

we take down the pharmaceutical industry? What should we do? What does each person think? Is everyone comfortable with this action? Are there any concerns? We are still striving for clear, audience-centered communication. But we are not looking to persuade anyone. Instead, we are offering and exploring different ideas. It's a group effort; there are no insiders and outsiders, no winners or losers.

Persuasive rhetoric and invitational rhetoric are not diametrically opposed. Different situations call for different approaches. Confronting corporate power might involve invitational rhetoric and organizational meetings might involve persuasion. It all depends on the situation. Invitational rhetoric actually allows for and encourages multiple approaches. Sometimes persuasion is best, sometimes invitation is best and sometimes we need something entirely different.

In ~~Invitational~~ *Not opposites* Invitational rhetoric should not be seen as passive, either. Instead, it's a different way to be active. Gandhi and Dr. King, two of the most famous invitational rhetors of all time, would be the first to say this. Rather than forcing or cajoling consent, you invite exploration and discussion. The participants converse and communicate in order to move further and deeper into a better understanding of one another's standpoints. There is no final arrival point, but only further and further progress. Such conversations often end for pragmatic purposes; we cannot go on forever. But no person is silenced, cut off or left out. All people (or groups or parties) walk away pondering their changed perspectives.

There is no single way to do invitational rhetoric. At the most basic level, it is simply open and honest communication. But given the nature of this instructional manual, some helpful guidelines seem pertinent.

- ✦ Invitational rhetoric can be used in all forms of communication — conversations, small group discussions, speeches and even essays and books. Each situation is different, and each will allow for more or less dialogue. Writing, for instance, isn't really dialogical. But the author can write in a dialogical and invitational manner.
- ✦ Invitational rhetoric should be used honestly. Don't use an invitation in order to persuade someone. That defeats the whole

purpose. Your invitation to dialogue should be sincere and genuine, not manipulative.

- ✦ Clarify your intentions at the start of the communication. Announce what you are doing: "I am not trying to persuade you. Instead, I am offering up my perspective on the issue." This frames the situation and allows others to understand the parameters of the communication.
- ✦ After making your initial statements, ask for others to respond. This isn't really possible with a written format unless you're using e-mails or blogs. But you can (and for good rhetoric, you should) anticipate hypothetical responses. You can then incorporate those possible responses into the body of your writing or you can write up a separate section entitled, "Conversing with the Responses."
- ✦ Genuinely listen to the responses. Avoid interrupting or defending your previously stated views. Just listen.
- ✦ Now respond to the responses. Realize that you are seeking greater understanding among everyone involved. This is not about defending a position, but about exploring all positions. You might ask for clarification or further elaboration. Others may ask the same of you.
- ✦ After sufficient time passes, ask for everyone's input: What stands out for people? What was most striking or most interesting? Have your initial views changed? If so, how and why? These last questions advance discussion and dialogue.
- ✦ *Strategy for* Now ask people to articulate their new understandings. What have people learned? Do they have any new ideas or appreciations? If so, why? If not, why not?
- ✦ *Understanding* Now try to re-articulate your own initial statement/proposal offering. Take into consideration all the comments you've heard. This can easily occur in a traditional speech setting where you have the floor. As you stand there, seriously think about the positions in the room and see if your views have been changed. If so, then talk about those changes. If your views have not changed, then talk about that. Either way you are processing and progressing toward a deeper understanding.

♦ Last, realize that invitational rhetoric does not always run so smoothly. Sometimes we are too different or too antagonistic with one another. Sometimes we get too defensive. And sometimes we simply don't have enough time to let it play out. Despite these obstacles, invitational rhetoric is still a good guide for exploring ideas and feelings. It's a different approach to rhetoric that opens space beyond the competitiveness of persuasion and argumentation.

Building Rhetorical Knowledge

Rhetorical knowledge is any type of knowledge that improves your rhetorical practice. For example, you've just finished a speech at a local town meeting and people are interested in your issue and start asking questions. You're responding, keeping in line with your presentation. But then someone asks about the connections between your proposal and the town's political history. You have no idea what to say. Some audience members shrug it off, not thinking too much about your lack of knowledge. But others read this as a sign of ignorance, even disrespect. They no longer see you as credible and they start second-guessing your presentation. The local news reporter even uses it against you, writing in the next day's newspaper, "Local Activist Stumped on Local History." This is an example of rhetorical knowledge: activists working on local issues need to know the history of local struggles. You don't have to know all the history of all issues and places. That's unrealistic for anyone. But you are responsible for knowing some history about the issues you are working on.

There are many different types of rhetorical knowledge. The following sections cover three of those types: current events, history and self-knowledge.

Current Events

Activists are supposed to know about current events, right? Yes and no. You obviously need to know the major events of the day, the general policies of current politicians, the important players in domestic and international affairs, etc. Then, of course, there are the major breaking stories, the latest controversies and so on. This is all

important. But these current events can be approached from a rhetorical perspective. What events affect your campaign? How do certain events relate to the issues you are working on? How might you incorporate certain events into your speech or essay? What are the connections between this event and that issue? How does your audience see those connections? Will they see any connections at all, or will you have to tease them out? Basically, how do current events affect the rhetorical packaging of your issue or topic?

Let's say you're a universal healthcare activist and Michael Moore's movie about US healthcare, "Sicko," comes out. That movie increases the national dialogue about universal healthcare and you must prepare for that dialogue. Do you agree with Michael Moore? Does he get all the facts straight? Why do some people disagree with the movie? Are they wrong? Do you support Moore's depiction? On top of all this, you should be using that movie as a springboard for your own cause. That can be done by either affiliating yourself with or distancing yourself from the movie. Either way, you need to rhetorically package your cause in relationship to Michael Moore's movie. That's a good use of current events.

As another example, you might be preparing a teach-in on the debate between militancy and pacifism. You're going to need a concrete example that gets at both sides. You decide to use the Israeli-Palestinian situation, looking at different forms of Palestinian resistance. Palestinian militancy is widely discussed and documented while Palestinian pacifism is not. This is a good choice on your part because it is more pertinent and up to date than, say, the Civil Rights era of Malcolm X and Dr. King. That Civil Rights debate could be touched on during the teaching, but it's outdated and overdone. The militancy of Malcolm X is not the same as suicide bombers' and the pacifism of Dr. King is not the same as stopping bulldozers. Your teach-in will be more intriguing and relevant if you can use current, twenty-first century realities.

You must also be respectful of the Israeli-Palestinian situation and brush up on your knowledge of the conflict. You don't need to know everything about that situation, but you do need to know enough to have a conversation, answer some basic questions, etc.