

SMALL THINGS TO TRY

# TIPS FOR ENGAGING YOUR AUDIENCE

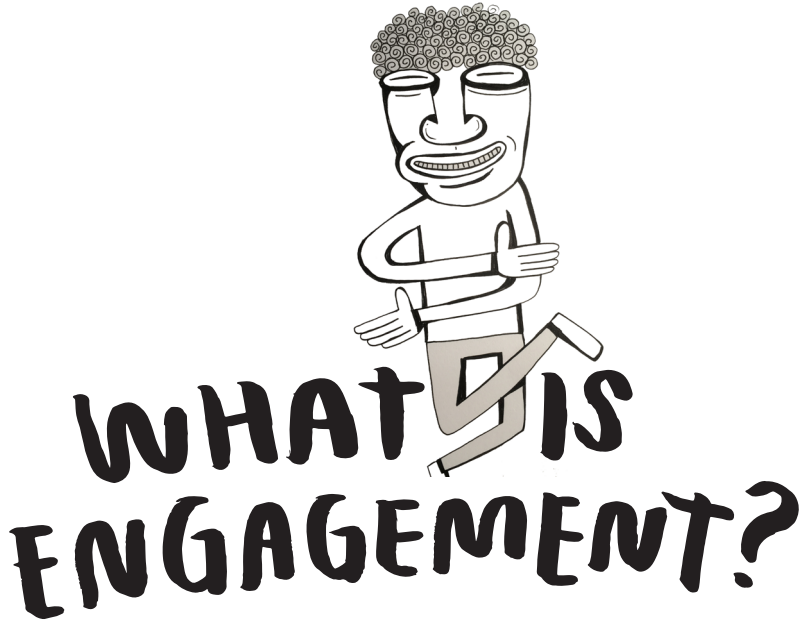


**ON YOUR FEET**

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5 WAYS to  
IMMEDIATELY  
ENGAGE YOUR  
AUDIENCE:

