

Applying the 3 R's in building a relationship with your audience

By Bob 'Idea Man' Hooley, AS

I can remember the old adage about the basics of learning as it applied to schoolin' – the 3 R's as I recall. **Reading, w-Riting and a-Rithmetic!**

I would like to draw on a different set of 3 Rs in my desire to assist you in building a solid relationship with your audiences. Relationships that will allow you to more effectively deliver your message with impact and staying power. Relationships that will extend the trust you earn with them, and continue to earn, as you deliver your message, set forth your case and challenge them to act on what you've given them.

Let's explore 3 R's that can help you achieve this worthy goal...

Real

Is the message you seek to deliver real? Is it based on truth, grounded in reality, and filtered thru the reality of your life and your personal experience? If so, you have a foundation to build your relationship on, and to move your audience to respond to your message and challenge.

By real, I don't mean you can't use creative license to make your stories live, to make them more vivid and memorable – but they must be based on truth to strike a chord in the lives of your audiences. **If they don't believe them – they won't believe you!**

By real, I mean how you convey your message, how you present yourself and how you connect. Who are you? Is your audience seeing the 'real' you? Faking is a prelude to failure!

You don't always have to be the hero of your own stories. Some of the most effective relationships I have had with audiences were built on honest discussion of the lessons I learned from messin' up – given time to reflect and 'age' a bit, our 'mess' can become a 'mess-age' of hope and encouragement and empowerment. And isn't that what we want to do as speakers?

Have the courage to be yourself and share you with your audiences – it will move them! **Real people learn and leverage from their lessons in life!**

Relevant

Is what you seek to share relevant to the audience's needs, experiences, relationships, or desires? How do you know? Have you taken the time to find out? The more you know about your audience the better chance you have of choosing the stories, word pictures, experiences and thoughts and ideas that relate to them.

Building relevance takes time and diligence on our part – but if we truly desire to reach our audiences it is our responsibility. **Our goal is to build a bridge to shared learning and this bridge is anchored by ensuring what we share is relevant on both ends.**

People relate to you when you share points that are relevant and real in their lives and experience. We seek a connection that will allow us to move them to action, not simply file away our words as more ‘information.’

Relevance builds relationships.

Religion (Reaching out)

Now here I bet some of you are saying, ‘ok, where did he get this from?’ Or ‘I don’t get it – religion?’ But I do have a purpose here and will share it – stay with me.

I remember when I was attempting to sleep and was pondering about this article and searching for a 3rd R – and the thought ‘religion’ came to mind. I immediately thought, ‘no way – how does that apply?’ I have a deep faith, and am not shy about sharing it, but that didn’t seem to fit here.

But I took a peak and found the verse that had come to mind from a distant sermon, heard, filed and forgotten. In the book of James he writes, ‘**Religion** that God our father accepts as pure and faultless is this: **to look after orphans and widows in their distress...** Jas 1:27 NIV He was talking about being a doer of the word, and not just a hearer of the word – that ‘real religion’ was hands on, impacting and helping people in their daily lives, not just words. And didn’t Jesus model that? Hmmm

As I fell asleep, I still didn’t get the connection for this great idea! Until the next morning, when I suddenly saw the gem in the message he was conveying, and how we can apply it in our desire to serve and challenge our audiences. I’m not talking here about your spiritual connection with God (some may not even believe in God,) but a more person-to-person one. Many of the world’s religions have a foundation for service and caring, and that is the essence I seek here.

To be most effective, our message must be grounded in a call to action for our audiences and built on our true desire to serve – to visit them in their affliction and to do something about it. To the extent that we put ourselves on the line and reach out to our audiences, we will see them respond and react to what we say. If we want to reach them, teach them, and move them to act on what we share – we need to visit them where they are (figuratively or metaphorically at least.)

They will respond to our efforts and give what we share more relevance when we do. **Religion in its purer sense is ‘reaching out’ in helping people and building a relationship to that end.** As speakers, we are at our best when this is where we are coming from when we deliver our message. When we seek to reach out to our audiences and lift their sights and their spirits.

Our effectiveness as speakers is built on establishing relationships with those in our audiences. Being real, working to establish relevance and reaching out will go a long way to build solid foundation for success.

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