

# HERE'S HOW! GET THE AUDIENCE LISTENING TO YOU AND STOP READING THEIR EMAIL

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**TIP#1: GET THEM ENGAGED RIGHT AWAY. CLOCK STARTS NOW!**

**TIP#2: IT'S THE SIZZLE THAT SELLS THE STEAK**

**TIP#3: 3. IT IS NOT ABOUT YOU. IT REALLY IS ABOUT THE AUDIENCE.**

**TIP#4: DON'T TELL JOKES. DO USE SELF-DEPRECATING HUMOR.**

**TIP#5: USE A FUNNY PICTURE OR MOVIE TO GET YOUR POINT ACROSS.**

**TIP#6: REMEMBER THE RULE OF 3'S**



At this point in your career how many dull, pointless, uninspired presentations have you sat through? There is always the ubiquitous PowerPoint slides that sludge through endless pieces of data, 15 or more bullet points per slide, and a presenter who reads every single point verbatim.

It's doubtful you remember any important bits of information – you were either on your phone with emails or you let your mind wander to something else. Anything else. You weren't paying attention because the speaker did not engage his audience. He didn't allow you and the entire audience to be part of the presentation.

And now, you are the one in front of the audience, delivering a presentation. I feel it is my responsibility to spare you the discomfort of speaking to a sea of blank faces – you and your audience deserve more.

You have one minute to capture the audience's attention so don't waste a second on "housekeeping" items or reiterating your bio. Instead, give a summary of your presentation and let them know why they need to pay attention. You'll be sharing several important points that will help their careers and they won't want to miss a thing!

There are six tips that I know can help you get, and keep, your audience engaged.

**Tip #1: Get them engaged right away. Clock starts now!**

It is your job to break down the barrier between you and the audience. A great technique is to ask polling questions, like "show of hands, who has been in accounting for more than 10 years." The audience gets to participate, and you learn something about

them that may be useful during your presentation. Sprinkle polling questions throughout your presentation, even turning audience comments into a question.

Another good way to create engagement is to open your presentation by offering a statement they can discuss in small groups. Lead with "My biggest fear about public speaking is..." Ask them to discuss this with the person next to them for five minutes and then share with the group. You have created a shared experience with a common ground for those fears among the group. Bonus: Now you know what their fears are, and can be sure to include those in your presentation.

**Tip #2: It's the sizzle that sells the steak.**

Create a narrative around the facts or data you want to share. A majority of your presentation should be a compelling story that is supported by data. Why do the facts and figures matter; what do they mean to your audience?

"Facts and statistics may tell a story, but if you truly want to effect change and influence the way your audience thinks and feels, you will have to go beyond straightforward communications," explains Marla Tabaka, contributor to INC. com. "The key to really getting people to listen and act: Touch them on an emotional level."

**Tip #3: It is not about you. It really is about the audience.**

How does the message you are delivering fit into the audience's lives? What challenges are they experiencing, and how will your presentation help solve their problems? Restating facts and figures is not helpful. Identifying what the issues are, and offering new ideas to improve situations is very helpful.





Let's say you are delivering a leadership workshop to a group of CPAs who have recently been promoted to manager positions in their firms. You recently read that many new managers are unable to manage to all the levels required: Up, down, out and in. Managing the partners' expectations is definitely not the same as managing a team or the new workload.

I have been asked many times about adding humor to a presentation. Humor has a place in most presentations: connecting through laughter is one of the best ways to engage an audience. Humor keeps us focused on the speaker and topic, and creates a shared experience for the audience. The goal of a speaker is to deliver information in a way the audience can accept and retain so they can later act on the speaker's advice.

One of my favorite quotes about using humor in a presentation is from Jeffrey Gitomer who said, "The end of laughter is followed by the height of listening." Think about your own experiences. Maybe you connected with a teacher who made learning fun and challenging, or a mentor who used humor to help reduce tension. The way you felt then is how you want your audience to feel.

There are people who believe they are not a funny person. That's fine because I am not suggesting you develop a stand-up comedy routine. Adding humor to your presentation can be taught. Start with baby steps. No one gets their first driver's license driving a Ferrari. I have a 16-year-old – believe me, something bad is bound to happen! Take those driving baby steps with a Ford Escort instead.

**Tip # 4: Don't tell jokes. Do use self-deprecating humor.**

You never want to tell an outward joke in your presentation because it could be offensive to someone in the audience. You can, however, poke fun at

yourself. My last name, Margaritis, gets commented on every time I introduce myself. So I use that to make fun at my own expense when I start a presentation by saying, "my name is pronounced like a cocktail but spelled like an inflammation." It always gets a laugh and helps to set the mood in the room. Word of caution: find the funny about you without going overboard because that can hurt your credibility.

**Tip #5: Use a funny picture or movie to get your point across.**

Begin by telling the story (setup) first to get the audience's attention and then show to photo or movie, for a laugh. For example, I was presenting on the sexy and exciting topic of the new lessee accounting rules and used a video to make my point and create laughs. I said, "the lessee will have to record the leased asset and the lease liability which now creates a highly leveraged balance sheet." To illustrate a rather dry point, I showed a movie I made using the app Action Movie.

I had filmed a tiki hut while on vacation in Rivera Maya and added the special effect of a boulder crashing down on the tiki hut. When the video played, I said the tiki hut was the company's balance sheet, the boulder was the new leasing standard, and you just witnessed your balance sheet being crushed. For those of you reading this who are not accountants, sorry for the accounting reference. My point is virtually everything, even accounting, can be made funny and memorable with a picture or movie.

**Tip #6: Remember the Rule of 3's**

According to the world-renowned source for everything, Wikipedia, the rule of three "is a writing principle that suggests that things that come in threes are funnier, more satisfying, or more effective than other numbers of things." Three Musketeers, Three



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Little Pigs, Three Times a Lady, Three Blind Mice, and joke structure.

Classic joke structure is premise, punchline, and tag but this can be difficult to master. Another form of joke structure that you can use is to set up a pattern - truth, truth, and misdirection. For example, "Thank you for the invitation to speak at your conference. I am looking forward to exploring your beautiful city (truth), getting to meet as many of you after my presentation (truth), and having lunch with plenty of chicken (misdirection)."

Observing how others incorporate humor into their presentations is a great way to learn from some of the best. One of the most popular TED Talks, with over

45 million views, was given by Sir Ken Robinson, an expert on creativity in education. In his talk, *Do Schools Kill Creativity?* he masterfully connects with his audience by incorporating a snippet of humor every three minutes or so, an achievement that beats the laugh moments in many highly rated comedies. Watch Sir Robinson use humor to deliver his powerful message while keeping his audience actively engaged.

Tailor your conversation to these points, craft stories about various challenges the new managers may be experiencing, and offer techniques to help them succeed. When you see smiles and "I get that" expression on faces, you know you have connected with your audience.



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