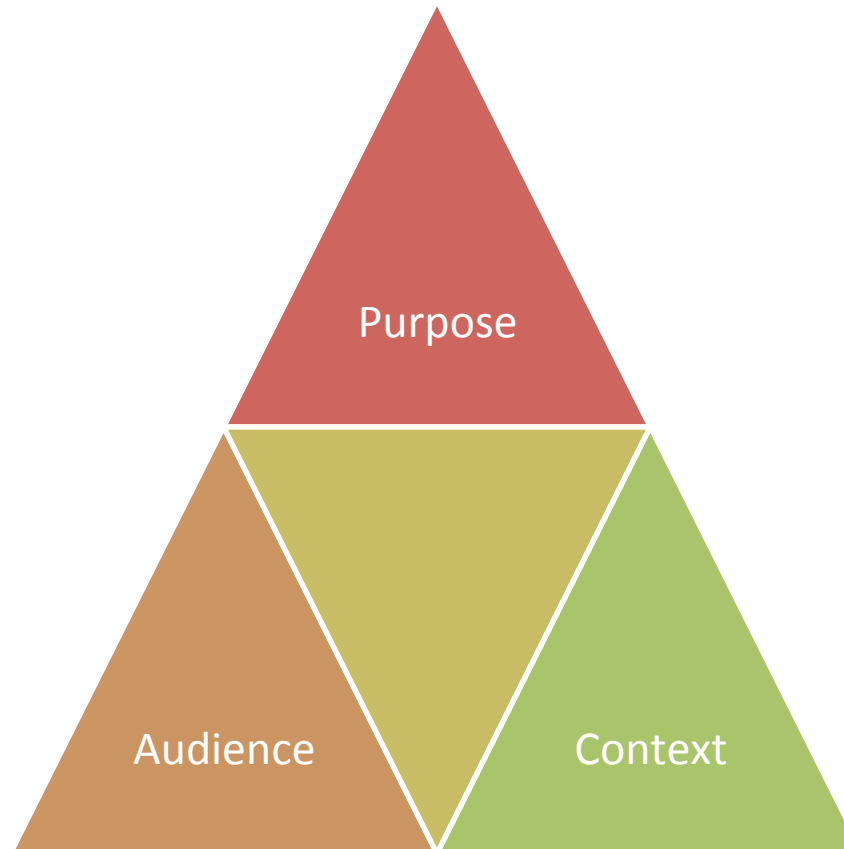# STRATEGIZING BUSINESS COMMUNICATION
Purpose, Audience, and Context

