

# Ep #10: How to Ensure Your Audience Is Never Bored



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Michelle Barry Franco**

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## Ep #10: How to Ensure Your Audience Is Never Bored

You are listening to the *Beyond Applause* podcast episode number 10.

Welcome to *Beyond Applause*, a podcast for mission-driven leaders, coaches, and creatives who are ready to share their expertise and stories through public speaking. Here's your host, Michelle Barry Franco.

Hello, hello, hello my speaker friends. I'm giddy as usual to be here with you this week. This week we get to answer the concern that I hear so often, which basically goes, I'm afraid that I'll bore my audience. And I want to share with you the essentially no fail way to never be boring to your audience, or at least to the people you're most meant to impact in that audience.

So I can't wait to share this episode with you today, but first I'd love to do a shout out to Marsha. Hi, Marsha. She sent me a note, I think it was last week or maybe the week before saying that she was on the couch with a sweet baby girl on her lap listening to the *Beyond Applause* podcast, and there's just something about that image to me, and really knowing that that's happening that lights me up. Because much of my mission is about of course, all voices for good, being out in our world making a difference, making an impact, uplifting this whole world with these beautiful messages. And there's a special place in my heart for empowering the voices of girls. Girls and women. So I love that that little girl was getting that seed planted in her mind and heart, so well done, Marsha.

And if I could ask you to do me a favor here, my beloved listener, if you haven't yet, would you please head over to iTunes and give us a rating and review? When you do that, then when people put in public speaking or other key terms around sharing their voice for good, this podcast is more likely to rise up in the search, and then maybe another awesome Marsha type will be on a couch with a little girl or a voice for good, a growing voice for good on her lap, and they're more likely to find our podcast. Would greatly appreciate that.

So now for our Story of Inspiration, and I'm wondering, do you mind? Can I be our Story of Inspiration this week? Or at least share my experience of

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both being inspired and getting to feel the rich experience and get the feedback of inspiring others. So I had a blast at World Domination Summit this week, this past week in Portland, Oregon. So much fun. I got to facilitate a session called Speak So It Matters, and we had about 100 people. We actually sold out of the session of this academy. We had about 100 people sign up, probably about - I mean, the room was quite full. So many of them showed up.

And here's the thing I want to tell you. It reminded me why I do the work I do. Sometimes I go for periods of time where I'm not speaking as much as I am teaching and coaching. And it's so amazing to me when I get back out there and do what I'm so often talking about, which is stand in front of a room of people and facilitate their learning and growth, help them learn something new that will help them realize dreams and visions that they have for their own life.

And in my case, that is sharing their voice, sharing their expertise and their stories. So I had - I can't even tell you how many different people throughout the three days that I was at the conference come up to me and say, "I was at your session, I'm so inspired and I can't wait. I've never thought about speaking that way." You know, just all these beautiful words, but I could feel in them the inspiration and they really felt like they had tools to get out there and start sharing their voice and their message.

Now, that happens to be my goal, right? But the reason I'm telling you this story is because that is who you are, that is who you're meant to be for the people who are waiting to hear you stand up in front of the room that they're sitting in and share your story and your expertise.

And not so incidentally, I made at least 10 - probably significantly more, meaningful connections with people who are making this world a better place through speaking. I had people walk up to me and say, "I cannot wait to start working with you. I will be in touch. I wanted to meet you face to face because I'm going to call you and I want you to remember that we met now." I mean, it was just so cool.

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I sat in the audience later on for the main stage and happened to be sitting next to another woman who was like, "Oh my gosh, your session really got me re-motivated and inspired to take a stand for the people that I care so deeply about and for the message I care about." So again, I know it sounds like this is about me but I don't mean it to be about me. It's really about you and what's possible for you when you stand in front of room full of people and share that message.

By the way, I was up until like, 1am the night before. I hadn't prepared the way that I tell my clients to prepare, I had done a lot of preparation. But there was just a lot going on. We were traveling, all kinds of things, I brought my whole family. So I hadn't done this all perfectly, right? There was some technical issues, all of that. But here's the mantra that I offer to you that I was saying to myself that day: this isn't about me. It's about them and my ability to serve them.

So take that with you if you would as part of this Story of Inspiration. Get out there, make that difference you know you're meant to make because you are, and I got to be reminded of that in my own life just this past week.

Okay, so let's dive in. I'm afraid I'll be boring. How can you pretty much never be boring to the people you're meant to serve? Now, I want to make sure that I'm clear about that because in any audience, and certainly in some audiences in particular where maybe they're required to be there because you're speaking for an organization and it's required that they come to a particular meeting or event, you know, there's going to be variations on how the people got into your audience and how clear they were on choosing your topic area.

But in any audience, there is at least a subset, and in many cases, ideally, a large subset that you are meant to serve with your message. And when you craft your talk in a particular way, a way that we're going to talk about today, they can't be bored. They can't be bored because you're going to give them what they're so desperately needing and wanting, and you're going to do it using best practices. So that's what we're going to talk about today. How do you make sure that you're giving them what they need and

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want? That is never boring for us. No matter what the topic is. And I'm going to give you some examples.

