

3 Tips for Engaging Presentations (Hint: It's not about you!)

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Want engaging presentations? Here's a hint. Stop thinking it's about you.

Presenters often think of “engagement” as an adjective; we believe we must *be* engaging when we present. It is much more useful to see engagement as a verb, applied to the people you're addressing. And – this is important – *we are not the actors*. They are!



Sure, we need to have some content. We need to have a message. And it helps if we have style. But engagement doesn't happen because our story is so compelling. It happens when the people we're addressing see themselves in the story. And it's much easier for that to happen when we put them into the story from the get-go.

Below are three easy shifts you can make to start engaging your audience.

1. Before you touch that slide deck or open up your PowerPoint, spend some time thinking about who is in the room. Why are they there? What would they be doing if your presentation really hit the mark? (This thinking is way more valuable than thinking about what content you want to share. Think about your audience first, and keep coming back to them throughout your planning.)
2. Define the Big Question you have for them and be sure to ask it. (Hint: that question should not be "any questions?") Once they are engaged in answering the question, they become the protagonists of your presentation. Yes, that cuts into your presenting time, but think about this: if your goal is for this group to take some action or learn something specific, having them simply listen passively won't help you achieve your goal.
3. Be selective -- really selective -- about the content. In fact, just enough information to help them dig into the Big Question and no more. If they walked out remembering just three things (which is likely!), what would they be? How about *one* thing? You probably know a lot more about your topic. You may really love it. And most likely you have done a lot of thinking about it. You want people to understand everything you understand. But guess what? That's about you! Your presentation needs to be about them.