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# HOW TO ENGAGE, INSPIRE AND STIMULATE YOUR AUDIENCE

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*Dan Terry*

**How to ENGAGE, INSPIRE and STIMULATE your  
AUDIENCE**

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*For Tracey, Ruth and Katie.*



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# Preface

I FIRST MET Dan Terry over five years ago at a seminar in London. Since then we have become colleagues, friends and co-presenters on numerous occasions. It is a privilege for me to write a few words as the foreword to this book. I have seen firsthand Dan captivating an audience and I have often thought “*Wow, how does he do that?*” I must confess that I have also thought “*I wish I could do that.*” By carefully observing what he does, I have improved my skills as a presenter, without ever attempting to become a copy or clone of the original. This book will help anyone who has to speak in public. It will be of use to people who have to speak as part of their working life, trainers, presenters and teachers, or those who just speak occasionally at weddings or parties.

There is an old adage in the world of training that some people will get it from just being told, others will need to see it, and still others will need to experience it. Reading this book will tell you what Dan does in order to be a truly captivating public speaker. If you are able to attend one of Dan’s speaking engagements then you will be able to observe him firsthand. In order to have the experience of what it is like to captivate an audience you will need to try out the things Dan writes about in this book. And as Dan

would say, remember the three **A**'s – when you do something for the first time it's **A**wkward, but if you keep **A**pplying it, it becomes **A**utomatic.

Keith Aiton, EAF International  
Master NLP Coach and Trainer

# Introduction

*“You don’t have to be great to start but you have to start to be great”*

Zig Ziglar

**T**HIS BOOK WON’T tell you how to write a presentation or put together a course. It won’t tell you what kind of things you should and shouldn’t include, and it won’t help you design leaflets or course notes. Writing a presentation, talk, seminar or course is covered in other books. This book WILL tell you, once you’ve written your presentation or course, how to engage with the audience and have them on the edge of their seats, hanging on to every word you say.

Imagine facilitating a course where you can really feel the energy in the room, and you are delivering fantastic results, time and time again. This is what this book will help you to achieve through training and presenting.

Nowadays trainers, facilitators, presenters and sales people have to be at the top of their game, as new technology and transport shrinks the world, whilst the world itself becomes increasingly competitive. You only have to look towards China and see the strides they have made recently. The same principle applies in the training field, and companies that traditionally have employed and developed their own in-house experts and trainers can now afford to shop around, sometimes worldwide, for external people.

Out sourcing has become very common especially in the field of

training and personnel development, so get prepared to beat the competition.

I've spent the last decade training thousands of company employees and during this time I've become very frustrated hearing about the problems my clients have had with their previous training providers.

So I decided to do some research into the phenomenon, to try and develop an understanding of what constituted a really good and interesting course. At the time I was working primarily in the field of Health and Safety, which (lets be brutally honest) isn't the most invigorating or exciting of topics. If I could understand the essential elements of presenting this topic in an engaging and entertaining way, then any other topic could be brought alive regardless of how dry and dusty the subject matter might initially seem.

The fields of training and personal development offer fantastic opportunities to touch people's lives in profound ways. At the very least, we owe it to the many thousands of people who attend the many thousands of courses that run each year, in thousands of organisations all over the country and overseas, to offer our courses and presentations to them in such a way that they remember what they've been taught, can act upon this new knowledge immediately, and have a good time doing it.

I've written this book in 10 simple steps, breaking down each of the techniques so that your audience can be quickly and irreversibly hooked. This book will, I sincerely hope, intrigue and inspire you, even if you apply only one of the steps. Every chapter is full of ideas and techniques that I have used to train staff in many organisations both in the UK and overseas and they've been tried and tested over many years. Your challenge is to take on at least one a month (or for a greater challenge, one a week) and apply it. Your career and those of your delegates will take on a whole new meaning.

Learn to master the whole group, even the show offs, or the ones who don't particularly want to be there. This book can be used as a workbook – open it at any chapter and apply the techniques almost immediately.