1. CREATE CLEAR OBJECTIVES
2. HAVE A POSITIVE MANTRA
3. SEE YOUR AUDIENCE
4. LEVERAGE STORY
5. CREATE FLOW

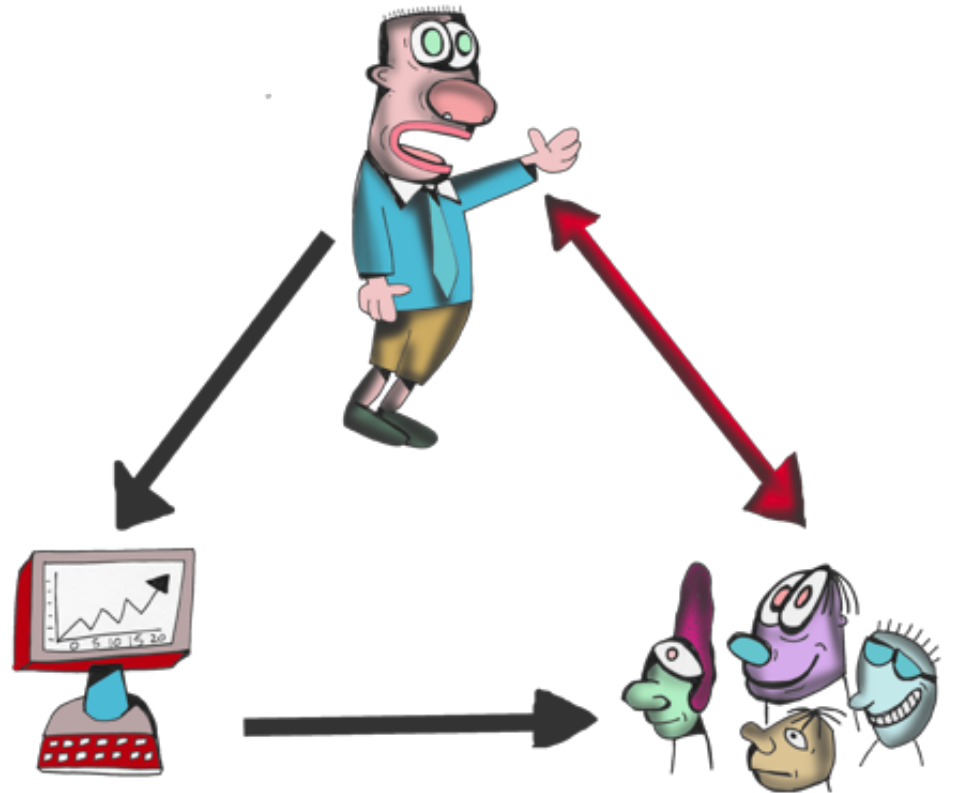


As most presenters get ready, they think a lot about themselves: Will they look smart? Interesting? Credible? Charming? Like a fraud?

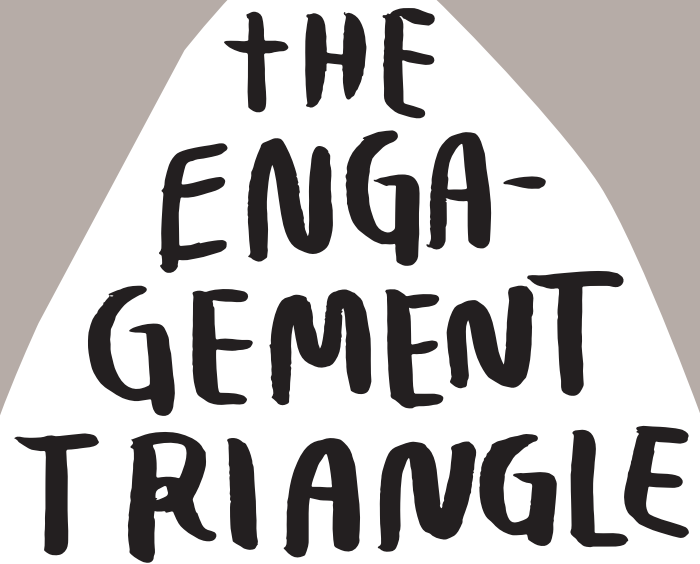
Because of this, they get super-focused on their content, making sure they can answer any question that is asked, that their slides are perfect (and that there are a lot of them!). The consequence of this is that they get up in front of their audience focusing on themselves and then download a fire hose of information at their audience.



**THIS SHOWS THE NORMAL STATE OF MIND OF MOST PRESENTERS. AN OBSESSIVE FOCUS ON THEMSELVES AND THEIR CONTENT.**



**WHAT IS OFTEN NEGLECTED IS THE RELATIONSHIP AND FLOW BETWEEN AUDIENCE AND PRESENTER.**



# THE ENGA- GEMENT TRIANGLE

In any presentation there are three components: the presenter, the content, and the audience. The way these elements interact defines the usefulness, involvement, and fun (i.e., engagement) of the presentation. The Engagement Triangle—also called The Blakesley Triangle, named after an early client, Steven Blakesley, who demanded that presenters in his company stop putting their audiences to sleep, and start paying attention to them instead—is the way to redesign and redefine how you convey information.

What follows are five small—but powerful—ways to immediately engage your audience.

# CREATE CLEAR OBJECTIVES



## SMALL THING #1 TO TRY

### CREATE CLEAR OBJECTIVES

What does your audience need to walk out with? When people don't know the goals of your presentation they focus on their own agenda, lose interest, get distracted, and dream about being anywhere else.

Clear objectives give you permission to stop and redirect conversations that veer off course. Put them up on the wall. Keep going back to them throughout your presentation.

Think about what you want your audience to walk out with by the end of the presentation.

## STEP 1: THINK

## STEP 5:

Make sure they got what they came for.

## STEP 2: USE NOUNS

Put your objectives into specific and actionable language.

UNDERSTANDING OF...  
ANSWERS FOR...  
AN ABILITY TO...  
THREE OPTIONS FOR...

## STEP 3: WRITE

Write “What You Will Walk Out With” up on a flip chart or white board, not on a slide that will go away.

## STEP 4:



Keep going back to your objectives throughout your presentation.

