

## How to Keep Your Audience Engaged

### 8 Techniques that Maintain the Connection

As a teacher/speaker/presenter/trainer your primary objective is to make sure that the audience remains engaged and focused. It is very hard to educate, entertain or inform an audience that is sleeping!

After seeing hundreds of teachers/trainers and speakers over the last few years I notice that the really good ones turn a **one-way monologue** into a **two-way dialogue**.

**Word of warning** - Do mix these all up; like anything, if you overuse one technique it begins to look like a technique rather than a natural part of your delivery.

- 1. Ask Questions** – Use lots of YOU focused direct and rhetorical questions. Let the audience know that you are having a conversation with them as individuals, irrespective of the numbers. **Direct questions** such as “Do you believe that...?” “What do you think works...?”; “You will discover that...” and **rhetorical questions** such as “I am sure you understand” or “We have all experienced...”
- 2. Use Props** – We all remember a good prop, something that brings your point to life. They don’t need to be elaborate, **only relevant**. Use visible and colourful objects that the audience will remember.
- 3. Get the Audience Working** – Get them involved with you. Ask them to respond to your questions **actively** with a show of hands, get them to stand up in response to a question or ask them to enquire of something from their neighbour. **Work the audience**.
- 4. Use Drama** – The **Chalk and Talk** speakers and entertainers expect attention from the audience. In an era of **sound bites** it doesn’t happen anymore. You must use everything you have, so don’t be afraid to act out a part of your speech or lesson - bring it to life. Use your body as a prop, use dialogue, accents and vocal variety.
- 5. Tell a Story** – You have heard it before, “**Facts tell, stories sell**”. We are brought up hearing stories and we are conditioned to remember them. Use stories from your **personal experience** to expand on your point, as examples and case studies or just as a natural break in the flow of information.
- 6. Instruct the Audience** – Use your **authority** as the speaker, tell them what will happen: “I guarantee you that...” or “If you fail to do this...” and the attention level will increase. Also direct them to do something: “You may find it helpful to write this down” or “When you go home this evening I would like you to...”

**Note** - Research shows that the audience responds better to suggestions than to commands. “You may find it useful to do...” rather than “Do this now!” But don’t be afraid to command occasionally on your key points.

- 7. Pause** – Use the **Power of the Pause**. Good speakers show confidence when pausing. More importantly, the audience changes gear and they concentrate more, wondering what is going to be said next. Vary your pauses and use big **Pedestal Pauses** when you have made your main point.
- 8. Use Lists of Three** – Audiences like **logic** and again we appear to be conditioned to remember and respond to bullet pointed lists or groups in threes.

Finally, keep **experimenting** to see what works best for you.

If we always do what we have always done we will always get what we have always got.

**Sean Kennedy 2007 ©** *If you would like to comment on this article please email me on [seankennedy@speakersbank.co.uk](mailto:seankennedy@speakersbank.co.uk)*