

"This book will help you craft, visualize, and deliver your big ideas by honing the most powerful presentation tool in your communication arsenal—you."

—**JOSH LINKNER**, founder and former CEO of ePrize and *New York Times* bestselling author of *Disciplined Dreaming*

THE
BIG FISH
EXPERIENCE

**CREATE MEMORABLE PRESENTATIONS
THAT REEL IN YOUR AUDIENCE**

KENNY NGUYEN • GUS MURILLO • ROBERT KILLEEN • LUKE JONES
of Big Fish Presentations

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INVOLVE THE AUDIENCE



One of the basic principles of public speaking is audience interaction or audience engagement. You should always be speaking *to* the people in your audience, not *at* them. This is a great philosophy to live by. However, if you want to truly engage with a group of people, what better way than to get them involved in the presentation?

Many, even the best presenters, get trapped in a “presentation bubble” of sorts. We get caught up in our thoughts and forget to cater to our audience in real time. You might be so focused on hitting the right points, enunciating clearly, and making eye contact that you neglect to interact with the human beings in front of you. It’s something that is so easily and often forgotten that audience members have become

accustomed to a standard presentation. A speaker appears on stage, maybe asks a question, and walks around a little bit. In a way, this can be beneficial for you as an up-and-coming presentation star. If audience members are used to seeing the same old presentation, then anything even remotely different or exciting will be leaps and bounds better than any other presentation they’ve seen.

John Medina, researcher and author of *Brain Rules*, says that the brain begins to tune things out after an average of 9 minutes and 59 seconds no matter how interesting the subject. During this time, it’s imperative that you start providing engaging avenues where your listeners can reconnect not only with you but also with each other.

It's all about closing the gap between audience and speaker and creating an experience that everyone can share, even for a few minutes.

There are many different types of presentation settings and situations, from small boardroom events to colossal global summits. Of course, each type has its own potential for audience interaction, but here are a few tactics that can apply to many.

Activities

Prompting the audience to participate in an activity is probably the most effective way to induce engagement. Activities compel the audience to perform an action instead of just listening. When they are given a task or prompted to think for themselves, they feel as if they are contributing. Therefore, they have a stake in your presentation. You have given them a sense of purpose and direction.

Remember Erik Wahl, the graffiti artist? He asked audience members to demonstrate bravery by performing various embarrassing activities. In return, he gave away works of art that he painted during his presentation. Everyone wanted one, and Wahl knew that. He kept them engaged by creating suspense and by putting something at stake.

The activities you choose can range from simple ice-breakers to single-player or multiplayer games. They should get the audience to compete, work together, or simply have fun. It doesn't necessarily have to relate directly to your message, but it certainly helps if it does. Your goal is to get people's blood flowing, mouths talking, and minds working. You want your listeners to be alert, ready to receive your message.

For smaller groups of 15 to 25 people, a good ice-breaker with which to open workshops and assess the audience's knowledge is the alcohol-free version of "Never have I ever." Have all attendees hold up 10 fingers, begin with "Never have I ever," and finish with a statement like "read off every single slide in a presentation." When an audience member is guilty of the statement, he or she puts a finger down. Keep this going until there are no fingers up or you run out of questions. Depending on the competitive nature of the audience (sales teams and execs are particularly competitive), you might throw in a prize, such as a gift card. Besides creating conversation, this is a fun and easy way to present points or facts that may raise awareness about a cause.

Other activities:

- *For small audiences.* Break into groups to discuss a challenge and share the results with the room.

- *For larger audiences.* Role-play processes, such as a sales interaction, with an audience member.
- *For audiences of all sizes.* Quiz the audience and reward participation with a prize.



Kenny's Tip

Finding memorable ways to get the audience to laugh at themselves makes you more likable and accessible. One of my favorite things to do in my keynotes is to get a volunteer from the audience to model what I describe to be good body language.

For example, if I say, "Make eye contact," the volunteer often stares at the crowd in a creepy, yet humorous, fashion. It's a great way to break the ice.

Questions

Questions go beyond just asking people in the audience to raise their hands or clap in response. Get creative. For example, with groups in which participation is welcomed and encouraged, you can use a tool such as Catchbox (<http://us.getcatchbox.com/>). The person

who catches the box has to say what he or she is most curious about with regard to your subject.

In addition to the postpresentation Q&A, it's good to keep the audience on their toes by asking them questions that relate to your topic. If you're trying to introduce a new concept, you may use an audience member as a real-life example or get real-time feedback about something you just said or did. People will be more accepting of an idea if it is being tested or applied right in front of them. Be transparent. If an idea isn't working, show that you're flexible. Be aware that asking questions of your audience means you have to be prepared for anything. Anticipating questions makes you a stronger presenter, and being natural with your answers builds credibility that sticks with people.

QUESTION ETIQUETTE

- You may field questions midpresentation.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, admit your ignorance. It's even OK to ask if an audience member knows the answer. This can reengage the entire room's attention. If no one knows, make sure you actually follow up through e-mail or social media with the answer.

