

# Help! They Want Audience Interaction!

## Breakout Session Highlight Notes NSA Annual Convention, July 19, 2015

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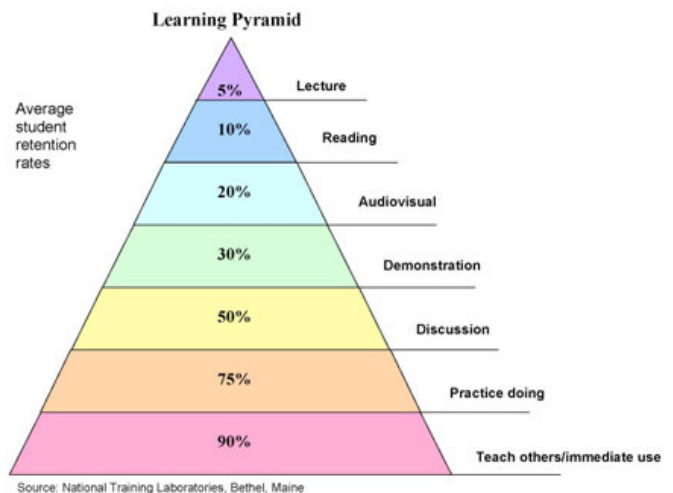
### Opening Shout Outs

I am hoping to leave this convention with \_\_\_\_\_.

- Laser-focus and intention
- Focus on one or two things
- Meet people
  - Drink as a way to put faces to names!
- What I'm going to do to make this happen:
  - Bring an assistant – and make an action list for who will do what in follow-up
  - Block off the week after the convention
  - Make a list, start with the first thing, and do them one at a time
- What we'd like to give
  - Encouragement to others – a little kick

### Why Audience Interaction

- Fuels me as a speaker
- Honors the audience as having valuable contributions
- Provides the audience what they want: learning new things through engagement
- Makes the experience memorable



## Top Fears and Concerns About Audience Interaction

- Losing control
  - One person dominates
  - Off topic comments
- It might not work
  - Different paces and learning styles
  - One person might take over
- Resistance
  - Might be hokey and campy
  - People won't value the exercise
- Timing and logistics
  - The time that it takes
  - Different timing for different groups
  - Lots of work to plan

## Ways to Address Top Fears and Concerns

- Losing Control
  - Think of it like health care: prevention, management, cure
  - First, prevent – the best investment
    - Show the audience that you are in charge
    - Build credibility
    - Demonstrate that you know what you are doing: “I got this”
    - Establish ground rules and clear expectations up front
  - If a participant challenges your process, say:
    - I understand that you think there might be a better way to do this.
    - \_\_\_\_\_ [name of leader or manager] and I have carefully planned this session; we have been thoughtful about it.
    - Let's give it a try.
    - We can talk more about it at the break.
  - If a participant makes off-topic comments:
    - Don't reprimand - don't draw attention - everyone already knows it was off topic
    - Say, “Thanks for sharing that. Is there anyone else who would like to make a comment?”
    - Always have a “what's next” or a “Plan B” to move on to and make it about moving on to something new rather than shutting someone down
    - Maintain an open mind - that comment just might be the magic solution that everyone needed to hear

- If someone talks too long
  - Try not to let go of the mic yourself
  - Maintain eye contact with the person who is talking
  - Acknowledge that their points have been heard and move on
- It Might Not Work
  - If you are fearful that no one is going to raise a hand and answer a question
    - Just wait – be okay with a moment of silence
  - Read the energy in the room and adapt
  - Recognize when an activity is failing and don't be afraid to push the eject button
  - Be transparent. Tell the group “I thought this was going to work well but it seems like it's not, and I don't want to waste your important time. Let's move on to the next thing - how many people would be in favor of that?”
    - Don't push a group artificially through an activity
  - Have a Plan B that you can move to - lightning fast!
    - While you are flipping through papers deciding what to do next, in those 30 seconds, someone will raise a hand and make a process suggestion and then you are back on defense
- Resistance
  - Make the exercise relevant
    - Participants less likely to resist if topic is compelling
    - Don't do an exercise just for the sake of doing an exercise
  - Prevention
    - Make a nice agenda - describe the session accurately in advance - maximize chances that the right people are in the room
  - Put participants at ease that they don't *HAVE* to do each activity, as long as they don't disrupt others
  - If you sense that high-level professionals might think activities are hokey, be transparent: “I know this seems hokey, but I'm asking you to hang in there and just try it.”
    - Often the people who indicate “I hate activities” are the ones who then say “that was the best part” on the evaluations
  - When tempted to perform especially for, and win over, that one guy who just doesn't want to go along
    - Try to rise above that temptation
    - If you will work with client multiple times, you have a chance to win that guy over
    - If it's a one-hour gig, then your duty is to serve the whole group and you will be letting people down if you just serve that one guy
  - You can't teach, you can only create an environment where people choose to learn