

Teach towards Changing the Listener's Behavior

There is an intimidating and terrifying wide gap between understanding parliamentary procedure at the RP level, and convincing an association to recompense you at the PRP level. The basis for this gap is that if you cannot teach a concept, you probably do not understand it well enough to be part of an association's solution.

But teaching is a behavioral science based on manipulating the listener towards his requested goal. Parliamentarians have difficulty manipulating the listener because many parliamentarians neglect a few basic points. We all learn to teach from different sources. We should continue to employ those resources, but not at the expense of the following five behavior-changing points.

Let us assume that we are teaching the motion to amend.

Point 1: Never ask the listener if he understood what you said.

Let us assume that I taught for 10 minutes and then asked the listener if he understood. And, he answers in the affirmative.

What actually happened in the listener's mind during my talk?

- Did he understand 100% of what I said? 75%?
- Did he focus on the easy, interesting parts and miss the subtle, critical parts?
- Did he clarify a confusing point in his mind with an erroneous concept?
- Did he answer in the affirmative because he was too ashamed to admit his failure to keep up with the others?

All of these common results would yield the same meaningless affirmative response.

You should never ask the listener if he understood. You cannot trust the answer. Instead, for example, ask the listener an open ended question.

"If a member moves to amend a motion by adding a phrase, where on the original motion would this phrase be added?"

Or, "If a member wishes to replace the number '20' with the number '30' in a motion, what would be the correct wording for the motion to amend?"

Instead of inquiring about comprehension, test, test, test! Testing is much more reliable, and it adds a degree of interactivity.

Point 2: Teach to the listener's entire body not only to his ears.

Teaching is an exchange of information. The teacher swaps his knowledge for a body reaction from the listener. If you direct your comments to the listener's ears, you will miss the listener's responding message. A listener will communicate his understanding with body language, for instance:

- By slouching vs. sitting on the edge of seat;

- By looking down at nothing in particular vs. looking at you with brave eye contact;
- With hands on his laptop's keyboard (you just lost him to Facebook) vs. hands on material related to the lesson;
- With passive silence vs. active participation;
- With a facial expression that hangs from scrunched eyebrows vs. from a look of discovery.
- With other annoying and inattentive behavior (texting is worse than snoring.)

It is not a lesson unless you test the listener. You speak. You test. You evaluate the audible answer and the silent body reaction. You adapt your lesson, immediately. You speak, again. The listener grows.

You can even test for the listener's pulse with an outlandish comment, such as, "Scientists have found that chimpanzee colonies are more peaceful when the chimpanzees are taught to use parliamentary procedure."

Point 4: Watch the listener's eyebrows not your PowerPoint slides.

Wouldn't a handout and an interactive drill be more effective for teaching any motion?

A lesson on parliamentary procedure should not be an academic lecture that sounds like a book report, and is really a PowerPoint slide recital (except to a room full of parliamentarians). The benefit of using PowerPoint is that it allows the teacher to be thorough without taxing the teacher's memory faculties.

But, boredom increases exponentially when a teacher focuses on being thorough and on telling everything he knows on the subject. The teacher should refrain from competing with Google, and instead, state only what is necessary to accomplish the lesson's goal. In our case, the goal is specific and narrow – the motion to amend. Do not venture into advanced aspects of the motion such as amend something previously adopted; amend rules that are not pending; what it yields to; what yields to it; or the motion to reconsider the vote. If these topics are presented at the wrong time, they are just noise to the learner.

You must resist the temptation to stray from the goal of the lesson. The more you digress, the higher the eye brows will climb and the smaller are the chances that the listener's needs will be met. Watch those eyebrows.

Point 3: Always have a stand alone handout.

The listener will not understand or remember everything from your lecture or PowerPoint slides. In a couple of days the listener will find your stand alone handout and the lesson's concepts will fall into place. Comprehension will start a viral process in his mind. Six postage-stamp sized slides on one sheet of paper

as a handout are not as powerful as two pages of clear, itemized, parliamentary knowledge points.

Ideally, the stand alone handout will elaborate on the interactive portion of the lesson. Regardless of the listener's age, the listener will not mentally digest parliamentary procedure unless he can get his hands dirty with it as you speak. The handout should enhance the participatory activity.

Point 5: Conclude with a call to action.

Parliamentary procedure is exciting and energizing to parliamentarians. Unfortunately, what the listener wants to learn about is effective meeting management skills. Regardless of what you are teaching, your lesson must be expressed in terms of effective meeting management skills. If you offer anything less, the listener will think he wandered into the wrong room.

Furthermore, you need a concluding call to action, a selling point, a punch at the end of your lesson. It should sound similar to your opening statement. You did make an opening statement where you promised the listener that if he employs the content of your lesson, he will reap specific benefits and accomplishments, right? Echo the opening sentiment as your conclusion. Your conclusion should be crafted to impact the listener's behavior.

Here is my selling point. The speaker learns as much as the listener. As an RP, every time you teach a parliamentary workshop, your RP knowledge matures, expands, and solidifies. As you complete and perfect your RP understanding beyond the mere words, your perspective will shift until you discover how you are part of every association's solutions. So fill that intimidating and terrifying wide gap between an RP and a PRP by teaching towards changing the listener's behavior.

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