Communicating with IMPACT A - Activate:
7.5 Ways to Engage Your Virtual Participants*
by Patrick Donadio, CSP

"Engagement is a result, not an activity."

The A in the "Communicating with IMPACT ©" process is for Activate. You want to active the receiver physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Engaging your participants is about activating others to achieve the Intention (the I in IMPACT) of the presentation. Before you start planning activities or exercises ask yourself, "what is the main intention of this virtual meeting/presentation?" Then build variety into your presentation to help participants specifically achieve this intention and to keep their attention.

Here are seven ways to engage your virtual audiences whether running a meeting or an educational program:

1. **Dynamic Opening/Agenda** – Get their attention in the first few moments. After your dynamic opening, review the agenda if you are conducting a meeting. This helps them know what to expect. (TIP - you could also send out the agenda in advance with the invitation and include any pre-work/reading to help participants be prepared to engage).

2. **Short Stories/Analogies/Examples/Questions** – use success and failure stories, personal and customer stories. Incorporate a visual to bring the story to life. TIP – engage participants every 3-5 minutes with a variety of tools/techniques)

3. **Questions/Polls** – use the Chat for participants to type in their answers or Use Polls to collect data – Yes/No, True/False or a short list to get audience's perspective.

4. **Engaging Handout** – Use a handout with key points to help participants follow along and space for them to take notes. Send them out a PDF version in advance if possible.

5. **Skills Inventory/Quiz** - to assess participant's level of expertise or measure learning. Send them out in advance for participants to complete before event.

6. **Visuals/Slides** - use animation, when appropriate, to reveal the next point when you want them to see it. This helps keep the participants' focus on the topic and not reading ahead. Use Images not just words: examples – Photos, Graphics, Models, Charts, Infographics, etc. Note, to keep them focused, I don't like to give out my slides before or during the event (that is what the handout if for). If giving them out after, tell participants at the beginning of the meeting.

7. **Small Group Interaction** - Give clear directions for the discussion before you break participants into groups/breakout rooms (great feature in Zoom).

7.5 **Bonus: Voice Inflection** – add vocal variety to create energy and keep their attention. Including pausing, before or after you make a point to let it sink in. Note: keep in mind, a good portion of your message is communicated by our voice and non-verbal communication.

Remember, your virtual audiences can be easily distracted. Consider engaging participants as much (and even more often), as you would in a live presentation by using the above tools.

https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/impact-tip-a-activate-7-ways-engage-your-virtual-patrick-donadio-csp

See page 2 for Bonus Tips….

Bonus – Technical tips for virtual meetings:

1. **Pay attention to your background**. Have a background that is at a minimum not distracting, and at best enhances your professional image. (be careful using virtual backgrounds, they fade in and out)

2. **Have the camera at eye-level, and head on**. The most common mistake is to have the camera too low- not a good look.

3. **Keep the video of yourself on whenever possible**. I don't like to watch myself either, but it is the only way to monitor, in real time, how you are looking to your participants, and to manage any background issues.

4. **Check your audio**. I use an external microphone for better quality. Some people use a headset or the computer microphone. Either way, just make sure participants can hear you clearly.

5. **Lighting.** Play around with the lighting in your office to see what looks best. The cameras adjust to the light so certain lighting configurations can make your face dark or too bright.

Click below to watch a video of Patrick reviewing his IMPACT© Process: Overview of Donadio's Communicating with IMPACT Process

Donadio's IMPACT Process*

Communicating with IMPACT shows you how to take control of your actions and words so that you can design and deliver a more impactful message. Patrick has created a practical process, including six outstanding principles (IMPACT), to help you effectively communicate ideas and achieve greater results:
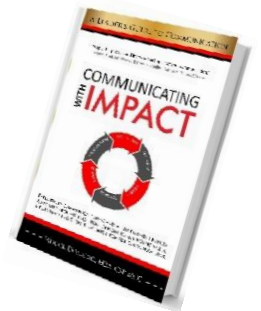
Intention - Intentional Communication
Message - Message Management
Person- Personalized Content
Activate - Activated Engagement
Clarify - Clarified Meaning
Transform - Transformed Results

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