

Re: Preaching To The Converted

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Immortalist wrote:

- > *The more well informed the members of the audience are, the less likely they are*
- > *to be persuaded by a one-sided argument and the more likely they are to be*
- > *persuaded by an argument that brings out the important opposing arguments and*
- > *then proceeds to refute them.*
- >
- > *On the other hand, an uninformed person is less apt to know of the existence of*
- > *opposing arguments. If the counterargument is ignored, the less-informed members*
- > *of the audience are persuaded; if the counterargument is presented, they may get*
- > *confused.*
- >
- > *(3) One-Sided vs Two-Sided Arguments:*
- >
- > *Suppose you are about to make a speech attempting to persuade your audience*
- > *that capital punishment is necessary. Would you persuade more people if you*
- > *simply stated your view and ignored the arguments against capital*
- > *punishment, or would you be more persuasive if you discussed the opposing*
- > *arguments and attempted to refute them? Before trying to answer this*
- > *question, let us try to understand what is involved. If a communicator*
- > *mentions the opposition's arguments, it might indicate that he or she is an*
- > *objective, fair-minded person; this could enhance the speaker's*
- > *trustworthiness and thus increase his or her effectiveness. On the other*
- > *hand, if a communicator so much as mentions the arguments on the other side*
- > *of the issue, it might suggest to the audience that the issue is*
- > *controversial; this could confuse members of the audience, make them*
- > *vacillate, and ultimately reduce the persuasiveness of the communication.*
- > *With these possibilities in mind, it should not come as a surprise to the*
- > *reader that there is no simple relation between one-sided arguments and the*
- > *effectiveness of the communication. It depends to some extent upon how well*
- > *informed the audience is: The more well informed the members of the audience*
- > *are, the less likely they are to be persuaded by a one-sided argument and*
- > *the more likely they are to be persuaded by an argument that brings out the*
- > *important opposing arguments and then proceeds to refute them. This makes*
- > *sense: A well-informed person is more likely to know some of the*
- > *counterarguments. When the communicator avoids mentioning these, the*
- > *knowledgeable members of the audience are likely to conclude that the*

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- > *communicator is either unfair or unable to refute such arguments. On the*
- > *other hand, an uninformed person is less apt to know of the existence of*
- > *opposing arguments. If the counterargument is ignored, the less-informed*
- > *members of the audience are persuaded; if the counterargument is presented,*
- > *they may get confused.*
- >
- > *Another factor playing a vital role is the initial position of the audience.*
- > *As we might expect, if a member of the audience is already predisposed to*
- > *believe the communicator's argument, a onesided presentation has a greater*
- > *impact on his or her opinion than a two-sided presentation. If, however, a*
- > *member of the audience is leaning in the opposite direction, then a*
- > *two-sided refutational argument is more persuasive. Most politicians seem to*
- > *be well aware of this phenomenon; they tend to present vastly different*
- > *kinds of speeches, depending upon who constitutes the audience. When talking*
- > *to the party faithful, they almost invariably deliver a hell-raising set of*
- > *arguments favoring their own party platform and candidacy. If they do*
- > *mention the opposition, it is in a derisive, mocking tone. On the other*
- > *hand, when appearing on network television or when speaking to any audience*
- > *of mixed loyalties, they tend to take a more diplomatic position, giving the*
- > *opposing view a reasonably accurate airing before proceeding to demolish it.*
- >
- > <http://groups.google.com/groups?selm=vt49og3usfsbda%40corp.supernews.com>
- >
- > *The Social Animal – Elliot Aronson – 8th Edition 1999*
- > <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0716733129/>

Kam:

A good post, Immortalist. Depressing, but good. I say that it's depressing because I view the majority as uninformed. This is why the majority can, for example, be persuaded by presidential "debates." It's sad to think that a one-sided argument could convince anyone.

Anyway – thanks for the post.