



## 3 Surefire Ways to Engage Your Audience (Captivate Your Audience – Don't Bore Them)

by Alan Ovson

Ever been stuck in a boring presentation? Or one where the speaker is so enraptured with the topic that he or she doesn't seem to care if the audience follows or not? Or, a presentation where the presenter reads every word on a long series of boring slides? Painful, isn't it?

The whole idea of making a presentation is to engage your audience. Whether you have an audience of one person or a crowd of one-thousand, a presenter who doesn't engage an audience is not a good presenter. No matter what the setting - your office, at a conference table, out in the field, or standing at a lectern in a hotel ballroom - a presenter must keep the audience listening and engaged.

Knowing how to engage an audience is the difference between a successful presentation and never being asked to do a presentation again.

How do you engage an audience? Below are three surefire ways to engage an audience at any point during your presentation.

### **1. Use Your Senses: Taking the time to see and hear the audience**

This is a must! While you are speaking it is important to know what the audience is doing. Too often, presenters spend all of their time talking at their audience. They talk and talk and talk and never pay attention to their audience's reaction.

It doesn't matter if the audience is bored out of their minds because the presenter won't notice. Presenters who don't pay attention to their audiences will wind up without an audience.

Early in your presentation, at the end of one section, stop for a moment. Take the time (a few seconds will do) to look at your audience. Are they leaning forward, hanging on your every word? Are they falling asleep? Scan them to see if you think they are interested and following along.

- Watch body language to see if they are engaged or restless, bored or excited.
- Look people in the eye. Do this for as many people as you can to get a sampling of interest.



Throughout your presentation, stop to take a breath and listen to the audience. Listen for conversations or murmuring that may indicate whether everything is going well or if you're about to fall off a cliff.

In addition to using sight and hearing, don't forget to use your Common Sense. If you know you're about to lose your audience, you can make some choices - either keep going and forget about them or make an adjustment by doing the following.

## **2. Ask Involving Questions: Using simple questions to get back on track**

As a presenter, your job is to make sure the audience is following what you are saying. If you explain a complex concept or say something that you sense the audience isn't following, ask them questions so you can get their feedback and get them feeling like you are really talking to them!

Try these simple questions:

- Does that make sense?
- Are you following me?
- Do you see how that works?
- Can I show you an example?

Each of these questions lets you take the pulse of the audience so that you can respond appropriately. If the audience is not engaged, these questions are opportunities to re-engage them. Questions make the audience feel like they are part of the presentation. Everyone wants to feel like they are being talked to and not talked at.

Involving questions don't have to be profound. You're not asking for a full-blown dialogue. You just need to make sure they know that you are interested in them. Their response can be enthusiastic or lukewarm. Either way, you'll have information so that you can adjust your presentation if needed and make sure your audience is on your side.



### **3. Tell a Story: Giving examples, using anecdotes**

People remember stories. It's been proven that the majority of people remember information from a story better than straight factual lists. The reason is simple: Stories are more natural and create emotional connections both to the presenter and to the information the presenter is giving.

For every main point you make, think of a story, anecdote, or example that shows how people like the ones in your audience relate to the point you are making. It's a great idea to have a number of stories, examples, and anecdotes in your presentation arsenal. The more you have, the better you can adjust to the needs of your audience.

The world's best presenters know how to tell stories that engage, drive an emotional point, and end with an idea they want the audience to remember. If you don't think you can tell a story that drives home your points, take storytelling classes or presentation classes that focus on how to tell a powerful story.

### **Conclusion**

Paying attention to your audience, then engaging them with interesting content, relevant questions, and memorable stories, will help make you and your presentations stand out.

What's in it for you: promotions, raises, high esteem, closing a sale, a successful career, and the ability to feel powerful in almost every situation where you can state your opinions, ideas, and knowledge.

Presentations make the world go round. Good presentations make us feel confident, powerful, and respected. Remember, whatever situation you are in, you are presenting yourself to the world. Make sure you present yourself the best way you can.

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