Daylanne Markwardt, Ph.D.
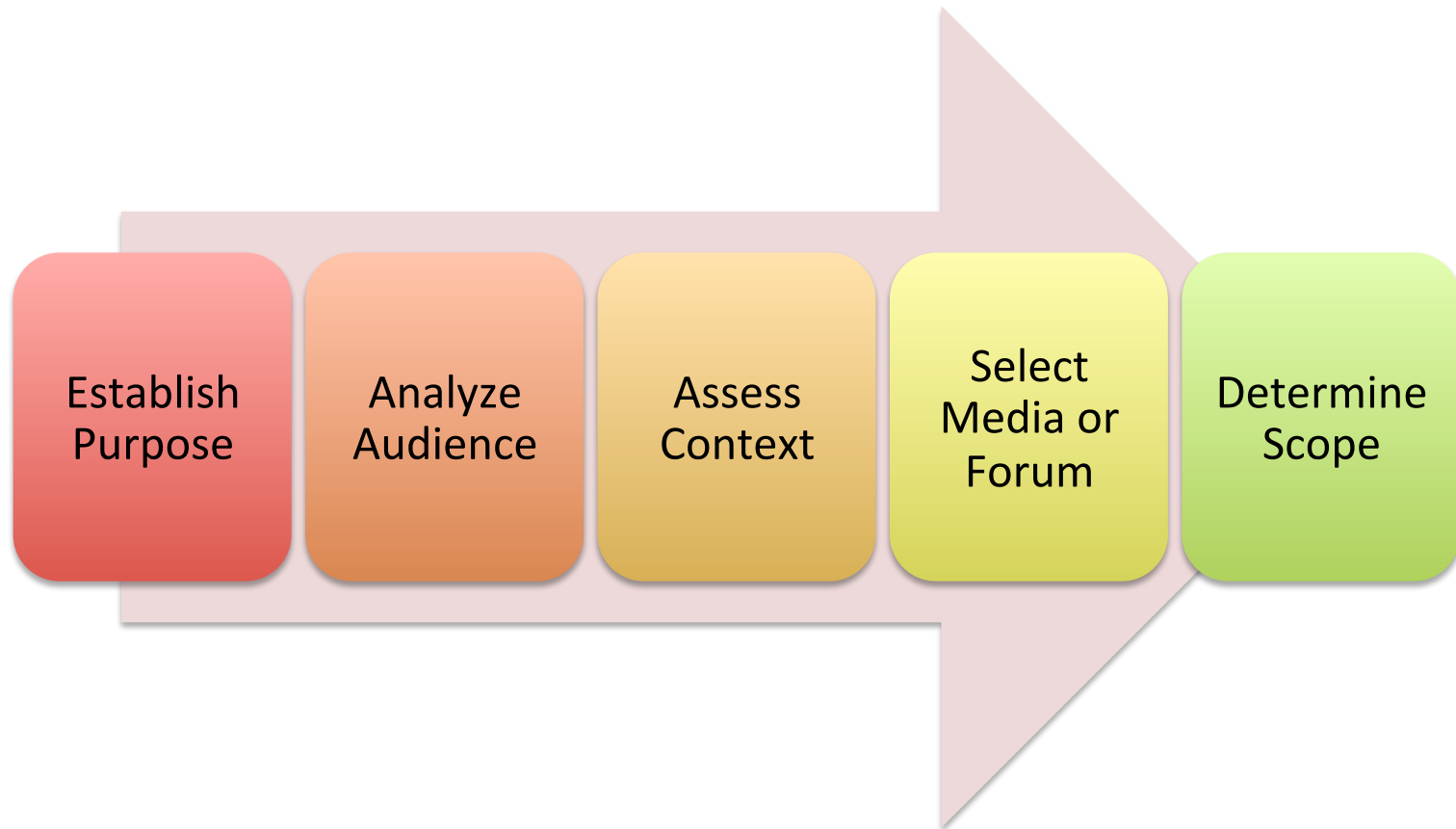
The Rhetorical Triangle
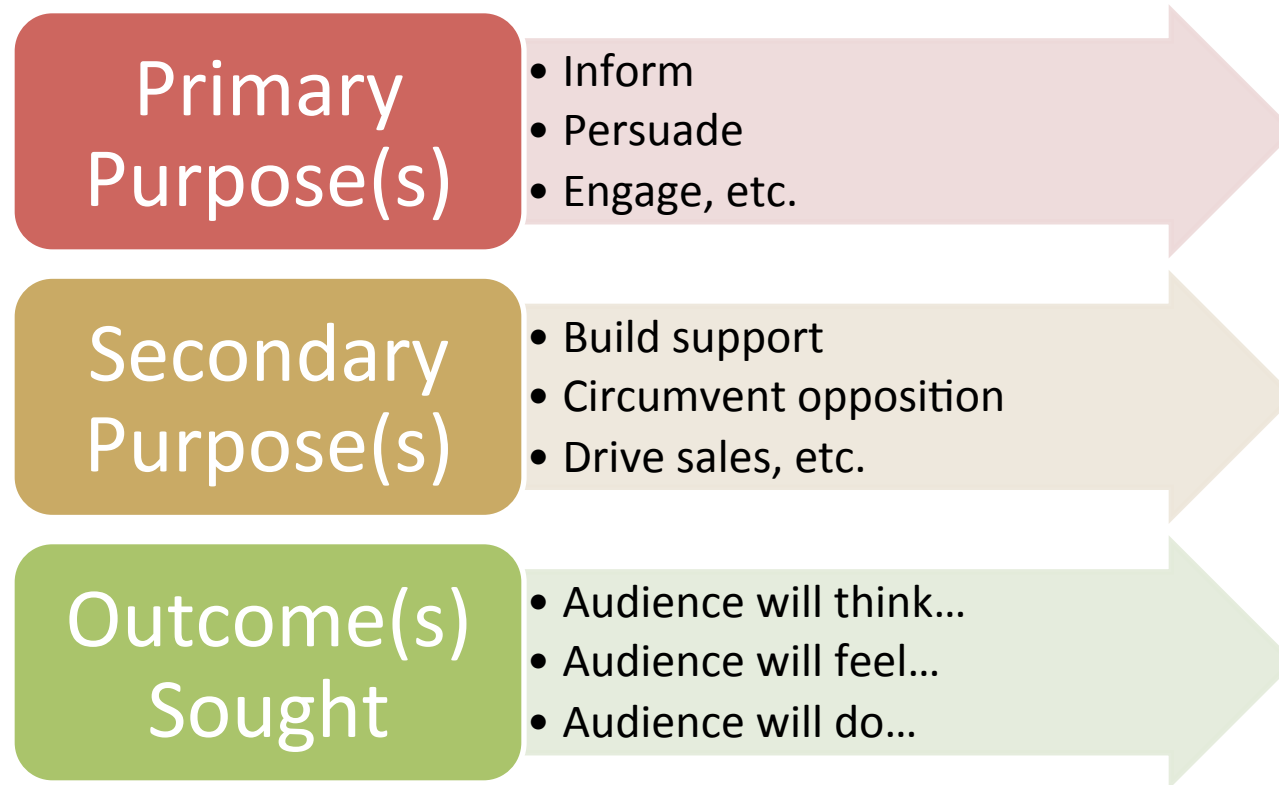
Strategizing Business Messages

