

Title:

FULL CONTACT STORYTELLING

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Summary:

Grabbing an audience's attention is critical to increasing listeners' retention and decreasing your frustration.

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Article Body:

Nearly every storyteller has experienced the frustration of telling to these audience members: the clock-watcher, the doodler, the hair-twister, the squimer, the talker, the bored acting, the heckler, ect. But these characters are reminders that sometimes we all forget the most important ingredients in our storytelling program - personal contact and meaningful interaction.

Grabbing an audience's attention is critical to increasing listeners' retention and decreasing your frustration. I've often seen storytellers complete a program without ever making their audience members a part of their lives. They offered no warmth, no one-on-one interaction and no full-contact relationships. All they did was tell stories! There is more to it. You are the entertainer! To avoid that mistake, you can use these four ideas to keep even the hardest audience on their toes while you tell.

Say Their Names

In small groups, storytellers have the power to use the most beautiful word ever heard by an audience member - his or her name. Before you start your program go around the room if possible introducing yourself to people. Don't be afraid to write down a name and repeating it after each person speaks. Now when you work the room, you can add peoples names to your storytelling program! Not only will you be able to associate a face and name but the audience members will likely loosen up because they are no longer strangers. A big plus is that they will wonder if you will use their name next! If you don't know how to add someone's name to your storytelling program, you might want to work on it! It's not hard! For big groups possibly using a name or two of someone well know locally always works. Note: Don't make fun of people! If you make fun of anyone, let it be you.

Ask For Background

Find out as much as you can about the group you're telling to if possible. If it's a school, maybe a little history, if it is in a certain town, that is even easier, get the information! Never go into a program without any sense of who you're telling to. Even their age makes a difference.

Get the Audience to Participate

As you delve into your program, don't let much time pass before you involve the audience. You can even start right away by singing a song or by using a "repeat after me" opener. This starts the ball rolling. The audience will do what you want them to if you are willing to lead them along! Remember: It is your storytelling program, let them be a part of it on your terms. When you do this all of the weird stuff and noise that can happen at a program is under your control.

The Purpose of Your Program

Why are you telling? Is there a theme? Holiday's, birthday, ghost stories, folk tales, Cajun festival? The event you're telling at is important! I saw a teller at a Halloween program tell a baseball story that wasn't even scary! It just happened to be their favorite story! You can imagine how the audience responded. Stick with the theme! It's not that hard. If you don't have any stories to tell within certain themes, learn some! When you discover that the purpose of the program is a foundation to your stories, you will be successful!

Discovering the secrets to full contact storytelling isn't hard. You must act as a professional if you want to get up in front of people and say, "I'm a storyteller". There are too many tellers in the world that only tell stories, they don't get the crowd involved. That is sad. I do believe that is why some audiences don't want to hear "a Storyteller", they had a bad experience before.

Go out and make the next audience you tell in front of "your" special audience. Get involved.

Let them know you were there. They will have the time of their live's!