

# THE ART OF AN ENGAGING HOOK

Unbeknownst to many of us when we listen to a song, watch a film, or sit down to listen to a presentation we have decided to give our attention to the storyteller. Now there are many different types of storyteller, be they a singer, director, blogger or presenter and as a result there are many different means of grabbing an audience's attention. These means of grabbing an audience's attention can be grouped together as "hooks".

In a time where distractions live at our fingertips, or in our pockets, if the storyteller wishes to convey a message, they must first reel their audience in and then force them to become invested in the subject matter. Songs do this using a catchy beat, films an arresting image and so presenters wishing to sell their product are no different. They must cleverly compose a means of convincing an audience to sit up and take notice of their product. Some involve their audience by asking them to stand up or raise their hands, some deliver an anecdote with a hidden meaning that helps illustrate the need for their product, both methods work when employed correctly however I prefer to employ a different method.

I always like to put myself in the audience's shoes. I suffer from a very short attention span so I want a presenter to grab my attention quickly. I have always found the best way to do this is by shocking the audience. Retreat from the norm and distinguish yourself from the 10 other presentations they will see that week; create an emotional element, make your audience feel. After three presentations they are most likely tired, their minds start to drift towards dinner or that show on TV later that night. By catching their emotions off-guard they become arrested by your message.

The value of silence cannot be underestimated. I feel it is undervalued and almost feared by most presenters. If you can use simple, shocking imagery juxtaposed against a background of pure silence you can 'without saying a word' causes an audience member's mind to race to hundreds of conclusions. By forcing them to engage they become enthralled and from then on, they're yours.

Another "hook" attacks your audience's emotions by telling a story that the audience can relate to directly. In this case imagery is unnecessary, your words will help the audience paint a picture in their own heads. Speak to them about their safety or the safety of their children and everyone stops in their tracks, listens and thinks.

You may have noticed I have advised to either use an audio or visual approach. This is because by bombarding an audience on both fronts overwhelms them and causes them to become disinterested.

In summary, there is no right or wrong way of employing a hook, just find one that suits your presenting style, and ensure that you attack your audience's emotions, without overwhelming their senses.