Establish Purpose → Analyze Audience → Assess Context → Select Media or Forum → Determine Scope

Establishing the Purpose

Primary Purpose(s)
- Inform
- Persuade
- Engage, etc.

Secondary Purpose(s)
- Build support
- Circumvent opposition
- Drive sales, etc.

Outcome(s) Sought
- Audience will think…
- Audience will feel…
- Audience will do…

Analyzing the Audience

Primary Audience
- Those to whom communication is primarily addressed
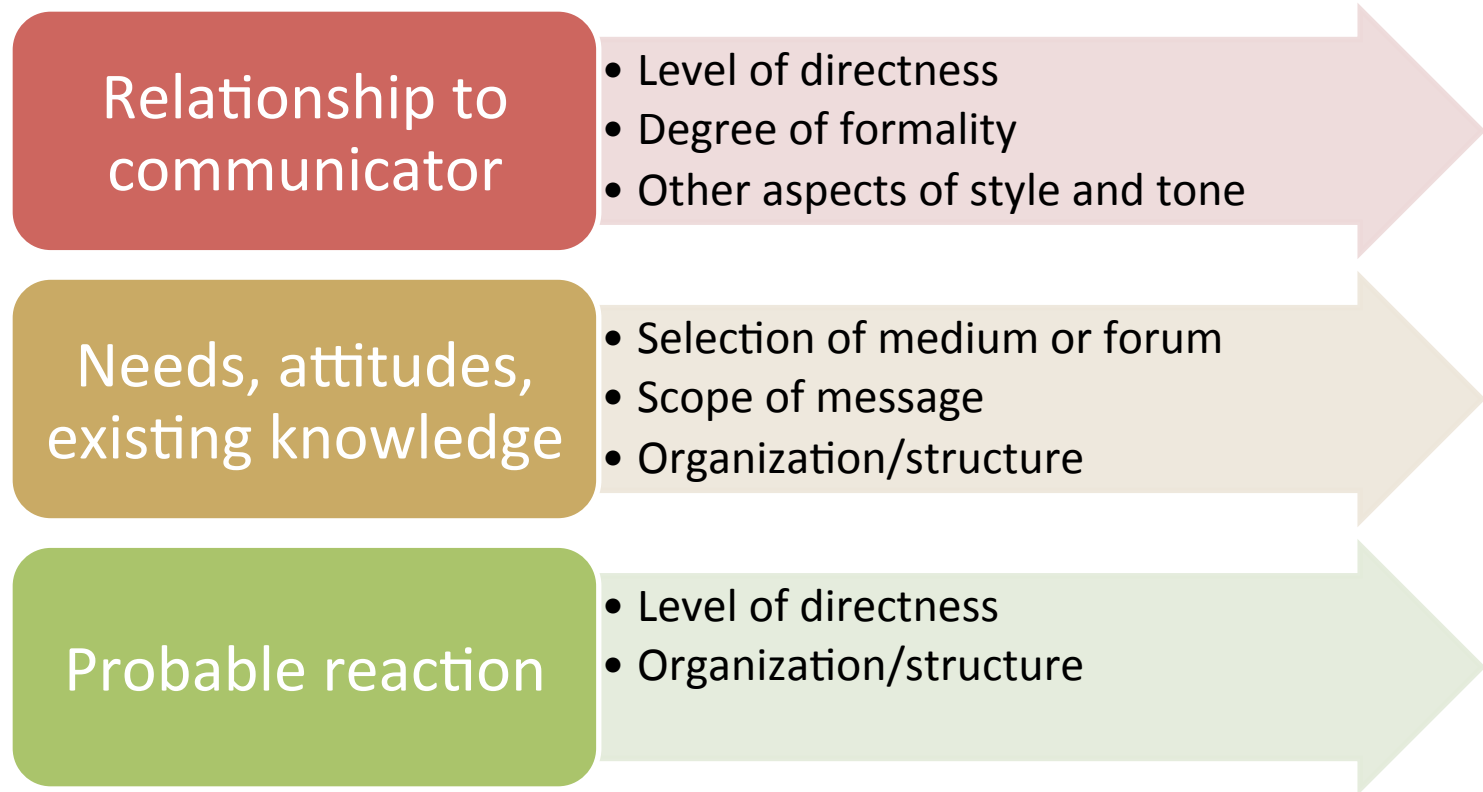- Targeted readers or listeners

