

How To Break 'The Fourth Wall' To Connect With Your Audience

By Peter "The Humorator" Fogel – NSA Member

Persuasive public speaking is all about connecting with your audience. One of the quickest ways to heighten your audience connection is to use a theatre acting technique called 'Breaking the Fourth Wall.'

One of the reasons you go to the theatre is to be transported to a different time and place and experience something magical. Of course you know it's a play (or a movie), you paid a ticket to see it, but once there you've suspended disbelief.

Picture two characters on stage having a passionate argument. All of sudden, one character freezes. The other turns to the audience and remarks: 'You think he's angry now... just wait until the second act when he discovers I'm sleeping with his wife!' The audience LAUGHS. The actor then goes back 'into the scene.'

This is called 'Breaking the Fourth Wall.' In this instance, the character is drawing the audience into the scene more by giving them information that the other character is not privy too.

You can do the same thing with your public speaking to make your speech interactive and develop a deeper connection with your audience. If during your speech you have a specific point to make-- stop!

Look out into the front row, make eye contact with an audience member and, if you can, address him by name. (He'll be surprised.) Then ask him a specific question regarding the point you're trying to make.

'Chuck, you're a bright guy - I know this because you're the customer service supervisor, right? What do you say to a customer who returns an item without a receipt he bought back when Clinton was in office--and NOW demands a refund?'

Once Chuck answers, repeat his response to the whole room. Now you've made your speech interactive and taken it to a whole new level.

You've 'Broken the Fourth Wall' by a) including audience member Chuck and b) getting a laugh (hopefully) by making fun of a targeted problem that customer service reps deal with every day.

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Want an even bigger response? Throughout your speech, keep referring back to Chuck when making a point. This is called a 'recall' - it will keep your audience engaged and make Chuck feel like a company celebrity.

Use these techniques when you give your next presentation and you'll no longer be perceived as just another 'talking head.' Not only will you personalize your message, but you'll delve even deeper into the hearts and minds of your listeners.

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