- Stay silent after asking a question. This will compel someone to volunteer an answer.
- In response to questions, answer with something along the lines of “Thank you for your question” instead of “Great question!” You don’t want to sound sarcastic or patronizing.

We recommend recording all the frequently asked questions in your presentations so you can prepare good answers.

Live Demo

Getting an audience member to demo a product live accomplishes multiple goals: it involves the audience in your presentation, it captures interest and builds suspense, and it shows how any consumer would use your product or service. Make sure the demo is ready to go, though. An audience member on stage can be the biggest advocate for or worst critic of your product when he or she sits back down.

When you think of live demonstrations, no other company does the product demonstration quite like Apple. Steve Jobs first revealed FaceTime on the iPhone by calling his friend and colleague Jony Ive. Executing a technological demo successfully can be magical for the

audience, but it can harm your credibility if external factors such as spotty WiFi or malfunctioning equipment prevent it. Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse. And always have a backup plan.

Social Media

Creating a hashtag for your presentation is a great way to establish a connection with your audience. It also gives you the ability to track engagement. You can see how many people use the hashtag, how it’s shared, and what people are saying. You can measure reach, frequency, and public opinion all by sharing a unique hashtag.

However, hashtags can also hurt you. For example, for its keynote at CES 2013, Qualcomm decided to do an over-the-top presentation with actors, musicians, and guest appearances. While that sounds amazing in theory, its execution confused some viewers watching live and online. They took to Twitter to express their confusion and to poke fun at Qualcomm.



I think they’re about to show sexting on stage at Qualcomm... and still get it very, very wrong.

7 Jan 13

**Joshua Topolsky**

@joshuatopolsky



NOTHING says Qualcomm like a vampire attack

7 Jan 13

**David Pierce**

@piercedavid



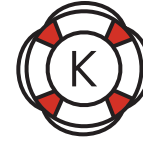
OMFG BIG BIRD IS HERE I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT IS HAPPENING

7 Jan 13

Key takeaway: Make sure the people in your audience are comfortable with what you deliver or be prepared to face their wrath.

Put Your Presentation Online

You can also prompt audience interaction by posting your presentation online on sites such as SlideShare and Prezi. Your audience, as well as other users, can view the presentation, leave comments, or even follow along during the presentation. Using technology to reach and engage your audience may seem distant or impersonal, but it's a modern approach that proves to be effective.



Kenny's Tip

For more information on how to utilize SlideShare, visit <http://www.bigfishpresentations.com> for a free e-book.

These are just a few ways to involve your audience in your presentation. The topic, audience demographics, audience size, venue, and time will determine the way or the degree to which you may engage with them. When in doubt, check with the event organizer for guidance on what is appropriate.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



KENNY NGUYEN is the founder and CEO of Big Fish Presentations, a company whose mantra is “turning presentations into experiences.” Kenny and his team work daily with clients nationwide, from startups to

Fortune 100 companies, providing high-quality presentation design, presentation training, and creative video production. He was named the 2012 CEO Student Entrepreneur of the Year by Collegiate Entrepreneurs Organization (CEO). Under his leadership, Big Fish Presentations was recognized as one of the top 50 student-led startups in the world by the Kairos Society and one of *Inc. Magazine’s* “Coolest College Start-Ups of 2012.” Kenny has been featured in popular news outlets such as *Forbes*, *Entrepreneur Magazine*, *Yahoo*, *Business Insider*, *Mashable*, the *Huffington Post*, and the *Washington Post*. He has spoken at TEDxLSU and HubSpot Inbound and has taught presentation workshops at General Assembly. A curator of 99u Baton Rouge, he is a member of AIGA New Orleans and the host of the online cooking channel You’ve Got Meal. Kenny is passionate about helping his home city of Baton Rouge become a hub for creative talent in the South. He dreams of owning a corgi one day.



GUS MURILLO is the cofounder, president, and COO of Big Fish Presentations. Since he and Kenny attended the “worst presentation they had ever seen” together, they have been working to rid the world

of such experiences. His work at Big Fish includes producing and directing commercial videos. Before graduating from Louisiana State University with a degree in biological sciences, he was recognized as a Kairos50 member for his innovative college startup and was awarded for this achievement at the New York Stock Exchange.



ROBERT KILLEEN is the lead copywriter and creative director at Big Fish Presentations. He has been writing his entire life—short stories and fake TV scripts that will never see the light of day, journals that

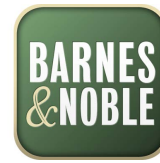
are best kept private, and blog posts for public consumption. This, however, is his first book. He has a bachelor's degree in mass communication from Louisiana State University and serves as Student Outreach Committee Chair for the American Advertising Federation of Baton Rouge and Marketing Coordinator for 99u Local: Baton Rouge.



LUKE JONES has the distinction of being the first copywriter of Big Fish Presentations. He is now a copywriting associate at DEVENEY Communication. A born entrepreneur, he started a T-shirt company

and a neighborhood newspaper in his youth. He has worked at production studios, design firms, and advertising agencies. Luke received his bachelor's degree in mass communication from Louisiana State University. He loves words, movies, cream soda, and his miniature schnauzer, Albus—not necessarily in that order.

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