

Support MPAs with Your Moving Message

Learning How to Influence or “Wow” the Audience can have Lasting Impacts

When your presentation influences and deeply touches people, you have succeeded as an interpreter. You have learned how to “Wow” an audience. What does this mean, and actually entail? What happens when you “Wow” an audience is that they will automatically begin to dwell on and wonder about the experience they have just had with you and the meaningful message that you have shared with them. They will be inspired to think about it and talk about it. They will create ideas and images in their heads about it, begin to care about it, and perhaps be moved to action. If you can make this happen, you have become a “molder and shaper of the bonding that takes place between people and a place”. In this case, you have bonded them to an underwater world cared for by you and the MPA.

Definition of “Wow” v. affect deeply or intensely, overwhelm, touch emotionally, influence, excite, energize, inspire. Slang. “Blow away”

Developing and practicing this skill opens the door to the possibility that you can influence visitors to care for and act on behalf of the wildlife and natural places that are now important to both of you. Each of you does this as equal partners, in your own fashion, and in your own particular way.

Achieving this End Is Good Communication the Key?

Unfortunately, being a good communicator will help, but will not get you to your final goal of “Wowing” the audience. Even though you might give a great presentation, a performance that is Organized with a capital O, Relevant with a capital R, and entertaining with a capital E, you may still not “Wow” your audience. No “Wow”, no real impact. Why is this?

Consider this: The average evening television program is, just like your presentation, Organized, Relevant (relates to the viewing audience), and is Entertaining. It often successfully communicates. But something is missing, isn't it? Television shows usually lack a powerful, motivating message. Or, the message they present is a weak, ineffective one. Good interpretation demands that you do something MORE than television does. Good interpretation demands that you also provide your audience with a single, significant, motivating and meaningful Message (that's “message” with a capital M!). Good interpretation gives the audience MORE than the Organization, Relevance, and Entertainment qualities of TV. It provides them with a meaningful Message, and therein lies the difference. Both Tilden Freeman, the father of interpretation, and Dr. Sam Ham believe that the chief purpose of Interpretation is to provide a central, meaningful message that is thought provoking and creates a sense of wonder, caring, and curiosity. They are implying that you have to have a clear, powerful Message or your audience is not getting what it needs and wants. In other words, they might as well be at home watching TV. Your job as an interpreter is to give them MORE than that, especially if you want to “Wow” your audience, and leave them thinking, talking, and influenced.

Giving the Park Visitor “MORE” And Getting What you Want as an Interpreter

Many of you turn off the TV, and instead, go out to the movies, read a good book, or listen to some of your favorite music. Why? Because movies and books and songs have a Message, moral, theme, refrain, or whatever you want to call it. They have the capacity to “Wow” you. They move you to thought, emotion, wonder, caring, and sometimes action. They give you MORE. (by now you’ve figured out that the acronym MORE means: M = message, O = organized, R = relevant, and E = entertaining, the four essentials of a successful interpretive presentation). Dr. Sam Ham, interpreter extraordinaire, in his studies has figured out that people don’t remember facts, no matter how “cool” or mind-boggling they are. Instead what they remember, (and think about and talk about and hold on to) are meaningful Messages. Hallelujah! That’s just what you wanted to give park visitors anyway, a motivating Message that incorporates your love and passion for the aspects of your particular State park along with sharing the importance of the MPA. How nice it is to know that it is one of the most significant things you can do as an interpreter. So... What can having a message actually do for you and your audience? Studies show that having a meaningful Message has the power to inspire your audience to think about, talk about, wonder about, care about, and perhaps take action on, the central idea or related aspects of your presentation. It is a powerful tool, and now that you are aware of that the power, learn to use it often and wisely. Here’s how.

Making Meaningful Messages

Touching the hearts and stimulating the minds of park visitors is as simple as it is difficult. So many things come into play. But let’s cover the simple part first. The best way to start off creating a meaningful Message is to take an aspect of your park that you are interested in (like the MPA), make it your topic or main idea, and complete the following sentence...

When it comes to this audience (remember to be relevant!) and my topic or main idea, (the MPA) I think it is really, REALLY important that this audience understand that...

Before we tackle the topic of MPA, let’s look at some examples of how to do this. The first one comes from the father of interpretation, F. Tilden.

Topic: the Civil War and a battle where brother fought against brother.

Important note: These messages need to be refined and developed. Hint: You know the message is ready when reading it brings on the goosebumps or tears.

First Draft: I want the audience to understand that... In this battle brother ended up fighting against and killing brother... {Actually this is a TV quality message, very graphic, but uninspiring. It’s a weak message.}

Final version: Some of these young boys, these soldiers, now striving to kill each other, were once fed gingerbread and doughnuts by their mother at the same kitchen table. (Do you feel the “Wow” power of such a Message?)

Here are other examples (closer to home) that clarify the process of developing a moving message that is thought provoking and meaningful.

First Draft: (Topic- Elephant seals) The Elephant seal is an amazing story of adapting for the purpose of survival. (So what?)

Final version: Diving beyond depths that would crush a submarine, and surviving without food for weeks and months at a time, the Elephant seal is a living mystery that man came close to destroying. Today we will delve into that mystery. (Deeper than a submarine? No food? Tell me more)

Now onto the MPA...

First Draft: MPA's care for our threatened ocean.

Final version: The oceans take care of us. Who takes care of our oceans? The MPA does? Here's how...

or

First Draft: An MPA is like a park, only it's underwater.

Final version: Our parks are where we play and protect the land. Our MPA's are where we fish and protect the sea. We can play and protect!!

Now take an important idea from your MPA training session and have fun creating a motivating, meaningful, message on your own. Remember your goal is to "Wow" people.

First Draft: Your MPA Topic - Create your meaningful message in its initial form

Final version: Create a more powerful version of your message, which is well worth laboring over and developing: _____

Let's share!!!! After you have created one motivating message that you feel will work for you. Send it in to us. We'll compile all the messages we get and redistribute to everyone. We'll then have a treasure chest of ideas. We request you send the MPA messages to zena200@comcast.net.

Thanks for your support!