

# Understand, Engage & Influence Different Audiences

## WORKSHEET

### How To Use This Workbook...

1. You can print out this Workbook or save it on your computer or other electronic devices. And you also have a Notes section at the end of this Workbook to add even more thoughts and comments to help you make the most of this lesson so it helps you develop your **aptitude** as much as your **attitude**, both tangibly and intangibly, so you **apply** them more effectively to help you **achieve** what you want to.
2. Enjoy making the most of these tips, thoughts and techniques and remember the No.1 rule of learning anything: It's about TAKING ACTION and IMPLEMENTING so YOU ACHIEVE RESULTS! So...all you need to do **now** is to decide the following: **WHAT ACTION ARE YOU GOING TO TAKE WITHIN THE NEXT 24-48 HOURS TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN!?**

### Now For The Good Stuff...!

The first thing to remember is that your audience responds to you and how you feel about yourself and your subject as you portray both at the same time. If you're nervous, it makes them uneasy. But if you're relaxed, particularly when things go wrong, then they admire you even more for not being fazed by the situation. Rather than distracting their minds with your uneasiness and nerves and lack of confidence, they can focus on what you're saying. And that's the point of you're appearing in front of them, surely!

So...

Let's look at some tips & techniques to help you understand, engage and influence different audiences.

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One great tip that helps you overcome any fear you may have when in front of a group of people is this: Understanding and using the **Audience Appreciation Paradox**.

When people in an audience are sitting there looking at and listening to you, they tend to do so impassively. Their faces don't show much emotion most of the time. Therefore, it's very easy for you to think that they're bored or even don't like you. The thing is, you've been that person in the audience, haven't you. Unless the speaker really is boring and/or unlikeable, you've sat there so often thinking that they're not only very likeable, but also very interesting and maybe also amusing or even hilarious. But you're not always going to express those positive and appreciative emotions facially. Hence the **Audience Appreciation Paradox**.

**Help yourself overcome unhelpful fears by focusing on these 5 key points:**

1. Your audience is crying out for presentations and conversations that are colourful, communicated with conviction, coherence, conciseness, clarity and, depending on the situation and the people involved, a bit or even a lot of comedy
2. Your audience wants you to do well. They like being enlightened, energized and, ideally, entertained by you. Alas, the vast majority of people presenting in business, whether at an external presentation, an internal meeting or in a networking scenario, don't do this. If you do present well, you stand out for all the right reasons.
3. Your audience is also more grateful than you can imagine that it's you making the presentation and not them! So they want you to do well. It not only informs them, but can also inspire them.
4. By making a presentation, having that difficult conversation or networking and socializing with people you don't know, you increase your chances of achieving something positive in a way that others can't. This is because you're venturing bravely into arenas that most people convince themselves are too unnerving for them.
5. And don't worry if you don't get it right on the first occasion or on other occasions. Even the best professional speakers, comedians and other regular presenters have their "off days." But what both you and they learn from these experiences, as well as the great ones, constantly help you improve your skills as a communicator. And this, in turn, strengthens your confidence which also helps reinforce your ability as a charismatic communicator.

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## Small audiences

With audiences of under about 30 people, it's vital that you engage all of them visually and at varying times during your presentation. Because a gathering of this size is more cosy, you need to engage every individual there. Not doing so magnifies your lack of connection with them.

## Medium to large sized audiences

With audiences where there are hundreds or thousands of people present, you're not able to engage with each one individually – visually or verbally. You only have the chance to visually and verbally connect with blocks or groups of people in stages.

Try splitting your audience into four blocks:

- Front left
- Back left
- Back right
- Front right

Vary the order in which you look at them – anything between 5-15 seconds per block.

You should also vary it with each block to look at different sections, or sub-sections of a block of people so, certainly with a medium sized audience, no one small section or set of individuals feels left out because you haven't looked at them.

With large audiences, some of the people in the rear blocks look like small shapes and dots to you, and so this makes your job easier. From their point of view, you appear to be looking at them by virtue of the fact you're looking in their direction!

