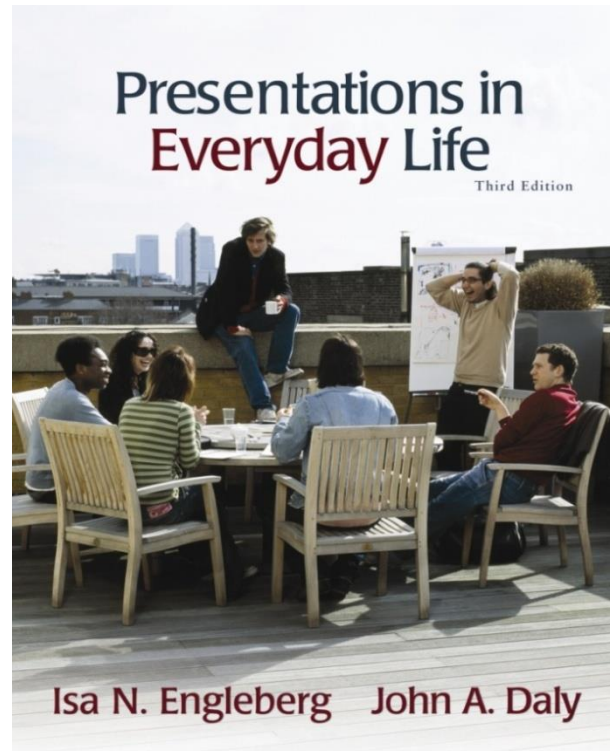


# Chapter 12: Generating Interest



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# Chapter 12: Generating Interest



Overcoming Audience Disinterest

The Power of Stories

The Value of Humor

The Benefits of Audience Participation

# Disinterest Factors

- **Audience Factors**
  - Limited Attention Span
  - Poor Listening Habits
- **Speaker Factors**
  - Length of Presentation
  - Poor Delivery

# Sources of Stories

- You
- Your Values
- Your Audience
- Other People
- The Occasion
- Media

# *You as a Source of Stories*

- **Your name:** What is the story of your name?
- **Your youthful background:** What do you remember about your youth?
- **Your family's "roots":** Where does your family come from? What's unique about your family?
- **Your special place:** What special places do you remember with fondness or fear?

# Telling Stories

- Keep It Simple: Use a Simple Story Line
- Limit the Number of Characters
- Exaggerate Content and Delivery
- Provide Links to Your Audience
- Practice Your Performance

# Story Probability and Fidelity

## Story Probability

**Focuses on the formal requirements of a story**

- Does the basic story make sense?
- Do events unfold in a logical way?
- Do characters behave in a consistent way?
- Do you believe the plot?

## Story Fidelity

**Focuses on the apparent truthfulness of the story**

- Does the story conform to what you and the audience know about human nature?
- Does the story omit or distort any key facts or events?
- Does the story create the impact the speaker wants?

# Story-Building Chart Components

- Title the Story
- Story Elements
  - Background Information
  - Character Development
  - Action or Conflict
  - High Point of Climax
  - Punch Line
  - Conclusion or Resolution
- The Central Points of the Story



# Build a Story: The Three Bears

- |                             |    |
|-----------------------------|----|
| 1. Background Information   | 1. |
| 2. Character Development    | 2. |
| 3. Action or Conflict       | 3. |
| 4. High Point/Climax        | 4. |
| 5. Punch Line               | 5. |
| 6. Conclusion or Resolution | 6. |

# Storytelling Assessment

- Purpose:** Does the story have a clear, appropriate and topic-related purpose?
- Audience:** Is the story appropriate for and adapted to the audience?
- Credibility:** Is the storyteller believable?
- Logistics:** Is the story appropriate for the occasion and place?

# Storytelling Assessment

- ❑ **Content:** Are the characters and plot well developed? Are the climax and punch line clear? Is the language engaging?
- ❑ **Organization:** Does the story develop logically and effectively?
- ❑ **Performance:** Does the storyteller use appropriate form(s) of delivery, effective vocal and physical delivery, and achieve immediacy?

