



Virtual Audience Engagement Worksheets

WHY USE VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT?

If you're giving a lengthy virtual presentation, it's imperative to mix up your presenting style. You don't want to be a talking head for 30 minutes or more.

John Medina, founding director of Talaris Research Institute, found that the general rule of thumb for virtual audience engagement is every four minutes. If you're not doing something to keep the attention of the people watching, they will start to lose focus.

You can change up how you're interacting with your audience by asking them questions, allowing them to ask you questions, vote on a poll, getting them to move/stretch/dance, or otherwise shaking up the rhythm of your speech.

This will lead to audience engagement

For every single virtual presentation, not just day-long trainings, a speaker needs to figure out how he or she is going to engage the audience. Dumping information on listeners simply is not good enough.



Are you up for that challenge?

That's good, because your audience—and you—deserve that kind of presentation.

Do you want to change hearts and minds through your company's presentations? If your answer is yes, then you need to think specifically how you will engage, entice, and entertain your audience.

You don't have to become an Oscar-worthy actor or actress. But you do need to incorporate activities, polls, quizzes, breakout rooms, exercises, visuals, improvisations, or other elements that go beyond information delivery to actively keep your audience hooked and enjoying every minute.

Expecting your audience to sit there while you recite information is an ineffective way to teach, inspire, or motivate them.

Remember, when we finish a virtual presentation, we want our audience to have learned and want to know more!

No matter how convincing or obvious the data seems, don't make the mistake of thinking that it speaks for itself and will be enough.



The best presentations target both the right brain (emotion) and the left brain (logic). Aristotle noted that good public speaking can be broken into three parts:

- 1 Appeals to reason
- 2 Appeals to emotion
- 3 Appeals based on credibility and personality of speaker

When a virtual audience is silent or just staring with a blank expression on their screen, how will you engage them?

The biggest challenge for any virtual speaker is connecting with people who are not even in the same room. This is why the best speakers make their virtual presentations feel like a conversation with the audience.

Gaining this kind of engagement takes practice and experience. But even if you're new to speaking, there are steps you can implement to make your presentations, workshops, or trainings as interesting as possible.

Ready to set aside those snore-inducing lectures and make your events fun and interactive? Let's go!



HOW TO PLAN AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

Let's say you've discovered your message and purpose, you've conducted a thorough audience analysis, and you're now clear on your outline structure. Following that, you've found exciting data to help you make your point.

The final step is to plan engagement throughout your talk.

There are many different methods of active learning approaches. As you read the list, take note of which ideas appeal most to you. Which ones have you tried? What is one new idea you might want to try?

It is crucial to plan ahead and choose your audience engagement technique(s).



Choose a technique that fits your objective and the allotted time. Virtual audience participation encompasses a broad range of activities. This can mean a simple showing of hands, requests for brief personal input, role playing and games, or even small group exercises.

Each has its merits. Before asking for audience participation, think about the types of responses you might get. You want audience input to be meaningful and to help you make your point.

Be clear about your purpose and consider how audience participation will help build your case. Most importantly, think about what you'll say if you don't get the responses you expect.

Pace and rhythm in talks create energy.

Divide your talk up to maintain a steady rhythm. Variety is the spice of life, so make sure to add variety for every new point. Keep in mind that attention spans are short by nature and they're getting shorter!



When planning audience engagement, it helps to remember the general rule of thumb to employ an ECS technique (Emotionally Competent Stimulus) for every 4 minutes of content.

Break your talk into a steady rhythm of main points and make sure that you do something different to keep people engaged following each 4 minute interval.

Think about an audience engagement technique that gives the brain a break and connects to one of the points. Examples include: stories, video clips, case studies, images, relevant anecdotes, or anything that triggers an emotion.

Audience participation should add value! When you leverage tenets of behavioral science to surprise and delight your audiences, you'll achieve maximum results in your presentation.