Secondary Audience
- Those copied or blind-copied
- Other intended readers or listeners

Accidental Audience
- Others who may receive communication secondhand
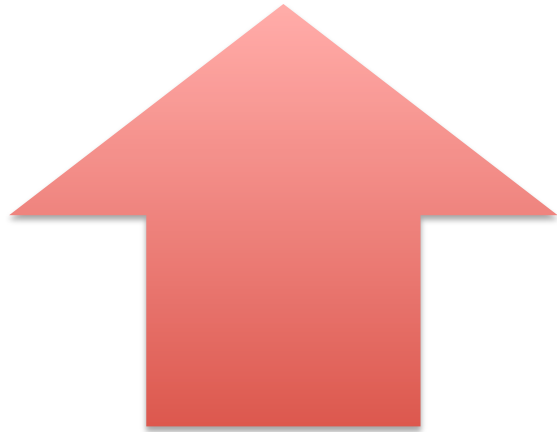- Unintended readers or listeners

Analyzing the Audience

Relationship to communicator
- Level of directness
- Degree of formality
- Other aspects of style and tone

Needs, attitudes, existing knowledge
- Selection of medium or forum
- Scope of message
- Organization/structure

Probable reaction
- Level of directness
- Organization/structure

Level of Formality

Greater distance from writer
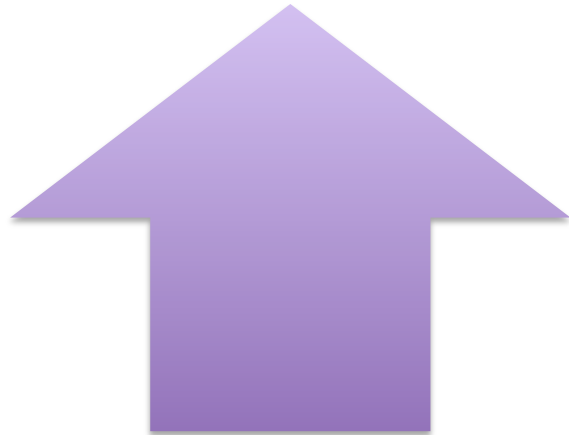
Greater formality

