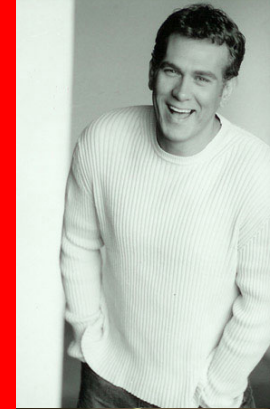


Get Control!

As I walked out onto the stage I was facing 250 party guests. All of them had just left the Medical Conference and now I was expected to interact with them. The client told me they would be a rough group to motivate, but they never said that it would be this bad. It was time to take this group and make a statement. I was about to be tested. All of my years of training and experience would now be needed. I thought the DJ was going to pass out when I turned to him and told him to turn the music off and keep it off until I said otherwise. Then I turned to the audience, put the microphone to my mouth, and said, “Ladies and gentlemen I need 4 contestants right now on the dance floor. If I do not get those four contestants I will play the song Feelings until I do. Furthermore, nothing else will transpire in this room until I get those four contestants.” It took two minutes of the song Feelings as well as some fun lip-sync action, but eventually I got my contestants and I got the audience. That was one of the best events I have ever worked.

This is an example of a problem we facing Mobile Entertainers on a daily basis. How can I get the audience to do what I want, when I want them to do it? It is a question that I have been studying for over fourteen years. When I moved to Chicago and began working at the prestigious Excalibur nightclub, I was on stage five nights a week. Our show was like a long private event that was open to the public. The format was two MC’s and one DJ. Every night I would work until three in the morning and then go home only to keep working. I would stay up for the next several hours watching videos of our performances and analyze them for improvement ideas. I wanted to know why the audience was not responding to us at certain times, and why we did not have complete control over them. Why was it that when we said a certain phrase the audience would just look at us and stare? How could I get them to give me the reaction I was seeking?

I quickly began to realize that the answers lie not in the audience but in me. The reason my audiences were not responding was because I was not asking them the right questions. Our control was lost because they did not understand our direction. The drastic measure I took was to tell my fellow performers and myself that from now on we were going to tell ourselves, “There are no bad audiences only bad performers.” It sounds crazy, but in order for us to grow we had to begin to take the responsibility away from the audience.

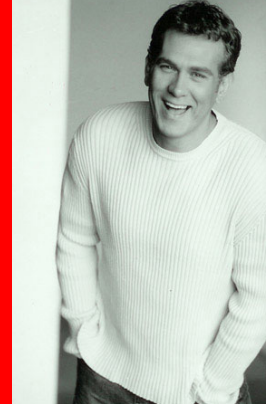


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To me the fundamental key in audience motivation is control. If you do not possess control over the audience you will never properly execute the necessary level of motivation effectively. Aside from what you are saying, chances are your major block is in your own mind. Over the years we begin to develop automatic reactions to difficult situations and we stop being creative. For instance, you have most likely said often, “The audience is just tough and they do not want to do this stuff.” What you really mean to say is, “I have no idea how to control these people.” Audiences need you to control them because without clear direction they will be lost. Without control **you** will be forever lost in the world of “hit and miss” entertainment.

The first exercise I decided on was to write down all of the major things we were saying to the audience. Things like, “How is everyone doing tonight?” and “If you feel good say yea!” After writing those phrases down, we then wrote out at least ten different ways to say the same thing but in a way that was more specific. From now on, “How is everyone doing tonight?” became, “Everyone make as much noise as you can right now!” while “Everyone clap your hands.” Became “Everyone face the stage, put both hands in the air, and clap your hands just like this.” By writing down these phrases, we were beginning to learn to think and speak more specifically. Thus, we were taking the control back from the audience.

How is complete control achieved?

First comes the exercise I mentioned above; I call it the 10 exercise. You need to change the way you speak to people. If you want people to face you and clap their hands exactly as you do not simply say, “Everyone clap their hands.” Instead tell them EXACTLY what it is you want. “Everyone face the stage. Now watch me and do everything that I do.” This sounds simple, but if you try it you will see a grand improvement instantly. These deadly phrases are what I call the Trap phrases. Traps are the phrases that will back you into a corner before you even get midway through an event. These words give the audience the control and take the control out of your hands.

Here I have given you the top 4 Traps as well as their solutions. This will get you started on the right path.

- 1.) TRAP PHRASE: “If you feel good say yea!”
You Could Say: “Everybody on the count of three all of you say Yea!”
- 2.) TRAP PHRASE: “How is everyone feeling tonight?”
You Could Say: “The (guest of honor) has asked me to make sure you are all ready to party tonight. In order to do that, we ask that you all make as much noise as possible right now.”
- 3.) TRAP PHRASE: “Everyone clap you hands.”
You Could Say: “Everyone turn and face me. Now everyone watch me and do what I do. First put your hands up just like this. Now everyone clap your hands side to side like me. Now!”

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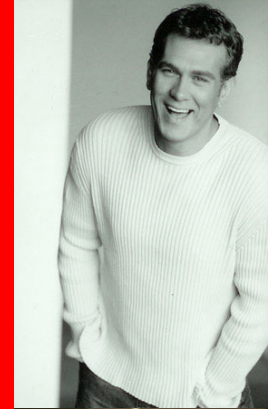
4.) TRAP PHRASE: “Dance like me.”

You Could Say: “All of you turn and face me. Now put your left leg out like this. Everyone turn this way. Now watch me and dance just like this.”

So now you will begin to say things a bit differently. That is only part of the battle. What do you do if some people begin to stop participating during a routine?

I developed rules for my events. Rules that will tell people you are in charge without being a bully. The main rule I tell audiences is “The (guest of honor or company) has instructed me to stop the music if at any time anyone is not participating.” The audience will comply because they will want to make the guest of honor happy. Now I have established in a fun way, that there are consequences to actions. The control is once again placed in my hands and I am established as the “boss”. The key here is to not be a bully. This is a fun rule and the audience will be receptive to it. The next time you look out during a routine and see a person not participating, stop the music. Point out that person and then move on. I would even have everyone else in the audience say, “Come On!” to that non-participant. The rest of the audience will be on your side because you established this rule early in the evening. This is another effective control measure that will change your events.

These are the first steps in controlling your audiences. Do this work and you will see things begin to change for you. Also, do not accept that the audience is simply “bad”. Instead, take responsibility for it and find a way to take the control back. You may need to stop the music, perform a contest, or simply change the way you are speaking to the audience. The tough part is that you are so set in what you have been doing for years. You will need to objectively look at yourself and your skills in order to begin to grow as a performer.



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