

Tips for Management on Holding an Audience



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Whether you're delivering the monthly team review, giving positive feedback or demonstrating the new office system via presentation, every manager or team leader needs to know how to communicate effectively with their colleagues. But with so many distractions and drifting focuses in your working environment, keeping your audience's focus might not be as easy as you think. In this post, Broadcast Media Services offers five top tips for management on holding an audience and perfecting that effective delivery.

The Neck Down Approach

When a public speaker begins their delivery, they may well start with something big. A joke, a sweeping statement, a controversial line – something to grab attention and force the audience to pay attention through pure shock factor. And once you've caught their attention, whatever you say afterwards will automatically filter through and stick in their head, even if it's less exciting than your opening line.

This rule can also be applied to the varying styles of management and business [communication](#). Whether it's the landing page of your website, the first slide in your presentation or the joke you throw in before reading the monthly reports, if it's professionally appropriate and bold,

it might just engage your audience for that little bit longer.

Think of it as the front page headline. Newspaper editors know that a great front page headline can increase sales by up to 10%. A great opening line will do the same for the attention span of your audience.

Go Personal

So, you've grabbed their attention, but how do you keep it? One way to keep your colleagues interested and engaging with what you're trying to communicate, is to involve them personally in the topic. Let them share their own experiences, target them with personalized positive commentary, and allow them to feel familiar and comfortable with you.

We've all drowned out that robotic voice on the other end of the phone, telling us to Press 1 to repeat our last message. Adding a bit of personal colour and soft self-deprecation can make you appear warmer to your audience, and the more we like someone, the more we want engage with them.

People are more interested in people than in dry facts, figures and opinions. The more you can clothe your messages with people stories or the impact of what you're saying on actual people the more likely the audience is to stay engaged.

Have Confidence in Your Subject

Nothing makes an audience tune out faster than a nervous, unsure presenter. If you aren't confident in what you're talking about, it can show in a negative way – and whilst people might pay you more attention, they're most likely waiting for you to trip up, rather than engaging with your content.

As a manager, you need to know your topic and team off by heart, and show your enthusiasm for it; talk away from the slides, share 'secrets' and restricted information about it

with your colleagues, go into as much detail as time allows and make yourself believe that your team care about it as much as you do.

You will know too much for the time available but don't try to say too much. Don't show off with knowledge. Take all of your experience in the subject and filter out just the important things. Think: what do I really need to say to this audience?

So, take time to think about what time opportunity you have and say only the essentials.

Sir Winston Churchill used to say that if you wanted him to speak for two hours about the conduct of the war, he could start straight away. If you wanted him to speak for 15 minutes about the conduct of the war he'd need a couple of days to prepare.

Make Your Goals Visible to The Audience

What do you want them to do? This is a very important question to ask yourself. When I have finished speaking – what do I want this audience to do?

Am I looking for a change of culture, is my talk a rallying call, do I require sympathy for my view, do I want them to understand a new bit of equipment?

By setting yourself and your team goals, you're giving them a target to work for. Similar to the tactic of the carrot and the stick, giving your group a standard to aim for can help motivate them into engagement. If you've made your management style likeable enough, sharing your personal management objectives, e.g. receive feedback from at least 3 people, get a 50% increase in profit, connect with everyone in the office, might just spark them into helping you achieve them.

This is a tactic that tends to work well in both customer and business management as it requires very little sacrifice on behalf of the audience. They're not being asked to buy products or spend anything beyond their time to help you

achieve your goal, and they might just be flattered by your faith in their willingness to help.

Limit Distractions

Nothing in the room should be more interesting than you. If possible your audience should have their backs to the window. This means they can't see anything interesting outside and you'll be in the most favourable light. One of the biggest reasons your team might be switching off to you might not be your content or delivery at all. If there are easy to access distractions in the room, such as flashing computers, uncomfortable chairs, mobile phones or snacks can easily draw your audience's attention away – or even distract you from delivering properly.

When planning team meetings, reports, schooling or review sessions, pick familiar places that your colleagues have been in before. This will limit the distraction of new surroundings and distracted sensory exploration, and help them to keep their focus on you. But if you're in a larger space or open room, simple decorative motions such as shutting the door, closing the blinds and switching off all other screens or monitors in the room can make a real change to your presentation.

About the Author: *Andrew was a newspaper, radio and television reporter, producer, presenter and director for nearly 20 years before forming Broadcast Media Services Ltd in 1997. BMS has been a Televisual magazine UK Top 50 Corporate Production studio since 2011 and is one of the UK's leading Media and Crisis Media Training companies.*