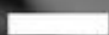


LEARNERS NOTES | 2018-19

DEALING WITH INTERRUPTIONS

- SETTING GROUND RULES
- DEALING WITH INTERRUPTIONS
- STAYING IN CONTROL OF THE QUESTIONS
- HANDLING DIFFICULT QUESTIONS



ETHNUS



Explore | Expand | Enrich

DEALING WITH QUESTIONS

SETTING OUT THE GROUND RULES

DEALING WITH INTERRUPTIONS

STAYING IN CONTROL OF THE QUESTIONS

HANDLING DIFFICULT QUESTIONS



INTRODUCTION

We have seen ways to prepare a presentation, the methods of organizing the content, preparing how to present it on a stage, and many more things. While presenting, if there are questions from the audiences, how can they be handled?

It is not necessary that you know answers for all the questions that are being asked by the audiences. When someone asks you a question while presenting, how will you handle the situation? Read along and find out the tricks to avoid awkward moments on stage.

SETTING OUT THE GROUND RULES

WHAT ARE GROUND RULES?

Ground rules are standards of behaviour that are agreed upon by the presenter and the group members at the beginning of a session. These standards are a list of the group's expectations for acceptable behaviour during the session.

WHY TO SET GROUND RULES?

When running a facilitated session we would like to think that common sense and good manners would prevail. This is not always the case. Sometimes in facilitated sessions, particularly those sessions dealing with contentious issues, participants can let their emotions get the better of them. In these situations it is a good practice to develop ground rules.



It is also important to set a ground rule for how participation will be managed. Do you prefer for participants to raise their hands and be called on or for people to speak freely? Remember that some people, especially those who tend to be introverted, need more time to process thoughts and speak, so the latter option may exclude them from the discussion. Still, the formal process of raising hands to be recognized may detract from the collective atmosphere needed to discuss controversial issues.

TIPS TO DEVELOP GROUND RULES

- Start with some basic ground rules to minimize the time spent on developing new rules.
- Ask the group if they would like to add any ground rules once the basic ground rules are established.
- Avoid making new ground rules during a session if issues arise.
- Get buy-in from the group for the ground rules; ask the group to help enforce the ground rules during the session.
- Be realistic and flexible when developing ground rules. They are guidelines, not the law.

- Post the ground rules on a flip chart in a visible location during the session for easy reference

Some of the sample ground rules are as mentioned below.

- Listen actively -- respect others when they are talking.
- Inform about the questioning session in prior -- whether it is in the end or questions can be asked in middle.
- One person speaks at a time -- too many voices at same time can make the questioning session awkward.
- Be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses -- they can be as disrespectful as words.

DEALING WITH INTERRUPTIONS

WHAT IS AN INTERRUPTION?

Interruptions are a break in the flow of something that is going smooth. In a presentation, when an interruption occurs, there are mainly three problems that occur. They are as listed below.

- It breaks the flow of the presentation.
- It may steer the flow of presentation towards irrelevance.
- It may introduce situations for which the presenter is not ready to deal with.

Breaking the flow: When a presenter explains the crucial concept in the presentation and a question is asked from the audience, this breaks the flow of the explanation and steers the conversation to the question asked.

Steering towards irrelevance: A question asked from the audience can steer the whole conversation towards a topic irrelevant to the actual topic of presentation. Imagine a situation where presentation is given about marketing in different countries and when a question is asked about something irrelevant

to the topic but in relation to a specific country, that turns the whole conversation purposeless.

Situations not ready to deal with:

Sometimes, the presenter may not be ready for questions while explaining a point from the slide. There are people who forget when a flow is broken. This situation creates an awkward moment where the presenter fumbles to answer the question and fails to continue the presentation also.

WHY DEAL WITH INTERRUPTIONS?

Dealing with interruptions requires a measured response. The presenters must never adopt extreme approach such as ignoring the interruption or giving their full attention. Interruptions reduce the credibility and impact of the presentations. Paying full attention distracts the presenter from the true message of the presentation. Ignoring the interruptions entirely is considered as a rude behaviour by a presenter

HOW TO DEAL WITH INTERRUPTIONS?

There are a few methods of how to deal with interruptions. They are as given below.

1. ABC Method:

ABC is one of the methods that helps to deal with questions asked by the audience during a presentation. In this method, the queries are classified into 3 types.

- A is query that has to be addressed immediately.
- B is query that will be addressed later in the presentation.
- C is the query that can be addressed privately after the presentation.



IMPORTANT

2. Most, Some, Few: In this method, the priority of the questions is based on the number of people asking the same questions.