A number of years ago I heard of a delegate who, after attending a four day course (not one of mine I hasten to add), went back to

work and almost immediately fell into scalding water (metaphorically speaking). Apparently it wasn't a case of (a) "it-won't-happen-to-me" attitude, or (b) complacency or negligence. It was simply the case that the course was so dull that most of the messages and training had literally "gone out of the window".

This book explains how to make a presentation memorable and without knowing it the people/delegates on your course start to do the things you discussed and continue to do them long after the course has finished. How good would that be?

I set about modelling how the best presenters delivered their material and how they interacted, engaged and energised the group. The one thing that all the best presenters did was start with the delegate in mind, rather than the topic being taught. If your presentation methods and style are delegate focussed, you can gain fantastic results. And you can do this before you even start your presentation!

Above all have fun

## Chapter 1

# The Rules have changed

**C**AN YOU REMEMBER the name of your favourite teacher when you were at school? What subject did they teach? Did you do well in that particular subject?

Now, can you remember the dullest and most boring teacher(s) at school? Most people can remember the name of their favourite teacher and the subject they taught, and it's usually true that when a child engages fully with a teacher their understanding and performance within the subject improves. So, it's not surprising that (after all these years) you can still remember your favourite teacher, yet generally people find the names of dull or boring teachers more difficult to recall.

Now, thinking back, can you remember the first in-house company training course you had to attend? Did the instructor put you to sleep with the overhead transparencies or a PowerPoint presentation, but you were still expected to remember all the information and fill in an assessment form afterwards? What was that like?

Conversely, have you ever been on a course that inspired you, so much so that you took it further and applied what you learned?

These two examples help to show how we rarely remember

things that bore us and don't stimulate us. If training does not invigorate both our imagination and creative thinking, as well as our professional or personal knowledge, it becomes a total waste of time, effort, and money.

In the past, the general approach was for lecturers to lecture, and the audience to just shut up and listen. It has taken many generations for teachers to discover that people do not learn effectively in that way, and they never did. So, the rules have had to change. The age of instructors' with sergeant major's swagger canes, regularly beating the desk or podium to ensure attention is (I hope) long gone.

But the effects of this approach isn't, and it's a great shame because many thousands of people still sit through many hours of courses, and ultimately all that the lecturers and trainers achieve is to bore the pants off the delegates.

I remember attending one particular works seminar because I fell sound asleep on the front row, right under the lecturer's nose! Around sixty of us were attending that course and many of us had been out the night before for a few beers. Now, I know that this wasn't perhaps the best way to prepare for a course, but there we are - that was what happened.

The trainers' voice droned on monotonously, which was just about the best alternative sleeping pill anyone could have. It was such a shame because with a little thought and planning the subject could have been a really interesting one. However, it wasn't to be.

Within minutes I had slipped blissfully away to dreamland, and within what must have been a few minutes I suddenly heard a voice bellowing – "AM I BORING YOU?" With this I sat up straight, slightly confused, apologised and managed somehow to remain conscious for the rest of the session. After the break I sat in a different place, near the back of the room, and to my pleasant astonishment there were many others dropping off to sleep as well. The day dragged on, and I'm sorry to say I can't even remember what subjects were covered. I was eternally grateful when the course was concluded.

Do you know what was so sad? The instructor was completely unaware of the level of boredom that he was inflicting on us! And despite the obvious problems associated with this approach, there are still some trainers out there who still use the old rules. You

probably know one or two?

Having seen and lived through the “bad old days”, it is time for us to consider how the “Good New Days” need to be shaped. But first, there are two little phrases that must be learned by heart.

- The trainer does not know everything.
- The only difference between the trainer and the delegate is that the trainer has been a delegate longer.

Old rules	New rules
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lecture to the delegates</li><li>• Stick to rigid syllabus</li><li>• Read off the slide show</li><li>• Overload with information</li><li>• Written closed book test</li><li>• Controlling</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Get to know the delegates preferred learning style</li><li>• Deliver flexibility</li><li>• Have group interaction and engagement</li><li>• Use humour, fun to create interest, and feedback</li><li>• Nurture</li></ul>

Let’s disregard the old rules, and look at these new rules in more detail.

