

5 Strategies for Audience Management:

Be fully present

The effective communicator is fully present. Rather than being focused on themselves, or distracted in their thoughts, they are focused on connecting with the audience. They are actively aware of everything in the presentation environment and seek to fully engage with their audience.

They are able to sense the “mood” and respond to it, making it work for them.

Observe, listen, respond

Being fully present involves observing your environment, adapting and adjusting what you say and what you do to create and maintain a productive atmosphere. Make eye contact with your audience and “listen” with your eyes and ears to their verbal and nonverbal feedback. Respond accordingly to promote greater understanding and engagement.

Establish clear expectations

Audiences of all ages and varieties benefit from clearly defined expectations. Do not assume your audience knows what behaviors are acceptable and allowable. Clearly convey your expectations – in spoken or written announcements – before starting your presentation. Make expectations simple and few. Consistently follow them and review as needed. Be a role model.

Call people by name

Using audience members' names promotes a positive, more intimate atmosphere and reduces the potential for difficult or disruptive situations. Names help form stronger connections among presenters and audience members. Names reduce negative behaviors via the desire to avoid negative recognition as well as the desire to gain positive recognition. Call people by name.

Provide clear instructions

Audience participation activities and all types of audience engagement are more effective and efficient when presenters provide clear instructions. Before any interaction with your audience, provide clear directions for how to contribute or participate. Plan ahead how to solicit volunteers, break into groups or select partners, and how the audience is to provide answers and complete activities.