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Ed Sykes

By Nine Ways Johnny Carson Can Help You Run Outstanding

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Nine Ways Johnny Carson Can Help You Run Outstanding
Meetings

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Recently, America lost one of the giants of late night television, Johnny Carson. He was a master at his craft, because he would conduct his show, essentially like a ninety minute meeting. The program would be entertaining, insightful, informative, and leave you wanting more.

Many times we fear going to meetings because we feel, based on past experiences, that they are going to be boring, not relevant, lack information, and we can't wait until the meeting ends.

Here are my eight techniques used by Johnny Carson to make your meetings outstanding for all involved:

1. Do Your Research

Johnny Carson would invest time before each show to find out information on what was important to his guests and audience members. He would find out about his guests' personalities, their interests, and concerns.

Why not do the same? E-mail the participants with your agenda before the meeting. Ask them for feedback or any concerns they may have concerning the meeting. This allows you address any concerns before the meeting and to think through any potential problems and come up with better answers for solutions during the meeting.

2. Plan the Meeting

Master the details for your meeting. Set an agenda with points to be covered and the time period for which they will be covered.

3. Invite Only the "Guests" That Can Contribute

When Johnny was finished speaking with one guest, then it was time to bring out his next guest and engage in conversation with that guest. When he finished speaking with his guests he would excuse them so they could leave.

Invite only the "guests" that are relevant to subject matter at hand. How many times have you wondered, "Why am I here, this meeting doesn't pertain to me?" Also once your "guest" has contributed to the meeting and there is nothing else in the meeting that pertains to them, excuse them so they can leave.

4. Keep on Time

You knew every night the Tonight Show with Johnny Carson would start at its assigned time (unless there was a special event).

Starting your meeting on time shows respect for the participants who made the effort to show up on time, and let's the late comers know that this behavior is unacceptable.

Also designate one person to be the time keeper. They are responsible for keeping you on track to stay within the time limits for each subject covered in the meeting. The results are that you start on time and end on time while accomplishing your meeting agenda.

5. Set the Tone

Johnny would stand up and greet each guest with an engaging smile and welcome. Do the same with your meeting participants. Put them at ease for more informational meetings. Let them know that you really appreciate their feedback and participation.

6. Engage the Participants

Johnny would continue the flow of the conversation with his guests by asking follow-up questions or summarize what they said.

Ask additional questions to draw out important information with your meeting participants. Say the following:

Tell me more about...

That's an interesting viewpoint, please explain further...

If I understand what you are saying...

If there are participants that are quiet, make it safe for them to give feedback or suggestions. Say the following:

"Mike, we would really like to hear your ideas on...

"Jane, you look like you really want to add something important to the discussion, please tell us."

Once they make their comments say, "Thanks for your valuable comments. I look forward to you contributing more insights in the future."

7. Make the Meeting Participants the Stars

Johnny Carson had a way of letting his guests, whether they were infamous or famous, be celebrities on the Tonight Show. He allowed them to tell their jokes and witty stories, as well as complimented them, so that the stars were and ultimately the show was successful.

You can do the same for your staff in meetings. You could dominate the meeting and develop all the ideas yourself. You wouldn't accomplish much because the meeting participants would have no sense of ownership and would be slow to initiate your ideas. Or you can encourage the participants to contribute ideas so that they take ownership of the ideas and take responsibility for implementing their ideas. Also, acknowledge and reward these "solution creators" in front of the group.

Let them shine!

8. End the Meeting the Right Way

While excusing his guests, Johnny would sincerely thank them for coming on the show and compliment them on their contributions. The guests left with a good feeling and always wanted to come back again and again.

Make sure you thank the meeting participants for their time and contributions. Let them know how they made a difference in the meeting. If there were solutions created in the meeting, communicate what is the clear course of action to accomplishing those solutions. Express your confidence that you know that these solutions will be achieved.

9. Follow-up, Follow-up, Follow-up

Johnny Carson would talk about how great a show was because of a guest. This was another way to make the guests on his show feel special.

Send an e-mail to all relevant employees, whether they were in the meeting or not, explaining what was covered in the meeting, what was decided on in the meeting, and what course of action we are taking.

Also again, acknowledge key people in the meeting for their contributions.

Follow these nine techniques used by the master of late night and your meetings will be outstanding.

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Five Tips to Reduce Environmental Stress

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Life is stressful enough without allowing the physical environment – air quality, lighting, noise, and other controllable factors – to intensify day-to-day stress. Especially in the Fall and Winter is where you experience less daylight and more mood swings.

The great thing about environmental stress is that in most cases we can control what is in our environment that is causing the stress. Take these five steps to eliminate environmental stressors that might cause stress and tension in your work and home life.

1. Increase your activities during natural light.

Natural light elevates the mood and helps maintain a regular internal body "clock". Especially during the fall and winter we experience a substantial decrease in natural daylight. If you're indoors, try working next to a window and allow as much sunlight as possible to enter your space. If you work in an office without windows try buying a natural sunlight lamp (<http://www.wackyplanet.com/natsunlam.html>). These lamps can help with Seasonal Affective Disorders as they provide a natural sunlight spectrum for health and well being. Prolonged exposure to artificial lighting in any setting can be an environmental stressor.

2. Ban tobacco smoke.

Constant exposure to tobacco smoke and its toxins can be a persistent environmental stressor and lead to respiratory problems and other symptoms.

3. Evaluate your furniture arrangement.

Arrange your furniture so that you don't feel cramped. Remember you are more productive in a relaxed environment. Also, is your furniture arranged so that you inviting constant interruptions from visitors? If you can, move your furniture from the line of sight of potential visitors so that you can focus better, accomplish your goals, and decrease stress.

4. Frequently Change Your Ventilation or Air Filters.

Your office or home is full of ingredients found in cleaning supplies, upholstery, carpeting, adhesives, and in chemicals. Devices such as copy machines, printers and computers all contribute to poor air quality. Combine that with working in an office building where you can't open windows it makes the situation ten times worst for the occupants. In extreme cases, individuals may become physically ill from these pollutants, and even moderate doses can cause coughing, a scratchy, burning throat, and other symptoms.

If you are concerned about poor air quality in the office speak with the building maintenance crew and see how often they change the air filters. In most cases, if you explain in a friendly manner why you are concerned they will make an extra effort to change at least the filter in your area. Also you can buy a personal air filtration kit at any appliance store to make your life easier. Open windows At home to allow air circulation. Also frequently change your home air filter.

5. "Bring the Green In."

This is a term my wife, Joy Fisher–Sykes, uses to say that natural colors make us more relaxed. Color has effect on your mood and energy level. It is generally agreed that blue and green are very relaxing colors. On a personal basis these might not be the colors that relax you. You decide on the amount of color you're comfortable with and the shades that most appeal to you. For example, bright yellow would tend to irritate me it may work just fine for others because of its brightness. Experiment with colors that will work to minimize stress for you.

Remember, these are all environmental factor that you can change to work for you. Just recognize what works for you and take the first steps to decrease stress.

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