# New Rules

## Get to know the delegates' preferred learning style

**M**ANY TRAINERS/SPEAKERS have one preferred way of delivering their information. Practice makes perfect, and after a time they find what works for them and fall into their comfort zone in terms of presentation style. But, in many cases it doesn't occur to them, that delegates have many different ways of learning and understanding in terms of course delivery, and may require a variety of ways to keep them interested.

Trainers/speakers must be sensitive and sympathetic to the reactions and interactions of their delegates, and need to have flexibility in their methods of delivery. Preparation is the key to enable this to happen.

Similarities can be drawn with respect to stand-up comedians. They have to be thoroughly prepared, better than any other performer, to deliver a fixed script so that all the right jokes are delivered at the right time and in the right order. Also, vary it according to the reactions of their audience to keep the flow of information at the optimum level, and have an armoury of quips and put downs that can be immediately used to stop a heckler in their tracks and bring the show back on course. As a result they deliver a relaxed and seemingly informal presentation of their

material, based on many hours solid preparation and practice time.

The various learning styles are dealt with later in this book, and being able to deliver the essential elements of any course or presentation in line with each learning style will enable you to choose the right approach with the audience when the crucial time comes.

## **1 Deliver Flexibility**

Some topics have to be more rigid in terms of the data being conveyed than others; for example Health and Safety law, employment law, tax law, etc., are based on solid facts and rules, rigidly laid down with no interpretation required at all. So the general assumption is that these dry and inflexible subjects have to be presented in a dry and inflexible way. This is not the case at all. The only difference between these and so called “lighter” topics, like sales skills, killer marketing techniques, Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) training, etc. is that the drier subjects just require a greater degree of preparation with the use of real life case studies and anecdotes to highlight the principles of what is being taught. This does require significant research but the rewards are there to be gained.

To create a truly vibrant presentation as much time needs to be spent on case studies, anecdotes and jokes as is spent in the factual aspects of the presentation, and then all of these should be committed to memory. The trainer or speaker who is entirely tied to course notes or slides looks unprofessional, and will inevitably end up being a bore.

## **2 Have group interaction and engagement**

Do you remember the little phrases from earlier in this chapter? The first one really comes into play at this point – “The trainer does not know everything”. No one likes to be lectured at. The best trainers and speakers enable the delegates to learn by allowing them to be a part of the process, offering their point of view, and allowing the audience to relate their emotions and experiences to the subject. Training is not a one sided process and people do not absorb information like a computer downloading software. It is an interactive process where information is exchanged.

### **3 Use humour and fun to create interest and feedback**

Surprisingly, many people have thought that training courses and presenting seminars needed to be a serious affair with little space for humour. How wrong could they be? Here's another analogy for you – if you eat a dry meal too quickly you'll suffer with indigestion. So, it stands to reason that if you consume dry information too quickly you'll suffer from "intellectual indigestion". We all suffer very easily with intellectual indigestion from time to time, and definitely need a regular dose of "intellectual antacid" (otherwise known as "humour and fun") to relieve the situation. Failure to relieve the situation will certainly cause violent and uncontrollable bouts of "intellectual flatulence" (or information overload) as the brain tries desperately to redress the balance by expelling everything it's just tried to absorb (roughly translated as "forgetting everything that's just been said").

### **4 Nurturing**

Drawing the delegates out of their shells, allowing them to fully interact and contribute in the session is vital in today's training. Questioning is a fantastic way of achieving this. More on this later.

*"By the inch it's a cinch by the yard it's hard"*

Napolean Hill

As we have seen, the rules have certainly changed. Utilising the latest techniques and different ways to stimulate and engage the whole group is where this book becomes invaluable. It is not about lesson planning or the technical stuff behind training (though they are important); these are simple techniques that can be applied immediately in your training and presentations to engage your audience.

So, the first task in any training session is to get the delegates interested, open, interacting and consequently ready to learn.

# Stop & think

## Question 1

What rules are you working under in your present training sessions? Be honest!

## Question 2

How many of the rules do you identify with on a regular basis?

## Question 3

When was the last time you injected some humour into the session?