



CREATING AN EXPERIENCE

Just like your first record, 8-track, cassette tape, or cd, everyone remembers their first music concert. What they remember about it will differ, and oftentimes the “first” memories set the expectation for every other concert experienced from that point on. Ask someone to reminisce on that memory and you’ll likely hear one or more of the following factors that made it so memorable:

- **The Venue** – Something about the location was impressive – whether seeing the show at the Gorge Amphitheater, Red Rocks, Madison Square Garden or your best friend’s backyard under a string of lights...the experience of preparing for, arriving to, and waiting at the venue tend to be one of the most significant aspects of the experience.
- **The Company** – You remember who you were with, who knew every song, who was tone deaf and who really didn’t want to be there (maybe a parent!). The company you kept impacted your personal experience.
- **The Entertainer** – This is what you remember most – the actual group. No matter the genre: rock, jazz, pop, etc., the energy – or the lack thereof – is what you remember. How did they come out on stage? What was their opening song? Did they engage with the audience? Did they make you want to sing until you lost your voice? Did you get emotional? And the ultimate litmus test for how successful it was, did seeing them live make you love their music more?

Your role as a presenter is really no different. Perhaps you don't feel like a rockstar – you likely don't have the following U2 or Garth Brooks have when they enter the stage...but, your objective and ability to impact the audience and create an experience is similar. Your audience members will probably not be impressed with the venue or find their work colleagues terribly memorable – but they are there to hear from you.

Think about that – when you give a presentation or speech, the individuals in attendance are there for a reason. Maybe they are there for continuing education, or as a part of a larger conference...regardless of the specific reason, they are there to hear you. It may be out of obligation or duty, but it's your job to create an experience that will leave them at least feeling positive about the time spent, and at most feeling inspired by your words. Despite this, because you're not Bono, every time you step up to give a speech or presentation:

- 1/3 of your audience views you favorably
- 1/3 of your audience finds you unfavorable
- 1/3 of your audience is preparing to ignore you

When you consider this, 2/3 of your audience is predisposed to not listen to you – even if they're supposed to. It's your job, therefore, to win over your audience in each and every speech you give, starting with the very first words that come out of your mouth.

BE THE ENTERTAINER THEY'RE NOT EXPECTING

It may seem silly to visualize yourself as a rockstar when delivering year-end results or the next quarter's goals – but, consider the following aspects any successful entertainer plans for, and you'll realize it's not silly at all:

- **Who/what comes before me?** Understanding who/what your "opening act" is will affect the state of your audience when you show up. What is the subject matter? What is the personality or tone of that individual/topic? Your job is to try to either continue to ride the energy that was left before, or find a way to invigorate your audience so that they want to be there.
- **What is the venue and space that I'm working with?** Think about your "stage" – is it impressive to look at? Being in a venue that is already pleasing definitely helps you out! More times than not though, it won't be anything memorable. However, understanding the set up and your space to move in will help you create a positive environment and experience.
- **What is my demographic?** Know your audience! Boy bands know they've got pre-teens' screams to sing over and mothers who'd rather not be in the audience. Classic rock bands understand they have hard-core fans who know the songs better than them – who are probably harder to impress. Know your audience. Try to understand why they are there and what they are hoping to achieve or experience from being there.
- **How do I interact with my audience?** There are shows where the group simply gets on and plays through the set list as though you simply put their cd in the player. No interaction. They probably don't quite know what city they're even in. Others get on the stage so immersed in what they're doing, that 30 minutes later they are still jamming on the same song, leaving the audience unsure of where one song started and another ended. The real entertainers however, make it an experience. They understand their audience and know what they want to hear.

They take it a step further and deliver the unexpected (along with the expected) leaving the audience wanting more and wondering what will come next. Sure, you can't incorporate fireworks, lasers, or confetti, but you can exceed the expectations of your audience – if you take the time to understand them in the first place.

Think of your presentation as a show – a show that needs to not only deliver the expected information, but win over and inspire the audience. When you think of yourself as an entertainer, and not just some subject matter expert of finance or global warming...you'll be amazed of the outcome.

TED – THE ULTIMATE ROCKSTAR STANDARD FOR SPEECHES

Still not convinced delivering your speech as an entertainer is relevant for you and your industry? Consider the TED phenomenon. Every 17 seconds, someone, somewhere in the world, is watching a TED talk. Technology, Entertainment, and Design (TED) is the cool, modern lecture series on a variety of topics delivered by practitioners worldwide. They inform, entertain, and often inspire—always in 18 minutes or less. To watch a good TED talk is to feel inspired. There is no room for wasted words. No endless droning. Even if you are watching on YouTube, there is something about their approach that makes you feel you are there. No distance, just connection!

Numerous articles have been written about the wild success and allure of the TED talks. What is it that makes them so appealing?

While there are a number of reasons these talks are so successful, Forbes gets at the heart of why, "The TED philosophy, according to Lara Stein, the Founder and Director of TEDx, consists of one sentence, 'it's about simplified, authentic storytelling.' Which seems to fit well with its mission of, 'ideas worth spreading'. Combine both with a remarkable TEDx organizer and speaker and you get the 18-minute presentation equivalent of a Hollywood blockbuster."

Through the formula of keeping things short, lively, and entertaining, TED producers have figured out how to make viewers feel like they are part of the event. I can promise this: if you spend a little more time with TED, not only paying attention to the topics that are addressed, but how they are delivered, your presentation skills will improve if you adopt what you see. Take a look at my TOP 5 Pick for the most effective TED talks:

1. Ken Robinson: *Do Schools Kill Creativity?*
2. Amy Cuddy: *Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are*
3. Stacy Kramer: *The Best Gift I Ever Survived*
4. Brené Brown: *The Power of Vulnerability*
5. Dan Ariely: *Are we in Control of our Own Emotions?*

BE BONO

Be the Bono for your board meeting, industry conference keynote, or quarterly report. You don't have to wear sunglasses, jump around tables or incorporate elaborate light-shows. Instead, approach every speaking opportunity with a desire to not only share important information, but to engage and tell a story. Leave your audience impressed and wanting to know more.