

How to Engage your audience (Why, What, How)

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Engaging your audience is like opening a bank account. You get a chance to withdraw funds , deposit or let it go dormant. An active relationship with your audience allows you to leverage the numerous benefits of being an author or writer. It will give you a competitive edge over other persons in your niche; you will have access to feedback, referrals, reputation analysis, more profits, and you will have a yardstick to design your high-valued contents for your chosen audience.

According to a recent ThinkJar annual survey and associated ThinkJar research, 70% of companies that deliver best in class customer experience use customer feedback – versus industry average of 50% and 29% for laggards.

In an information-overload, attention-deficit, distraction-driven world that we now live in, building a relationship with your audience and of-course leveraging on your relationship with them gains their attention, loyalty and preference for your services which will in turn save time, resources and could create a win-win experience.

Here are suggestions on how to do this:

1. Map out your Writing Objectives

Your writing objectives should give you a guide to the section or expertise you want to focus on, taking into consideration your competences in relation to your audience's needs and expectations and not the other way round.

2. Mark out your audience Personalities

In the typical project management style, discern the services you can render for your audiences based on a thorough audience analysis. Divide your audiences into three personalities, mark out the Name, picture, descriptions of each personality by answering the following questions:

- What is the (age, gender, education level, occupation, ethnicity) of my audiences?
- What do my audience expect from this me?
- What interests, goals, problems or concerns or do they have?
- What biases or preconceived ideas might my readers have about me and my topic that could affect their interest in my topic?
- What personal and professional traits do we have in common?
- What expectations will your audience have regarding the length, format, and style of my writing?

2. Choose an Engagement Style

An engagement style is your distinctive brand personality with which you wish to project your brand to your audience based on beliefs, actions and ideas that define your brand.

The Four types of Engagement Styles:

1. The Presenter
2. The Projector
3. The Socializer
4. The Negotiator

In order to engage your audience it is important you choose a dominant style of engagement.

Are you usually out to inform your audience? If yes, Your dominant style is a presenter.

Your contents should:

1. Be focused on increasing their understanding of certain issues that you have identified as important to your audience.
2. Be focused on providing information that helps them solve certain problems (You may not always need to solve their numerous problems as it were; i suggest you don't try to. Save that for an online course or a consultation)
3. Ensure that your contents are of high insider-scoop quality that they may never get elsewhere, timely, clear and targeted to their needs and expectations for this is when you can be said to be providing informative contents.

Are you usually a strategic and focused taskmaster? Do you seek mainly to reach your writing objective by consulting, involving, training and collaborating with your audience? If yes, Your dominant engagement style is the Projector style

Your contents should:

1. Be designed to obtain feedbacks, views and elicit discussions.
2. Be clear, accurate and result-oriented
3. Answer the WIIFM question before seeing to consult your audience. You could Give something in return for their time, provide results of the outcome of the process (usually you should treat your audience like partners in progress and show loads of respect and appreciation)
4. Help you build trust and credibility enough to be able to influence your audience to relate with you on a personal level.
5. Provide answers that could encourage your audience connect with you at various levels as fans, friends, advocates, partners and or guides.

Is your writing style considered warm, friendly, creative, fun and flexible? ? Do you tend to write contents that are not controversial? Do you enjoy connecting with your audience via discussions and long articles? If yes? Your dominant style is the socializer style.

Your contents should:

1. Be broad, but be careful not to take too long to pass a point across
2. Contain success stories and ideas that encourage your audience to share their own points of view.
3. Help you follow your audience and connect with them outside your writing environment.
4. Include visual aids- infographics, images, memes etc. to illustrate your points.
5. Be comical, warm and friendly
6. Be objective, well-researched and tailored for your audience

Are your contents usually designed as mini-ads and are usually written to as they have a strong need to impress and influence, or persuade your audiences to take a specific line of action? Do you sometime fall short of your audience' expectations and can get very low on referrals and fan loyalty? . Are your true audiences usually those that have bought your products or used your services one way or the other? If yes, your dominant engagement style is the negotiator style.

You content should:

1. Position you to be the first on customers minds.
2. Be highly competitive; and thoroughly researched especially in relation to what your real or imagined competitors would ordinarily provide.
3. Contain Give freebies, contests and sweepstakes

Your chosen engagement style should be determined by the general tone or attitude What tone or general attitude do you want to convey to your audience.

3. Choose Appropriate Engagement Activities (and subsequently your engagement plan)

Having marked out the personalities of your audience and chosen an engagement style, it is time to design an engagement plan by pitching your contents around their needs and expectations. You will most likely not be able to have a consistent engagement plan but over time you could based on an analytic of the total numbers of readers for each content format, type (keywords, solutions, value etc) you write, the percentage of new readers you get on follow-up articles, your most viewed articles and the comments that your audience leave after reading your contents.

It is important to make your engagement plan about them and so much not about you and be very approachable by going where your audience go. You will know you have built an engaging relationship with your audience when they can state what you do, your style and how you serve them in one sentence.

Bringing It Home:

Checkout this practice engagement design for Asuni Abiola: Author, Speaker and Trainer

1. My Writing Objective

A “Leadership by Influence” advocate and author with a focus on generational relations, peer educator training, instructional design and 21st century power dynamics.

2. My audience Personality

Age range: 26-65; Gender: Mixed; Education Level: Educated; Occupation: Professionals/Executives; Ethnicity: Nigerians

3. What do they expect?

Concise, result-oriented information

4. What interests or concerns do they have

Generational relations; Social Media Marketing; Digital Marketing; Blogging; Instructional Designs

5. What biases or preconceived ideas might my readers have about me and my topic that could affect their interest in my topic?

Individual understanding of my topics and how it relates (or not) with their specific area of expertise.

6. What personal and professional traits do we have in common?

Serious-mindedness, authority, knowledge, Interest in the 21st century

7. What expectations will your audience have regarding the length, format, and style of my writing?

Length: Average length; Format: infographic, videos, product reviews, how-tos, podcasts, research and original data; Style: Conversational

Bringing it Home: Final Engagement Design for Asuni Abiola

Writing Objectives

A “Leadership by Influence” advocate and author with a focus on generational relations, peer educator training, instructional design and 21st century power dynamics

Audience Personality (you may include dummy-pictures for each personalities)

Personality A: Fola is a high level executive, keynote speaker and author. He is looking to understand how he can leverage on 21st century trends to promote his interests and business

Personality B: Kunle works as a graphic designer and adverts expert for a top advertising company that serves as an agent for top Nigerian companies. He is looking to expand his understanding of the 21st century creativity nuances.

Personality C: Michael is a blogger looking to understand the best ways to relate with and prepare contents for his blog enthusiasts.

Chosen Engagement Style:

Projector

Chosen Engagement Activities

1. Use an attention-worthy profile
2. Merge my personal and professional brand
3. Use what makes me different
4. Promote others rather than myself
5. Back up everything with proof
6. Be accessible
7. Engage and Interact with my audience and other authors
8. Go out and find new audience
9. Use a consistent Name, Pen Name and profile image
10. Be brief, to-the-point and objective
11. Answer the question everyone's asking
12. Get media attention/self promote my brand
13. Discuss future plans
14. Talk about my blunders
15. Create a regular feature
16. Use visual hooks

Did you find this article useful? Please let me know in the comment box below.

Basically, *“which of the tips therein caught your attention right away?”* or *“what confuses you most about this article?”* .?

I'd love to know your thoughts.

About the Author:

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