

Effective audience engagement is essential to meeting business goals. But much communication is ineffective because it is poorly planned – or not planned at all. Leaders must plan in order to communicate effectively, persuade audiences, and meet business goals.

General Carl von Clausewitz built the foundation of modern military strategy in *On War* (1832) His concepts of war and policy also apply to **effective communication.**

“War is the continuation of policy by other means ... The political objective is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and the means can never be considered in isolation from their purposes.



Communication is the continuation of business by other means ... The business objective is the goal, communication is the means of reaching it, and the means can never be considered in isolation from their purposes.

All effective communication persuades the audience to



know



think



feel



do

what they otherwise wouldn't, in service of a business objective.

By following the below **Persuasion Planning Checklist**, leaders can ensure effective audience engagement:

1 Define goal

What is the business goal?

2 Determine audience

Which person or group is most relevant to the business goal?

3 Target change

As a result of the engagement, what should the audience



know



think



feel



do

differently?

4 Craft analysis

What are this audience's values, desires, and fears?

How does this audience make decisions?

What are the barriers to reaching the hearts and minds of this audience?

5 Plan engagement

What does this audience need to see, hear or experience to know, think, feel, or do something differently?

Who is the most influential messenger to this audience?

What is the most influential message to this audience?

What is the most influential medium to this audience?



Failure to plan for an audience engagement can have devastating effects on a leader's reputation. CEO of United Airlines Oscar Munoz's initial response to video footage of the violent removal of a paying passenger from a United flight compounded the public's outrage at the incident, and severely damaged his good standing as a leader.

Where United Went Wrong

An appropriate expectation of a responsible organization's objective in United's position would be to maintain the trust and confidence of its customers, by demonstrating regret for the passenger's injuries and concern for all United passengers' wellbeing.

The below tweet, posted on United's Twitter account at 9:27 a.m. the morning following the incident, reveals Oscar Munoz's failure to adequately plan for this critical audience engagement and reach the desired objective.

United  @united · Apr 10
United CEO response to United Express Flight 3411.

A self-referential opening sentence sends the message Oscar Munoz's top priority is the emotional state of his employees, not that of the injured passenger or his other customers.

This is an upsetting event to all of us here at United. I apologize for having to re-accommodate these customers. Our team is moving with a sense of urgency to work with the authorities and conduct our own detailed review of what happened. We are also reaching out to this passenger to talk directly to him and further address and resolve this situation.

Oscar Munoz had a fundamental misunderstanding of his audience's values, fears, and desires; United's customers were offended by how the passenger was removed from the aircraft, not that passengers had to be re-accommodated.

- Oscar Munoz, CEO, United Airlines

A responsible leader seeking to reassure customers their safety is a priority would have mentioned the injured passenger first, and that he was being contacted to confirm the state of his health. Addressing the passenger last sends the message he is the least of United's concerns, and further indicates Oscar Munoz's poor planning.

As a result of his ill-prepared response, Oscar Munoz lost his planned promotion to chairman of United, and had to face a Senate hearing regarding United's handling of the incident.