

5 Techniques to Ignite Your Next Presentation

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"Should I be interactive in my presentation?"...

It's a daunting question for some speakers, but in many cases the answer is, "Go for it!" Depending on your purpose, adding interactive elements can be a tremendous help in making your message stick.

Presenters that get results in today's high-stakes world need to create experiences that challenge listeners to think, discuss, and even question what's being said. So, what can you do to incorporate interactive elements that emotionally, physically and verbally involve your audience?

Ask Powerful Questions. Don't wait for your audience to ask you — engage them by posing questions that inspire thinking and support the sharing of thoughts and experiences.

Pro tip: To get a response, be sure to establish and maintain direct eye contact — this communicates that you are expecting an answer. Silently count to ten as you wait for a reply.

Get Rhetorical. Asking rhetorical questions is a particularly useful technique when the schedule is tight and there's no room for a verbal give-and-take. Using this technique, you'll still be able to connect with your audience even when time is short.

Pro tip: Establish and maintain eye contact, but move on after three seconds. This lets your listeners know you aren't expecting a vocal response and allows you to move on to your next point.

Call for Examples. Let audience members share their own experiences by building in opportunities for listeners to contribute examples. Not only does this technique encourage interaction, it also helps you illustrate points in highly relatable and personal ways.

Pro tip: Once an example has been shared, acknowledge the contribution before moving on. Depending on how much time you have, one example may be enough; cap it at three for maximum impact.

Encourage Volunteers. If you're teaching a skill or providing a how-to demonstration, involve your audience by asking a few volunteers to work beside you. They'll benefit from the hands-on experience, and the audience will learn more by watching their peers attempt the task.

Pro tip: Let potential volunteers know they're in a safe, non-judgmental environment and that they're guaranteed to learn something as a result of participating. Reward participants with a round of applause and a personal thank you.

Get Them Talking with Social Media. Free online services like LinkedIn or Twitter let your audience join in a discussion and start thinking about your presentation points before ever setting foot in the board room or ballroom. You control the topic and flow of discussion to ensure things are headed in the right direction. After the presentation, you can solicit feedback and answer questions.

Pro tip: Leveraging your content via social media extends the experience for your audience well beyond the scope of your physical presentation. It allows for an extended dialogue that fosters a sense of community and a deeper connection with your message.

Remember: it's your job to provide a memorable and engaging presentation that benefits everyone in your audience. Interaction can contribute greatly to the success of a presentation, so feel free to use it!

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