

Who is your audience?

Perhaps the most basic question you have to ask yourself before creating any marketing/communications materials is:

Who is my target audience?

The more you know who they are, where they are and what they need, the better your materials will be.

And yet. A couple of days ago, I was driving down Massachusetts Avenue in Northwest D.C. and saw a sign outside of a church that made me wonder.

The sign said:

*English Classes Available. Please Call [telephone number] to
Enroll.*

Now, if you need to learn English, can you read English? Nope. Is the audience for this sign people who know people who need to learn English? Perhaps. I would think this sign would be more effective if it were written in the language of the people you are trying to target, don't you think?

On knowing your target audience

Knowing your target audience is the primary task of any marketer. How can you craft your message if you don't know who you are speaking to? How can you make sure your potential

clients buy your product if you don't where they live, what they like and the other elements that make up your demographic profile? Often, ads don't work because they don't target the right audience. Or, they target the right audience but don't communicate properly. So this brings me to Sarah Palin and Joe Biden during the debate last night. It was very clear that each of them knew who their target audience was and used the proper language to communicate with it. Palin used her folksiness to establish connection with "Joe Six Pack and Hockey Moms" around the US. She used terms like doggone it and gosh darn it to make the point that she is an average person from Main Street Wasilla. Biden spoke in a more formal fashion, to communicate with an intellectual audience and to those seeking a traditional politician. He threw in references to Scranton and Home Depot to assure "Main Street" that he's also in touch with them. In the end, I think both politicians understand who they need to communicate to and did so well. I think if you are a liberal Democrat with environmental leanings, Sarah Palin rubbed you the wrong way. But then again, you are not her target. She knows she can't connect with you. On the other hand, if you are someone who feels politicians are out to get you with their misguided policies, then you loved that Palin spoke to you.

If there is a problem with appealing solely to your target audience during a presidential campaign is that you don't motivate the other side to vote for you. This debate proved that—neither side did much to convince the other to switch allegiances.