Monroe's Motivated Sequence

Monroe's Motivated Sequence is a five-step structure for a persuasive talk. Alan Monroe, who taught at Purdue University, developed it in the 1930s. The steps are attention, need, satisfaction, visualization and action. They are designed to follow how people are motivated to act, from noticing a topic to doing something about it.

1. Attention

The first step is attention: the audience must want to listen before anything else works. A speaker can open with a surprising fact, a short story, a question or a striking example. The opening should connect to the audience's own world and lead into the topic. Attention that is not linked to the topic wastes the first minute.

Example: A speaker at a school meeting starts with a question about a fire alarm. With attention, the opening question makes everyone look up and think. The parents listen to the rest.

At work: Hanan wants her manager to approve a daily safety checklist for the warehouse. Using attention, she opens with a near miss from last month, when a pallet fell beside a worker. Her manager puts the phone down and listens.

2. Need

The second step is need: the speaker shows that a problem exists, that it matters and that it affects the audience. Facts, examples and short stories make the problem real. The audience should feel that something must change. A need that is not clear makes any solution look unnecessary.

Example: A neighbour tells the street that the road is dangerous for children. With need, he shows photos of the unsafe crossing and describes recent close calls. The neighbours agree that something must change.

At work: Hanan points out that two near misses happened last month and that each one could have injured a worker. With need, she shows that the problem is real and urgent. Her manager nods and asks what can be done.

3. Satisfaction

The third step is satisfaction: the speaker presents a clear solution that meets the need. It should be explained simply, shown to be workable and linked back to the problem. Evidence, such as a trial or an expert opinion, makes the solution convincing. Speakers often check that the audience understands it before moving on.

Example: The neighbour proposes a pedestrian crossing and a lower speed limit. With satisfaction, he explains how each measure answers the danger. The neighbours see that the plan is reasonable.

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At work: Hanan presents a ten-minute daily checklist for the warehouse. Using satisfaction, she explains each item and shows that another site already uses a similar list. Her manager sees that the plan is simple and workable.

4. Visualization

The fourth step is visualization: the speaker helps the audience picture the future. A positive picture shows life with the solution, and a negative picture shows life without it. A combination is also possible. The picture should be vivid, realistic and about the audience's own situation.

Example: The neighbour asks the street to imagine children crossing safely to school. With visualization, he paints a picture of calm mornings, then contrasts it with another accident. The audience feels the difference.

At work: Hanan asks her manager to imagine the warehouse a year from now. With visualization, she describes a team that finishes every shift without injury, and then a team that suffers a serious accident. The manager can picture both futures.

5. Action

The fifth step is action: the speaker says exactly what the audience should do next. The request should be specific, small enough to do and easy to remember. Restating the main benefit in one sentence gives a strong ending. Without a clear action, even a good talk may end with nothing changed.

Example: The neighbour ends by asking everyone to sign a petition at the door. With action, the request is specific and easy. Most neighbours sign before they leave.

At work: Hanan ends by asking her manager to approve the checklist on Monday and to start a one-week trial. Using action, she makes the request specific and easy. The manager says yes.

Conclusion

In summary, Monroe's Motivated Sequence organizes a persuasive talk in five steps. Attention opens the talk, need shows the problem, and satisfaction offers the solution. Visualization helps the audience picture the result, and action asks for a clear next step. The order matters, because each step prepares the next. We can use it for a short meeting talk as well as a long presentation.

Sources

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