THE EAT PRINCIPLE OF SOCIAL LEARNING

The EAT Principle helps us engage the four major areas of the cortex at the same time. According to the Neuroscience of Adult Learning, the more regions of the cortex used, the more change will occur.

E = Experience

Experience something first

A = Awareness

Gain an awareness of what happened during the experience

T = Theory

Receive an explanation of the theory behind the experience



When you keep the EAT Principle in mind while planning activities, you'll be sure to provide the opportunity for participants to:

- E:** Experience the content, allowing them to engage in a trial-and-error approach.
- A:** Feel good about contributing when the group is asked to discuss the experience.
- T:** Share the theory at the conclusion to help fill in the gaps.

This ties back to the social component of learning. Social learning allows participants to process and retain more information by discussing the concepts with a partner or in a breakout room with a small group. The lessons learned by asking other participants related questions and hearing real-life feedback are invaluable. The human brain is naturally inclined to participate in social learning, which helps increase learning retention.

THE TOP TEN TECHNIQUES FOR AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

Technique #1: Ask effective questions

Use inclusive framing by asking effective questions of the audience during the virtual presentation. Ask your questions in such a way that most audience members would be able to respond. Inclusive questions are great for building a shared identity among the crowd.

Technique #2: Allow time for response

Listen to answers. In the words of Ernest Hemingway “When people talk, listen completely.” Most people never listen. So just by listening, you will stand out. Whether you are communicating one-on-one, in a small group, or with a large audience, look for opportunities to hear from people—and then truly listen to the meaning of what they say.

Technique #3: Lead them in a game

Need to keep your attendees focused? Tap into their competitive sides. Puzzles or riddles, crosswords, memory games, ordering tasks—all are great ways to keep your attendees engaged and on-task. If you can teach or reinforce a concept through a game or activity, more people will comprehend it and remember it.



Technique #4: Breakout Rooms

Encouraging your audience to actively participate in a group activity is one effective way to ensure that your message is getting through. Create breakout rooms that virtual audience members can participate in and give them clear instructions on what to do. You can ask them to come back with a solution, a question, or even an insight to share. Engage them physically by asking them to stand, raise their hands, clap, etc. Create a “Round Robin” discussion to hear from everyone, especially when brainstorming or seeking opinions.

Technique #5: Polls and quizzes

You can do an online survey before the meeting or presentation to engage your audience in thinking before they even arrive. Conduct a poll. Take your question further by making it multiple choice or True/False and count up the answers. Or just make an observation based on raised hands.

Quizzes are great too. As school kids, most of us were afraid of pop quizzes. But adults love a quiz when it’s just for fun. Nothing engages an audience like a little friendly competition!

Technique #6: Tell stories or use metaphors

Try to make your material relatable to everyday life by using real examples, case studies, and creative metaphors. Metaphors and stories are central to the way memory operates. A great story will linger in the minds of your attendees much longer than a chart.

Technique #7: Remember the KISS your audience rule (“keep It Simple Sweetie”)

Summarize your idea with a short sentence or slogan. Use a numbered list or a countdown. Channel your inner David Letterman and organize your communication in a way that lets people count the progression. Use an acrostic. It may seem silly or overly simplified, but this technique supports the way the brain functions.

Technique #8: Provide recognition and reward

If you are leading a course, attendees will be more motivated to complete it if their efforts are recognized and they have something to show at the end.

Technique #9: Plan the set up

Everyone is used to signing on and being met with a generic welcome slide or awkward silence. Consider playing music to set the mood and get attendees energized before your session and during breaks. If appropriate, have a humorous GIF or image showing thanking them for waiting. Anything you can do to surprise and delight your audience will help.

Technique #10: Use props

Props can make your teaching even more engaging. These could be practical items that metaphorically represent your subject matter (think scales, an abacus, or a mannequin) or they could be ridiculous (try a rubber chicken or a magic wand). Props liven up your session, and will help people remember what they learned.

