

4 UNDERSTANDING YOUR AUDIENCE

Conversations with Landowners

It's not difficult to invite a few landowners who fit your target audience for coffee and a chat, or to talk to them informally at a community event. But remember that talking with landowners is most useful when you want to fill gaps in your knowledge or test specific ideas. People are generally not good at giving accurate responses to very broad, open questions (such as "What's important to you?"). Another useful strategy is to observe audience members "in their natural habitat." Careful observation can give you important cues about the culture and lifestyle of the communities that you want to target.

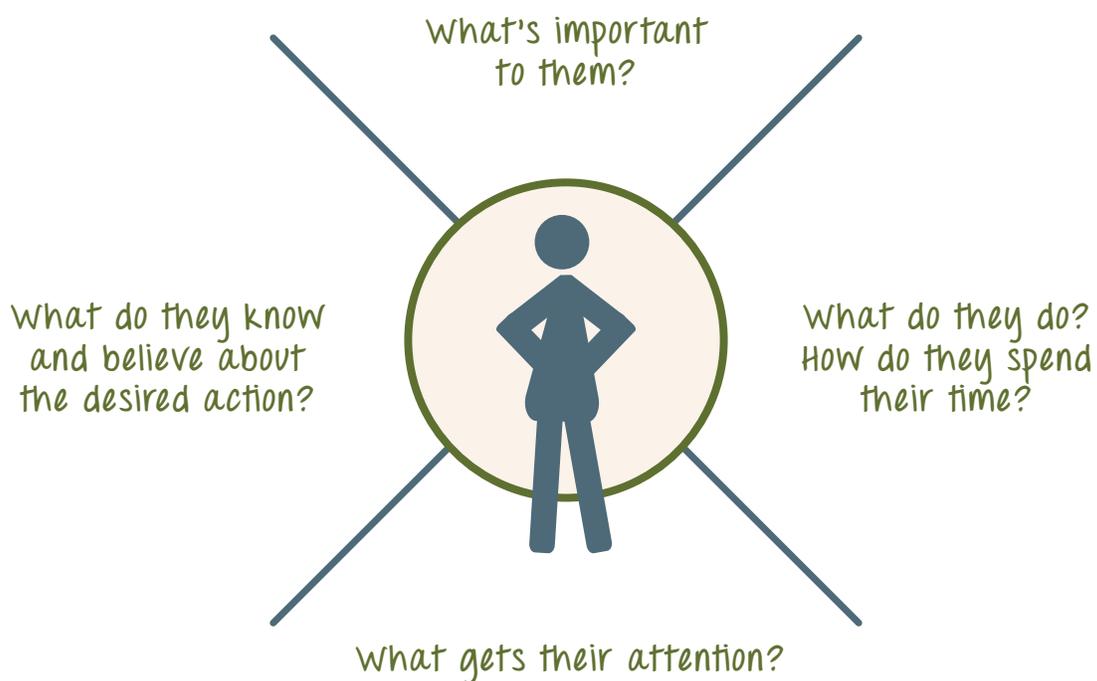
Finally, remember that landowners are simply people who own land. As such, they are likely to be fairly similar to other people who live in the same community. Market research surveys and datasets about the community in general can also give you good information about the values and lifestyles of landowners in that area. Also, if you or your colleagues live and work in the same communities, you probably have a pretty good sense of landowners' broad values, attitudes, and lifestyles.

THE STICK PERSON TOOL AND PAIN/GAIN CHART

Collecting quantitative data or using a TELE profile provides a good framework for identifying the chief characteristics of your target audience. But your team's knowledge of local landowners who fit these profiles adds the necessary color and texture to bring these audience profiles to life. The Stick Person Tool is a useful aid for collective brainstorming about local landowners who are in your target audience.

Draw the figure below on a board and work with your team to list audience attributes in response to the questions in each of the four areas.

FIGURE 4A: A BLANK STICK PERSON TOOL



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What's important to them?

Include core cultural values and ideas that frame your audience's worldview, as well as values that influence their relationships with their woods.

What do they do?

Use this area to list how audience members spend their time, including their work, hobbies, and pastimes. Look especially at behaviors that might be relevant, similar, or contrary to the desired action. For example, if you are asking landowners to come to a community picnic, consider whether they are accustomed to this kind of event and what they might expect of it.

What do they know and believe about the desired action?

Note current knowledge levels and attitudes relevant to the desired action. What are they hearing from others? Does it support or work against you? If it works against you, how will you counteract this opposing message?

What gets their attention?

Use this area to list channels and sources of information that audience members pay attention to, as well as topics that tend to get their attention.

As someone calls out an attribute, write it down. Don't worry too much about writing each bit of information in the right area—the goal is simply to list everything you know about your target audience members. Also, don't worry about getting everything exactly right. If there is some disagreement in your group regarding a particular attribute, just put a question mark next to it.

After you've listed everything, collectively evaluate all the information. Then circle the things you all think are most important for designing your outreach messages. These could include key cultural attributes, motivators or barriers. If any of these important attributes were marked as questionable, you will need to do some research before using them in your messaging.

As a final step, go through the audience attributes to identify the main reasons why your audience would or would not take the desired action. A good tool to use for this is the Pain/Gain Chart. Simply draw two columns marked "Pain" and "Gain." In the Pain column, list all the reasons why audience members wouldn't take the desired action. In the Gain column, list motives and incentives that would lead them to take the action. ([See the sample Stick Person Tool and Pain/Gain Chart on the next page.](#))

The Stick Person Tool helps you understand your audience and evaluate the desired action in the context of their lives and values. The richer your description of their lives and values, the better your chances of identifying compelling motivators and finding ways to overcome barriers.

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FIGURE 4B: SAMPLE STICK PERSON TOOL AND PAIN/GAIN CHART FOR A PROJECT THAT AIMS TO GET WOODLAND RETREAT OWNERS TO ATTEND A WOODS WALK TO LEARN ABOUT FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES



ACTION: ATTEND WOODS WALK / FIELD DAY ABOUT FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

PAIN ▼	GAIN ▲
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time/distance to meeting • Not interested in forest management • Don't want to listen to government "expert" • Don't want to feel like they don't know something • Management is ugly/bad • Implementing practices is complicated/scary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn new things • Wildlife improvement • See what other folks do • Pride • Feel like doing something good for the environment • Contributing to community • Be a good steward