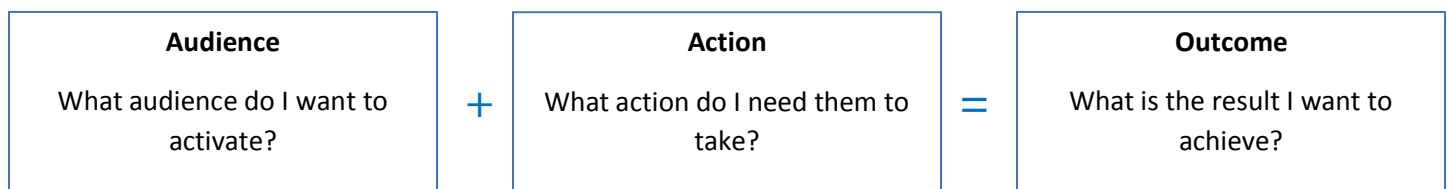# Mastering Audience Thinking

#1: The Pillars of Meaningful Audience Engagement

- **Community** that is understood and activated.
  What do you need to understand about your community (*this includes members, guests, dealers, artists, etc.*)?
    1. The needs and interests of your target audiences
    2. The research that grounds that understanding
    3. How your audiences interact with your digital platforms (*see Ecosystem*)
    4. The key messages that connect you and your audiences

- **Brand** that is unique, authentic, and resonant.
  Your brand includes:
    1. Your unique value proposition
    2. How this value is reflected in the way you position yourself externally across all channels—visually and in written form
    3. How your brand resonates with the audiences you are trying to reach

- **Content** that is distinct, unified, and adaptable.
  Content includes:
    1. A defined content strategy
    2. The key attributes and messages that anchor all of your content efforts
    3. The alignment of content creation (*how you create it*) and distribution efforts and the digital products and platforms you use to reach audiences (*where you put it*)

- **Ecosystem** that enables exchange across partners, platforms, and channels.
  Ecosystem includes:
    1. A formal strategy for distributing content
    2. Identifiable partners that help engage existing audiences, reach new audiences, and advance organizational goals
    3. Optimized channels and partners that ensure audiences can easily reach and understand your content

- **Talent and Structure** that are optimized to meet your goals.
  Talent and structure includes:
    1. The right mix of organizational skills that touch content creation and distribution
    2. The front- and back-end technical skills to support platforms and products to effectively reach audiences
    3. The right tools to collect the insights you need to understand the impact of your work

#2: The "Take Action" Equation

Always consider the outcomes you want to achieve and the actions needed to get there.

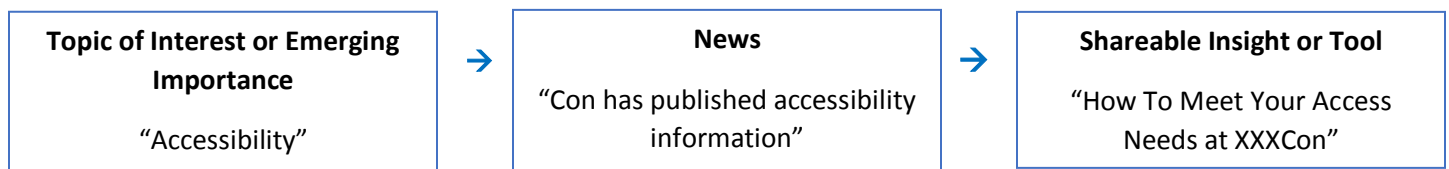| Audience		Action		Outcome
What audience do I want to activate?	+	What action do I need them to take?	=	What is the result I want to achieve?

Speaking With (Not At) Your Audience

#1: Creating Useful Content

Here are some tips to ensure you are communicating effectively with your audience when serving them content:

- Make sure it addresses something they care about (*do not send content just to send content*)
- Make sure it offers something new or original (*don't repeat content on the same topic*)
- Make sure it provides clear take-aways that can be put to use (*set expectations about what people need to know, when they need to know it, why, and how it is to be used – this applies to information you need to glean from your audience and information you are providing to them*)
- Make sure it aligns with audience platforms and habits (*meet them where they are and when they're there*)

#2: Drill Down to the "Social Thing"

Topic of Interest or Emerging Importance	→	News	→	Shareable Insight or Tool
"Accessibility"		"Con has published accessibility information"		"How To Meet Your Access Needs at XXXCon"

The "social thing" should be a <u>C</u>ocktail <u>P</u>arty <u>S</u>ound <u>B</u>ite (CPSB) that allows the audience to understand the general topic, encourages them to take action (i.e. read the content, fill out a form, etc.) and can be told to others easily, helping in spreading the word.

#3: How to Write Clearly and Concisely for Your Audience

1. **Front-load your sentences**
   Put the most important information at the beginning; people tend to skim over longer sentences, especially towards the end.
2. **Use active voice**
   Emphasize the person or thing doing the action
3. **Free the verb**
   Favor verbs over nouns ("programmed" rather than "made a program of")
4. **Elevate implications**
   Ask "What am I trying to say?" and "Why does it matter?"
5. **Reduce jargon**
   Write in conversational language and always remember that just because your committee calls something "X" doesn't mean your audience does (i.e. "Kaffee Klatsch" versus "opportunity to meet an author for a small group discussion over coffee"
6. **Develop critical distance**
   Give yourself time to write and step away from your writing

#4: Adopt a Platform-specific Approach

Figure out where segments of your audience get their information (your website, social media, topic-specific email updates, newsletters) place the content they need on the platforms they use in a format applicable to that platform.

Web-Specific Tips

- **Develop content that is clear and concise and is understood by your audience** (*not only your committee*)
    o *See "How to Write Clearly and Concisely for Your Audience"*
    o Organize things the way your audience—not you—organizes them

- **Resurface don't replicate content**
    o Create something once, feature it multiple times (*making content multiple times can lead to inconsistencies and errors*)
    o Make when and where you surface it timely and appropriate

    Example: Hugo ceremony information "lives" in the Hugo section, but the same content item appears on the Events and Program pages

- **Speak in one voice**
    o Have a web-editor who reviews all content so it is in the same style and voice so that your audience doesn't feel like they are visiting three or four different pages
    o Don't allow anyone and everyone to post content

- **Style pages similarly**
    o Use similar headline treatments so your audience can easily tell when new sections/topics begin
    o Place forms and publications in similar locations on each page so your audience knows where to look