

Ten Things About Presenting that I Learned (or Remembered) at NSDC

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One: How you respond to participant comments is really important. If you respond with a smile and enthusiasm, there is a much greater chance participants will contribute to a lively discussion.

Two: Use a remote. They only cost \$75.00 but they are a huge difference maker.

Three: A simple question or a short poem can provoke a lively discussion as effectively as a video clip. In one session, the simple question "what percentage of your life is impacted by race?" launched a great dialogue, and more importantly, a lot of thinking on my part.

Four: Video is powerful. When you're talking about a sophisticated behavior, like a dialogue session, for example, it is hard to beat watching it in action.

Five: Buy good speakers. I love JBL sound stage speakers. They fill the room and cost a bit (\$150.00), but they are well worth it. Use your persuasive communication skills to ensure your organization buys these things for you. If your speakers are squeaky people aren't going to get the experience you're aiming for when you show them that awesome video.

Six: Have enough handouts and organize them to eliminate all confusion. If participants can't find the right handout, or worse, if they don't have a handout at their table, they will check out. If you lose them on one activity, it can be tough to bring them back. Just ask the fellow who fell asleep beside me at one table.

Seven: Keep a perky pace. (thanks to Anita Archer for that phrase). Err on the side of too fast. When people spoke with a lively pace, they kept my interest.

Eight: Humor rocks! If people laughed, they liked the sessions, they stayed engaged, they felt connected to the others laughing with them, and I bet they learned more.

Nine: Stories are a difference maker. I was honored to see a profoundly influential man, Dr. Stephen Covey at the conference, and I was looking forward to hearing him tell some stories-I consider him a master story teller. However, he really didn't tell many at all, and it was hard for many around me to stay engaged. In fact, the most engaging part of the presentation may have been the guest speaker with him who told a very compelling story.

Ten: Offer ideas provisionally. I found it easiest to listen and learn when speakers respected my professionalism, and shared their ideas in a provisional way, suggesting that they knew I'd have to reflect and make my own decisions about what they said. When presenters spoke as if there was only one correct way of doing things and they happened to know it, I found it harder to listen.

Ten and a half: Walk the talk. For example, if you are talking about the need for teachers to change, don't say, "this is just the way I am, I can't help it." So, I guess I'd be better walk the talk and be provisional too, by saying that these are just my experiences. I am sure that there are plenty of situations where these suggestions might not work. Feel free to ignore any and all. And hey, if you're reading this and you were there, leave a message and let us know what you learned