

Monroe's Motivated Sequence (Persuasion Attempts)

Alan Monroe (1969) stated, "Although individuals may vary to some extent, research has shown that most people seek consistency or balance among their cognitions. When confronted with a problem that disturbs their normal orientation, they look for a solution; when they feel a want or need, they search for a way to satisfy it. In short, when anything throws them into a condition of disorganization or dissonance, they are motivated to adjust their cognitions or values, or to alter their behavior so as to achieve a new state of balance" (pg. 42).

The Motivated Sequence derives its name from the fact that by following the normal processes of human thinking it motivates an audience to respond affirmatively to the speaker's purpose. The sequence contains five distinct steps.

1. **Attention** (get the attention of your audience)
2. **Need** (describe the problem; demonstrate a need for change)
3. **Satisfaction** (present a practical and concise solution)
4. **Visualization** (allow your audience to picture the results)
5. **Action** (request immediate action from your audience)

1. The Attention Step. First and foremost, you need to gain the attention of your audience. In order to gain favorable attention, one or more of the following are recommended (most of these are the same techniques you would use in an informative speech introduction):

- + Relating to the audience
- + Showing importance of the topic
- + Making a startling statement
- + Arousing curiosity or suspense
- + Using a quotation relevant to your topic
- + Using an anecdote
- + Telling a dramatic story
- + Posing a question (maybe rhetorical)
- + Using visual aids for illustration

2. The Need Step. Now that you have the interest and attention of your audience, you must make them feel a need for change. You need to show your audience that there is a serious problem or an opportunity. It is important to state the need/opportunity clearly and to illustrate it with strong supporting materials. One or more of the following are recommended:

- + Give a clear concise statement or description of the need or opportunity.
- + Provide one or more detailed examples, which illustrate the need.
- + Offer statistical data.
- + Share testimony and other form of support to show the extent of the need/opportunity.

In your need step, you will make a convincing demonstration of how the need/opportunity directly affects your audience: their health, happiness, security, bottom line, or other interests. By

the end of this step, your listeners should be so concerned about the problem or interested in the opportunity that they are psychologically primed to hear your recommendation.

3. The Satisfaction Step. Having aroused a sense of need/opportunity, you satisfy it by providing a solution to the problem or a recommendation. Now you present YOUR PLAN/SOLUTION and show your audience how it will work. The following techniques are recommended:

- A. briefly state the action or change you wish your audience to adopt
- B. provide a complete concise explanation of your plan
- C. employ a theoretical demonstration -- show how this action logically meets the problem
- D. give actual examples how this plan has worked effectively
- E. use facts, figures, and the testimony of experts to support your claims\plan

Make sure you give your audience enough details of your proposal/plan so that it is clearly understood. Diagrams and charts are often useful here. You want your audience to leave the satisfaction step with a clear understanding of your plan. Your audience should now be wondering how this will work for them and what it can do for them (e.g., “This seems to be a practical solution for me, however, I would like to see/visualize it in action. How can I benefit?”).

4. The Visualization Step. Now that you have given your plan/solution you will intensify your audience’s desire for your plan by helping them visualize your plan. You want to project your audience into the future and picture the potential benefits of your plan. Use vivid imagery to show your listeners how *they* will profit from your recommendation. Make them *visualize* how much better conditions will be once your plan is adopted.

The Visualization Step may be developed using on of the following techniques:

1. **The Positive Method** -- by describing conditions as they will be in the future if the solution you purpose is carried out. Provide vivid, concrete descriptions. Select some situation, which you are quite sure will arise in the future, and picture your audience actually enjoying the conditions which acceptance of your plan will produce.
2. **The Negative Method** -- by describing the adverse conditions that will prevail in the future if the plan you have presented is not carried out. Picture for your audience the danger or the unpleasantness which will result from failure to follow your advice. Select from the Need Step the most undesirable aspects of the present situation, and show how these conditions will continue if your proposal is rejected.
3. **The Contrast Method** -- by combining the positive and negative approaches. Use the negative method first, visualizing the bad effects if the audience fails to follow your advice; then the positive method, visualizing the good effects of believing or doing as you recommend.

Whichever method you use, remember that the Visualization Step must stand the test of reality. The conditions you picture must be capable of attainment. Moreover, they **must be VIVID**. Let

your listeners actually see themselves enjoying the advantages, or suffering the evils, you describe. Now that your audience is convinced your policy is beneficial, they should be motivated to take action NOW.

5. The Action Step. The function of the action step is to translate the desire created in the Visualization Step into overt action. Make a call for action. Tell your audience exactly what you want them to do NOW, and exactly how to do it. For example, tell them where to go today on campus to donate blood. Give them the address of the state representative that they can write to (better yet, give them stamped addressed envelopes to the representative, and maybe even a form letter they can sign).

Give them all the information they need to sign up for the CPR class offered next week at the Red Cross.

You have done the leg work, and you are making it easy for your audience to take **IMMEDIATE ACTION**.

This step can take the form of one or more of the following devices:

- + a challenge or appeal
- + a summary is always expected by your audience
- + a quotation
- + an illustration
- + a statement of personal intentions

You must conclude with a final stirring appeal that reinforces your audience's commitment to **ACT NOW! Beware**, however, of making the action step too long or involved. You are trying to make this easy for your audience to do **RIGHT NOW**.

The Motivated Sequence Model follows the process of human thinking and leads the listener step by step to the desired action. This is a tried and true sequence that is extremely effective. The Motivated Sequence Model is used by people who make their living by persuasion--especially advertisers. Many TV commercials use this same sequence.

The material above was taken from St. John, R. (2011). Retrieved January 27, 2011 at www.disciplewalk.com/files/Ron_St._John_monroe_sequence_Handout.pdf and based on excerpts and thoughts taken from: D. Ehninger, A.H. Monroe, and B.E. Gronbeck's, (1978) Principles and Types of Speech Communication, 8th. Ed., pp. 142-163; S.E. Lucas (1995) The Art of Public Speaking, 5th. Ed., pp. 353-361.