WE HAVE FOUND  
THAT WHAT YOU ARE  
SAYING IN YOUR  
HEAD IS NOT JUST A  
MANTRA, IT CAN BE  
A PROPHECY TOO.



## SMALL THING #2 TODAY

### HAVE A POSITIVE MANTRA

How you show up matters. Presentations are a vivid and uncertain event because you never know what your audience will do or say. So how do you choose to approach this uncertainty? From a place of “sick and feeble” or “fit and well”?

Notice the current voice in your head (mantra) is around an upcoming presentation. If it’s a version of “I don’t know what will happen, but it might be a disaster”, then you have chosen a “sick and feeble” mantra.

See if you can flip this. Find a mantra that helps you imagine a better result. There are lots of possibilities: “I can learn something from this audience,” or “they will learn something helpful.” Silently repeat your positive mantra to yourself as you prepare.



# SEE YOUR AUDIENCE

I WAS ABLE TO SPEAK WITH A FEW OF YOU AND HERE'S WHAT I THINK I KNOW ABOUT YOU REGARDING THE PRODUCT LAUNCH...



# SMALL THING #3 TO TRY

## SEE YOUR AUDIENCE

Getting curious about your audience doesn't have to take a ton of time. Sometimes we recommend a short series of pre-interviews, either on the phone or in person (e.g., 15-minute conversations with three participants).

You can also just talk to people as they come into the meeting room to gauge their current reality. You can throw a series of pictures on the floor and ask people to pick up one that represents how they are currently feeling about the project.

The important thing is to not only take the time and attention to understand your audience in relation to the content of your meeting but to tell them what you think you know to make sure your understanding is correct.

**ONCE...** We were once working with a high tech organization who hired us to train their engineers to present and hold conversations with the company's sales force. The engineers loved the tech—how it was built, what was going on inside the box. The sales folks wanted to know how the box was going to help their customers and didn't really want to know the details of how it worked. Each brought a different reality to the conversation. It was highly likely

that if these parties didn't try and understand where their counterparts were coming from, they would miscommunicate and drop important ideas.

To prevent this we coached the engineers to get as curious about their audience as they were about the tech that they cared about. What were the needs and issues of the sales force? If sales were focused on the customer, what did the engineers have that could help?

STORYTELLING IS  
THE MOST POWER-  
FUL WAY TO PUT  
IDEAS INTO THE  
WORLD TODAY.

—Robert McKee, Hollywood screenwriter  
and influential teacher

# SMALL THING #4 TO TRY

## LEVERAGE STORY

Stories are ingrained into our DNA and we wake up every time we hear one. Using story as an engagement tool in your presentation is an effective way to get your audience to lean forward, focus and learn.

Three tips for telling a better story:

- 1 Make it Personal. Audiences want to know how you were affected and changed by new ideas. Tell stories that illustrate this change.
- 2 Balance your story with a combination of detail (color) and action (advance).
- 3 Use less jargon. Make it relatable.

# CREATE FLOW

Do they seem  
distracted?

Are they nodding their  
heads?

Are they smiling and  
laughing?

Do they seem  
frustrated?

Do they seem bored?

Do they have a lot of  
questions?

Are they excited?

Do they seem  
confused?

**Yes, and.**

Acknowledge. Respond.

# SMALL THING #5 TO TRY

CREATE FLOW WITH  
YOUR AUDIENCE

Creating a back and forth flow with your audience means seeing everything that your audience does as an “offer.” This means noticing their behavior and actions and not being afraid to acknowledge and do something with what you're noticing.

It's a very practical attitude, that in effect forces you as a presenter to constantly ask yourself “How can I use this?” Implicit here is letting go of value judgments about what is happening (i.e. whether you like it or not, whether it's “right” or not, whether you wanted it or not).

Flow with your audience happens when you accept their offer. This doesn't mean you have to agree with it, it just means that you have to recognize the offer and do something with it.

THIS SMALL BOOK  
IS DESIGNED TO HELP YOU  
REMEMBER THAT IT ONLY TAKES  
SMALL ACTIONS TO MAKE A  
BIG DIFFERENCE.

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