

How to Handle Hecklers When Public Speaking



Corporate Communication Experts

Nobody likes a heckler. A heckler can dilute or hijack your core message. A heckler can cause you to become anxious and lose your train of thought. Here are 9 strategies to help you handle hecklers.

1 PREPARATION IS KEY

As with most things, preparation is very important with off-the-cuff speaking. Preparation is one of the pillars of this book and off-the-cuff speaking. So, do your homework and be prepared for anything.

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2 PRAISE THEM

Thank them and praise them for their alternate or creative view. This will flatter them to some extent and show them that you do respect and value their ideas.

3 FIND AT LEAST ONE POINT OF AGREEMENT—FIND A COMMON GROUND

Agree with the heckler at some level. Again, you have to resist your gut instinct to get defensive and argumentative. Continue to remain calm while under fire.

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4 ANTICIPATE TRICKY QUESTIONS

Try to anticipate the tricky questions or critical comments that people may make about your presentation and prepare appropriate responses.



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GET BACK TO THEM

If you do not have an answer right away, let them know that you will look for the answer and then will get back to them.

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AGREE TO DISCUSS AFTER THE PRESENTATION

This can be done during the tea break, or at the back of the room, or even via email.

INCLUDE THEIR COMMENTS

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Include their comments or suggestions in your discussions and your presentation, but don't embarrass them or disparage their viewpoint; rather, explain calmly why you have a different idea or viewpoint. Do this respectfully.

REMAIN OBJECTIVE

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Remain objective and calm, and try and keep your emotions neutral. Hecklers are entitled to have their own opinion and may disagree with you, and that's OK.

BE CURIOUS

Try and understand why hecklers have reached an opposing view. Try and understand their reasoning. Ask them to explain their concept further. Curiosity shows an open mind and a willingness to learn from others.

If you would like more information or Peter to run a workshop, you can contact him at:



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