

Use Audience Participation to Enhance Your Public Speaking

You will have public speeches that **audience participation** is required. There will be other times when it will be your lifesaver if you learn how to use it.

Audience involvement is a two edge sword. If you ask a question that the answer is not readily known, it can stymie potential answers or even open the door to an answer that is not wanted. It can bring on a host of unwanted responses.

It can also bring on positive responses. If it results in someone in the audience saying what you would have said in your public speech. It can also make the time pass faster. Best of all, it can arouse interest of the audience.

How can you get the audience to participate.

There are several levels of participation. Each becomes more dangerous than the next. Each level exposes the participant to more embarrassment or you as speaker to more risk of an unwanted response.

Types of Audience Participation

- **Rhetorical Questions**
These questions are for the audience to answer within their mind. To use effectively, they need to be appropriate to the audience, to the speech and time needs to be allowed for them to sink in.
- **Closed Ended Questions**
These questions require a yes or no as shown by raising of hands. Discernment needs to be used here too. If you ask a question that could be embarrassing to the audience, you may not get a response. Asking how many have ever had this experience...have been...or have done is usually safe.

The participation comes from just raising their hands.

If children are present an excellent way to get them involved is ask, "Lets have a show of hands, how many young ones who are 12 years old or younger do we have here?"

This not only gets their attention, it gets the attention of parents and anyone who is in any way concerned with the children. Of course, only do this if you will include them in what you will be speaking about.

- **Experiences**
Getting more dangerous is asking for experiences. This is dangerous for you and the members of the audience.
- **Asking for Comments**
This is dangerous in that you could get a comment that is so off the wall or far from the topic you could have trouble recovering. Only use this if very well prepared. This is best left for the most experienced and the bravest speakers.

Use any one or combinations of these to get **audience participation**. You will increase their attention and their enjoyment of your public speaking if you do.