- The presenter can answer the question immediately when **MOST** of the people have the same question.
- When **SOME** people have a same doubt, it can be addressed later during the Q&A session.
- When **FEW** people have a specific query, it can be addressed at the end of Q&A session or privately after the presentation.

3. Expected, Unexpected: There are a few questions that the presenter can guess and some questions which can never be expected from the audience. These type of questions can be handled as follows.

- There can be few questions which would have been anticipated by the presenter while preparing the presentation. These **EXPECTED** questions can be addressed immediately.
- There can be few **UNEXPECTED** questions from the audience. These questions can be addressed in the Q&A session.

THINGS TO AVOID

There are a few things a presenter has to avoid during a presentation with interruptions. They are as follows.

- Ignoring the interruption.
- Dodging the questions using lies and manipulation
- Ridiculing or discouraging people asking questions.
- Being vague about ground rules.
- Letting interruptions to drag the presentation off the track.

These are a few things that must be avoided while handling questions from audience during a presentation.



IMPORTANT

STAYING IN ONTROL OF QUESTIONS

HOW TO CONTROL THE QUESTIONS?

Most people dread the question session because they fear losing control. A little thought and some early planning can avoid this risk. But you can also avoid it by remembering that any presentation is an information exchange. It is as much for you to hear what people want to know as for them to hear from you.

The main rule of question sessions is to treat your audience with the respect you would like to have shown to you, and answer their questions directly and honestly. If they have asked a question, it is because they want to know the answer. It is very unlikely that anyone will ask a question solely to trip you up, although this does happen.

MANAGE QUESTIONS

- Listen carefully to the question and, if the audience is large, repeat it to ensure everyone in the audience has heard.
- If you're not sure you understood correctly, paraphrase it back to the questioner and check that you have it right. Answer briefly and to the point.

These are a few ways of how you can stay in control of the questions and how you can manage difficult situations while questions are being asked.

HANDLING DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

HOW TO HANDLE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS?

One of the methods to handle questions that are lengthy to answer or if it needs explaining a whole new concept, these questions can be dealt with in the end of the presentation, in the Q&A session or after the Q&A session.



IMPORTANT

When a question is asked and if you do not know the answer, then say so and offer to find out. Then ensure that you follow up. To be able to respond, you will need the name and email address of the questioner, so make sure that you speak to them before they or you leave.

“I don’t know” is a very acceptable answer to some difficult questions and it is much more acceptable than stumbling through an answer or making something up. “I don’t know, but I’ll find out and let you know” is even more acceptable.

Involving your Audience: If you are speaking to a well-informed audience, a professional group for example, and the question is a fairly general one to which you do not know the answer, consider asking the room if anyone else would like to respond. You may have the world expert on that subject sitting there who would be delighted to share their expertise with you all. Most people will be fine with that approach, especially if they really do know more about it than you, and it will mean that the room gets a much better response. Yes, you’re the one standing at the front, but you don’t know everything.

STEPS TO HANDLE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

Prepare Beforehand: Whether you like it or not, you probably know ahead of time what difficult presentation questions are likely to be asked at the end, so take control and prepare some adaptable answers as part of your content development process. Having some answers to common questions will enhance your understanding of your own content and will benefit your overall confidence during the presentation.

Set the Agenda for Questions: If you're worried about tangential questions that fall outside of your specialism, then why not be proactive in identifying the themes that you would like audience questions to focus on? For example, if your presentation has three central components, you can keep your audience questions on-theme by asking something like: 'I'd now like to take any questions you may have on [area A], [area B] or [area C].'

Listen and Understand: Take the time to listen to your audience's questions in full, and don't rush to answer. Listening carefully will ensure you fully absorb the question and ascertain the asker's intention, enabling you to give the most appropriate answer to what is being asked. You can also ask the audience member to clarify by repeating their question back to them: 'Just so that I can give you the right answer, what you're asking is...?'. This gives you additional time to come up with your answer, and shows a care and willingness to engage your audience that will benefit your credibility.

What If You Don't Know the Answer?: If you really don't know the answer to a difficult presentation question, then it's okay to say so. But be positive and sincere in your response, and thank the audience member for asking an interesting question.

You can tell the asker that you don't know the answer off-hand, but that you will make the effort to find out for them. Make a quick note of the question and invite the asker to see you following your presentation – you can then take their contact details and follow up.

MAKE SURE YOU REVISE

- ✓ Why to set ground rules?
- ✓ Why deal with interruptions?
- ✓ Things to avoid
- ✓ How to handle difficult questions?



IMPORTANT



Explore | Expand | Enrich