof for each one, and describe any common ground. Help the audience be discerning.

## *What fits in the allotted time or space?*

Every communication is limited in length, whether it is measured in time or space. Be mindful of your limits and use the answers to the previous questions to determine the breadth and depth of your coverage. Less can be more. Wordiness can weigh down your message.

If a speech has X minutes allotted or an article has an allowed word count of X, create X!

## *Is this something I care about?*

Finally, communicate about topics you not only know about but also care about. Passion for a topic shows. Enthusiasm is evident and contagious. If you are not thrilled to learn more about a topic and feel inspired to tell others about it, refer to someone who is.

If you don't care about your topic, don't expect your audience to.