## Interaction

You can engage your audience in various ways. You can give a barnstorming speech. That's great. But always be aware of the context of the situation in which you're presenting. For instance, if you're one of a series of speakers at a day-long event, then imagine it from the audience's point of view. If you're one of five or six speakers talking for about an hour, say, then that can be quite draining for your audience because of the concentration needed to absorb all you and the others say. And that's *if* the speakers are riveting specimens who speak with an enthralling vim and vigour! But, as we know from often enthusiasm-sapping experience, this is certainly not guaranteed.

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The layout of a room or conference hall shapes what you're able to do. If you're in a massive conference hall and it's theatre style, then your audience can only realistically do exercises involving those next to them. So they can pair up or form threesomes, depending on the numbers in their row.

At an event where they have cabaret style seating then it's much easier to split people into pairs, threes, fours or into teams made up of those at their tables.

Remember that very few members of your audience are likely to want to come up on stage, even more so in front of a huge audience. The fear factor may be too much for them. The exception to this can either be a member of the senior management or some egomaniac (sometimes one and the same!). And be prepared also for some of them to try to take you on to make themselves look good at your expense!

For instance, things to reflect on and plan for include:

- What do you want to demonstrate or illustrate? Is this an effective way to do this?
- How many people do you need to make this work? (For instance, when I'm giving a demonstration of networking choreography I get two people up on stage followed by a third to further demonstrate what to do when trying to break into and even out of a group and more).
- How long does it take to do?
- Where should or can it take place?
- What happens if no one volunteers to come up? In this scenario, get to know and at least observe people before your session. Trust your instinct. There will be some people you know you can work/play/have fun with. They'll tend to be the more outgoing, the garrulous, the warmest and most natural and the most at ease with themselves.
- What happens if the person or people who come up to the front try to dominate the situation, look cleverer than you, embarrass you or do something alarming. Now, I've never had anyone who took their trousers down, broke wind or started swearing at the

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rest of the audience, or even a combination thereof. But, if they did, I, like you, would have a series of saver lines and actions to take. These include:

- What comeback remarks & putdowns do you have and, just importantly, can you use

**Please, please, please (that's a lot of "pleases") don't be cheesy, naff or crass when trying to get the audience to interact with each other and you.**

## **The 3 audience types:**

OK. There are THREE different types of people in your audience who you need to appeal to seamlessly using different approaches to engage all of them:

- **Soft & Slow**
- **Nice & Normal**
- **Loud & Fast**

### **Soft & Slow**

These will be the quieter and more introverted members of your audience. They prefer people whose tone, voice and pitch is softer and slower and more measured. They can feel audibly and visually battered by people who are Loud & Fast – the louder and faster talking types who are very high energy. To appeal to this part of your audience you need to soften and slow your voice – not in a way that sounds like your batteries are losing power or in a manner that patronises them. This is especially the case if you're a Loud & Fast speaker. A Soft & Slow person can struggle more with a Loud & Fast speaker than the other way round.

### **Nice & Normal**

These audience members can be a mix of introverted and extroverted people who speak at a normal pace, volume and pitch. They can deal with the slower and softer tones as well as the faster and louder vocal manner of the high energy speaker. To appeal to this part of your audience you need to speak at a normal volume (not too quiet and not too loud) and in a measured and paced way (not too fast and not too slow).

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## **Loud & Fast**

This part of your audience tends to be extroverts and, quite simply, can talk more loudly, more quickly and more emphatically than the other two groups. They tend to be high energy. A lot of motivational speakers can be like this. Some, however, overdo it and equate volume and speed of speech with being energising, entertaining and educational! Although this group can be the most engaging when speaking, they can get carried away...and lose even the fellow Loud & Fast listeners in their audience. To appeal to this part of your audience you need to employ some pepper and spice to energise your presentation delivery. If you're monotone and vanilla, you'll lose them through either impatience or indifference – if not both!

## **Appealing to ALL three types**

To engage all three types of people in your audience, you need to vary the pitch, pace and volume of what you say as well as how you say it. Imagine a line – a median – which is where the Nice & Normal people are, with the Loud & Fast above it and the Soft & Slow below that median line. Well, your speech should follow an undulating snake like curve that winds its way through all three sectors and lines to engage all of your audience as much as possible.

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