Less distance from writer
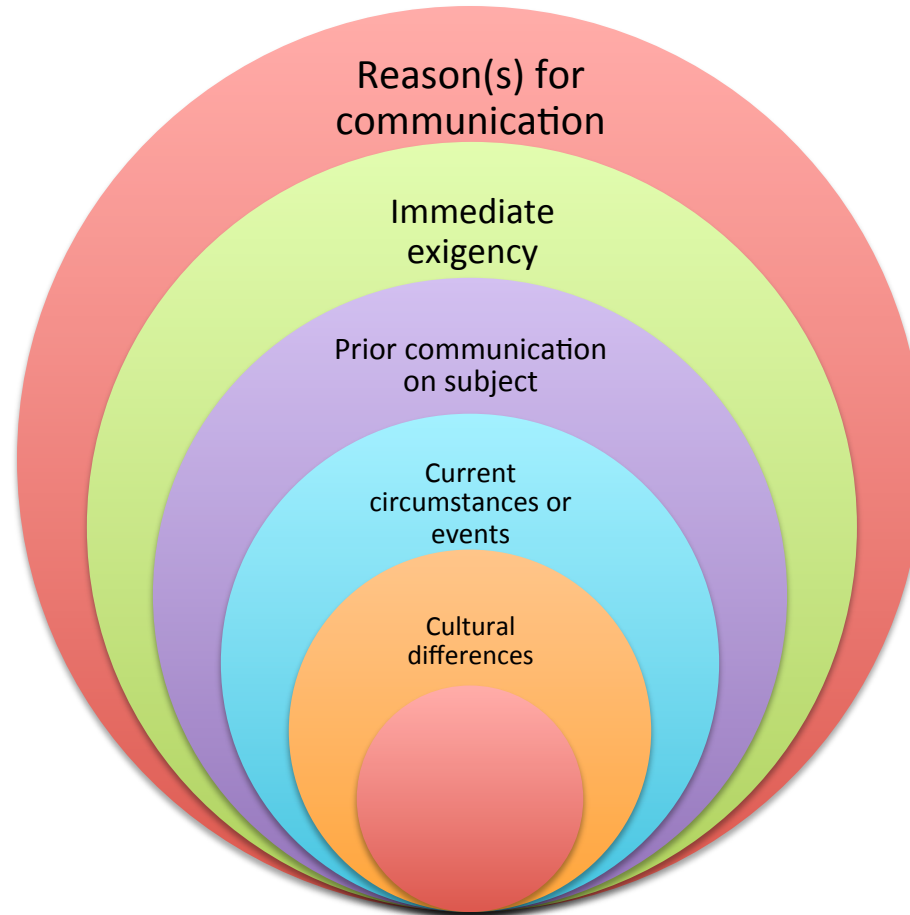
Less formality

Level of Directness

Less resistance anticipated

Less distance from writer

More directness

More resistance anticipated

More distance from writer

Less directness

Assessing the Context

Reason(s) for communication

Immediate exigency

Prior communication on subject

Current circumstances or events

Cultural differences

Selecting the Medium or Forum
Key Considerations

- Audience Needs and Expectations
- Time Sensitivity
- Level of Formality
- Cost Constraints
- Logistical Concerns

Selecting the Medium or Forum
Common Written Channels

IM/Text
- Internal communication primarily
- Instantaneous but very informal
- Very limited in length; no formatting possible
- Use with caution

E-mail
- Internal or external communication
- Quick but relatively informal
- Limited formatting possible
- Allows for electronic file-sharing

Memo
- Internal communication only
- Slower than e-mail
- Relatively formal; more formatting possible
- Used for documentation

Letter
- External communication only
- Much slower than e-mail
- Relatively formal
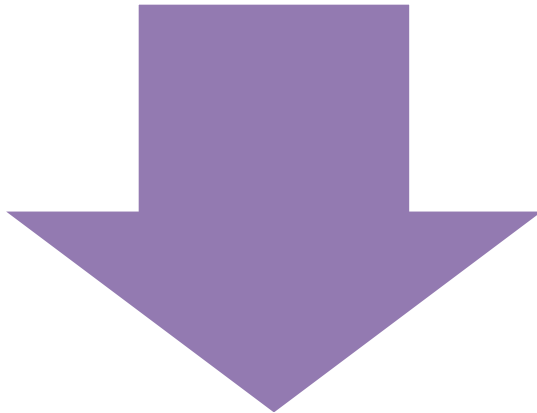- More formatting possible

Determining the Scope

Less existing knowledge

More relevance or interest

Broader scope

Greater detail

More existing knowledge

Less relevance or interest

Narrower scope

Fewer details

Organizational Pattern: Routine Business Messages

P: Purpose and Context

D: Details

A: Action

Organizational Pattern: Negative/Sensitive Messages

Context/Buffer

Background/Explanation

Bad News

Silver Lining

Action/Goodwill Closing

Organizational Pattern: Persuasive Messages
(Resistance Anticipated)

- Buffer/Context
- Problem or Need
- Reasons for Adopting Proposal
- Proposal
- Action/Goodwill Closing

Organizational Pattern: Persuasive Messages
(Little or No Resistance Anticipated)

Buffer/Context

Problem or Need

Proposal

Reasons for Adopting Proposal

Action/Goodwill Closing