

How to Tell a Story Using... Engagement Tools (Part 1)

Share this blog:



Facebook



Twitter



LinkedIn



Pinterest



WhatsApp

The last installment in this series was about humor – If you need help writing jokes for your next speech, be sure to [check that out here](#). Today, we'll be moving to our next topic: engagement tools!

“Engagement tools” is a very broad term covering things ranging from Zoom polls to a physical microphone for Q&A sessions. In general, the phrase refers to a variety of technical methods and physical objects that help a speaker connect better with their audience.

In this series, we've gone over a few different things that can help you maintain a firm grip on your audience's attention for the entirety of your speech

([pictures](#), [sounds](#), [data](#), [humor](#)...) But in the past few years online, we might have struggled with transitioning to giving speeches *online*. Our audience may become distracted when their phone is just an arm's reach away (we can see you trying not to look down!). So today, we'll be going over some virtual tools that can help you keep your speech varied and intriguing. (Put that phone down, Craig!)

Zoom

One of the most popular platforms for video calls is our beloved Zoom. Schools, businesses, and even friend groups have learned to use it over the pandemic, and chances are you've attended a Zoom meeting before.

In the case that you give a presentation using Zoom, here are the top 10 MUST-HAVE engagement tools. Many are unique to this application, but some similar tools are available on Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, etc.

1. **Breakout Rooms:** Breakout rooms are private spaces in a Zoom meeting for small groups to hold discussions. In the context of a presentation, breakout rooms can help you organize an activity that your audience can try out in small groups.
2. **Annotations:** Zoom annotations allow you to draw and write together on a blank whiteboard or a shared screen. This feature is extremely useful for small groups of people collaborating on a project because it allows you to virtually brainstorm ideas and then represent those ideas with ease. For your speech, you can use annotation tools to create a hands-on activity for your audience that can help show what they have learned.
3. **Reactions:** Reactions allow you to receive nonverbal

feedback from your audience! Meeting participants can choose to display emojis, raise their hands, indicate “yes” or “no”, or ask the speaker to “slow down” or “speed up”. During a presentation, one of the best ways to increase audience engagement is to ask a question and call on an enthusiastic hand-raiser. You can also get live input from the audience without having your speech interrupted (ex: make a funny joke and see laughing emojis flood your screen, without having to stop speaking.)

4. **Chat:** The Zoom live chat feature is just like the chat feature on many other applications: audience members are free to write whenever they wish. Just make sure the chat is not distracting everyone from your speech! (For more tips on that, read the points under “**Host Controls**” below.)
5. **Spotlighting:** As the host of a Zoom meeting, you can highlight one participant’s video on everybody’s screen. This is very useful because when you are a speaker, you want to command everybody’s focus. This feature helps you do just that.
6. **Host Controls:** When using Zoom, audience members have a multitude of tools at their disposal. While Annotations and Chat can be fun and useful in moderation, sometimes one may get carried away. A good rule of thumb is to ask the audience to refrain from using the chat/annotations while you are speaking (unless they have a specific question that they cannot ask verbally). If needed, a meeting host has the ability to block certain tools from the audience by going under *Security>Allow Participants to* and unchecking whatever boxes they wish.
7. **Recording:** This feature is very self-explanatory: recording allows you to save a record of your meeting. While it’s usually beneficial to get other people’s opinions (sometimes they will suggest something you wouldn’t have thought of), sometimes this just isn’t possible – and recording a meeting can help you get

feedback. By watching your recording later, you can find areas to improve on all by yourself.

8. **Virtual Backgrounds/Video Effects:** If you've ever used Zoom before, you've probably played around with virtual backgrounds and video effects. They have practical purposes (such as hiding your messy room from your audience's view) but can also be a lot of fun! With virtual backgrounds, you can transport your audience to a tropical beach or take them with you into outer space. If you're telling a story and need to play different characters, video effects have got you covered!

Hopefully, these tools will help you when you give your next virtual presentation. Whether you're speaking on an informative, persuasive or entertaining topic, engagement tools will help your audience share their thoughts with you or with each other.

To continue reading this article or receive future blog articles when they are posted, please subscribe. Please **note** that we take your privacy seriously and do not share your details with anyone! If you are interested in our ebook, please check out ["Public Speaking for Kids – An Illustrated Guide!"](#)

SUBSCRIBE