# Use Appropriate Humor

- Age
  - Old? At Ruth's last birthday, the candles cost more than the cake.
  - There are three signs of old age. The first is lost memory . . . The other two I forget.
- Banks
  - A banker is just a pawnbroker in a suit.
  - I think the reason they have drive-up tellers is so the cars can see their real owners.

# Comic Advice

- What *you* think is funny and what makes an audience laugh, are often completely different.
- Humor is hard work. It's about saying the simplest things in the fewest words.
- Humor arises naturally from stories.
- It's not necessary to use humor in speeches. True, it is also not necessary to wear shoes—but they get us where we want to go.

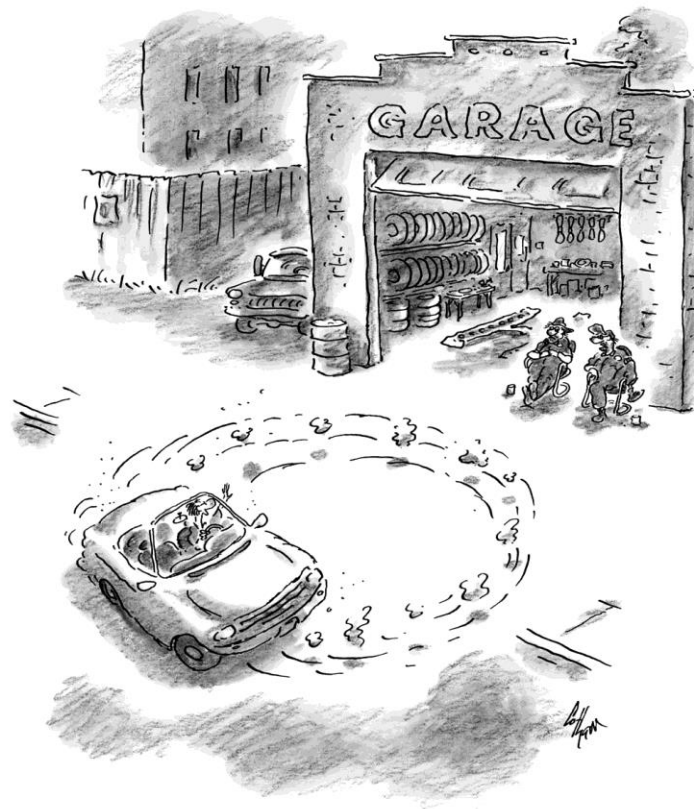
(Excerpts from a presentation on by speechwriter Brian Jenner delivered at a 2008 speechwriters' conference.)

# Fill in the Blanks: Humor Hazards

- Do not use distasteful or insulting language.
- Tiptoe around body functions.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

# Take the Cartoon Challenge

Write a caption for the following cartoon:



# Audience Participation

- Ask questions
- Encourage interaction
- Involve their senses
- Do an exercise
- Ask for volunteers
- Invite feedback



# How to Involve Your Audience

## **Topic: How to Reduce Presentation Anxiety**

Ask questions: \_\_\_\_\_

Encourage interaction: \_\_\_\_\_

Involve their senses: \_\_\_\_\_

Do an exercise: \_\_\_\_\_

Ask for a volunteer: \_\_\_\_\_

Invite feedback: \_\_\_\_\_

Other ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

# Immediacy

- Audience perceptions of physical and psychological closeness to the speaker
- Audiences like “immediate” speakers
- Audiences listen to and remember what “immediate” speakers have to say
- Forms of Immediacy
  - Verbal Immediacy
  - Nonverbal Immediacy

# Verbal Immediacy

- A sense of humor
- A conversational speaking style
- Inclusive language
- Seeks and offers feedback

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# Nonverbal Immediacy

- Moving closer to the audience
- Smiling
- More eye contact
- Natural movement and gestures
- Vocal expressiveness

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# How to Improve Message Comprehension?

- Create interesting messages (clear, vivid, suspenseful, humorous)
- Use stories
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- Use concrete language

# Generating Interest Checklist

- Creates interesting messages
- Makes messages relevant to listeners
- Relates content to audience experiences
- Use audience participation to involve listeners
- Uses stories and humor effectively
- Offers diverse supporting material
- Delivers presentations with skill, energy, and immediacy