

6 More Ways to Engage ALL Audiences (No Matter What Your Topic Is)



1. TELL YOUR NEIGHBOR. Pose a topic-related question (either verbally or printed on a slide) and say, “Think about this question ...” Stop speaking for 3 - 4 seconds to give your audience time to think. Then say, “Now let your neighbor – the person sitting next to you – know what your response is to the question.” Stop talking again for about 30 - 60 seconds while audience members share their responses with each other.

2. SHOW ME. Tell a topic-related statement (either verbally or printed on a slide) and say, “Show me a ‘thumbs up’ if it’s true or a ‘thumbs down’ if it’s false.” Then let your audience know which is correct and why. You can do this with a variety of topic-related statements that you insert throughout your presentation. You can also get creative and use a variety of “Show Me” signals for different reasons: “Wave your hands wildly if you have a burning question ... Pat yourself on the back if you know the answer to this question ... Show me a ‘time sign’ (making a T with both hands) if I’ve been talking too long ... Give the person sitting next to you a ‘high-five’ for their response.”

3. REPEAT AFTER ME. Create a word or phrase that captures the essence of a topic-related concept and say it aloud. Then invite the audience to say it with you. At various times during your talk, pause and ask the audience to repeat the word or phrase. Or ask a question that can only be answered by that word or phrase and have everyone answer it aloud.

4. STAND AND SPEAK. (Use with audiences seated at tables instead of theater-style seating.) Say, “Stand and find someone who is not seated at your table and tell that person 3 topic-related facts you now know that you didn’t know when you walked in. When done, thank your partner and return to your seat.” Give audience members about 2 - 3 minutes to do this.

5. STICK IT TO A WALL. (Use with audiences seated at tables where there are sticky notes and pens.) Direct each person to take a sticky note and write on it a topic-related summary statement, question, or opinion. Then tell them to stick their note to a designated wall where everyone can read the notes later or while on a break. Be sure to read and address the questions later, as well.

6. WALK AND TALK. (Use with audiences in a room large enough for people to walk around the perimeter.) As a closing activity, say “Find one or two other people to take a walk around the room with. While you walk, talk about how you plan to use what you’ve learned when you leave today. When you get back to where you started, thank your ‘Walk and Talk’ partners and have a seat.” As an opening activity, the instructions might include “Talk about what you already know about the topic.” For a review activity, the instructions can include “Talk about the most important concepts you’ve learned so far and why they are important to you.”

Content from *Training from the BACK of the Room!* and *The Ten-Minute Trainer* by author Sharon Bowman. For book orders, log onto Amazon.com. For quantity orders, call Bowperson Publishing at 775-749-5247. For information about Sharon’s popular 2-day train-the-trainer class, “*Training from the BACK of the Room!*” click on www.Bowperson.com.