And then using the kind of best practices that help them stay with you throughout the course of a whole talk. My academy this past week, by the way, was three hours. It is hard to keep people's attention for that long, right? You have to use some special techniques to do that. And also, there's a mindset, by the way. If you're doing a three-hour talk, even a one-hour talk - I mean, there's a reason that TEDx talks are 18 minutes, right? It is hard to keep people's attention for much longer than that, even for 18 minutes.

So, knowing that they will move in and out of attention. So as I share these strategies with you today, know that there may be points when you're looking at a particular person and they may be dozing off, who knows what happened for them last night. Or they might be sort of like, staring off into space. It's not your job to keep their attention the entire time. That's exhausting anyway for your audience to even try to do that. Just help them come back when it's most needed so that you can serve them, and these strategies will help them do that.

Alright, let's dive in. So I want to take you back. This is back maybe, gosh, eight years now, something like that. I was facilitating a training for this consortium group and they gathered every month to talk about lean practices. It was a bunch of manufacturing companies actually, but they were part of this industry group where they would gather every month to talk about best practices in lean, which is - gosh, I'm not going to do a very good job of explaining it, but it's a way of being most efficient with resources and most efficient and effective, especially in manufacturing but I believe now it's applied to a lot of different environments.

Anyway, this group of people were gathering to try to do their best most efficient work within their organizations. And they decided to bring me in this month. On many of the months they would bring in a special speaker or training, or at least on some months to help them just be better at their jobs at all of these different companies.

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So they brought me in to help them share their ideas with more clarity and impact inside their companies so that they could use the - make meetings more efficient, all of that, which is what happened when you have great presentation skills. So three members of this group were from a brewery, which sounds like an exciting topic overall, right? Like, don't people who work inside breweries have a blast all the time, right? It's beer.

I mean, you've seen the beer commercials, you've seen the branding that goes with beers. I mean, this was a craft brewery organization. Really beloved and well respected. But there was one person in this audience who at one point said to me, "Okay, here's the deal" - I think I had said something like, if you don't care about it, they're not going to care about it. So you've got to find a way to care.

And she said, "Look, I get what you're saying, but here's the thing. My job is to every" - I think it was every month - "report, like, share a report with the overall organization on hops production. Like, how are we doing on hops production. Is production low, are we having any trouble with hops production." And she's like, "No one cares about hops productions. Even when you work at a craft brewery. We care about like, the beer and how it's used and do people love it and throwing parties with the beer and whatever."

And I was like, yes, I hear you. This happens so much. I hear this so commonly in all kinds of companies. I trained for very large financial institutions, for insurance organizations, like some of - sort of stereotypically most dry topics, although I will argue that they are absolutely not dry inherently, but that's for a conversation we'll have at another time.

But I understand. I hear this all the time. And she's like, "How do I find a way to care when this is just inherently boring?" So the conversation that we had from there, you know, how I coached her through this was what do they care about? The first question has to be - we can't make them care about something they don't care about just from the topic area. You should care about hops production. You work at a beer company. They don't. They would have to fake it, right?

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But what do they care about? So we had this discussion about well, they love the Christmas party, they care about working in a place that's really fun, they're proud of working for this brand that has sort of a hip reputation, but also is pretty fun internally and out in the external world. They go to a lot of events, and so I went from there. What does hops production have to do with the company Christmas party, which was coming up when we were doing this training?

So we sort of built a connection. Is there a way you can create a visual representation in the break room or in the cafeteria area with beer bottles that shows hops production? And have people engage with that in some way so that while, maybe no, they're not actually caring about the hops production, they're having fun connecting in with hops production. And maybe there's some way to connect it with what happens at the Christmas party.

So you know, how fun - maybe we do a special event if this many people engage with the interactive display inside the cafeteria, and I realize this is getting very complex and maybe it's not a project you'd want to take on, so of course you ask the question, how important is it that they get engaged with this topic? Legitimate question, and it's a question you want to ask. How much of my time is worth it? But if it helps you care and it helps them care, and it's something that the top-level leadership really wants to be kind of front and center on people's minds for some reason, then it's worth spending some time figuring out how to help them care.

We cannot be bored when our needs and desires are being met. At least it's going to take a lot longer to bore us. So this is what we're going to talk about today. How do you make sure, first of all, that their needs and desires are being met and then how do you also use best practices? Both around structure of your talk and captivation techniques that keep the audience's attention or at least bring their attention back repeatedly so they continue to learn from you and be inspired by you throughout the time that you have their attention.

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This is the no fail approach to never being boring to an audience. And especially to an audience of people who need and want what you have to share.

So first, let's talk about this idea that you have to know what they need and want, and then give it to them. The first question here is what are they most struggling with? So for example, I worked in insurance for seven years. Early in my career, I worked in insurance. And I was a claim rep. I used to go write checks for people when they'd have a fire or a flood or some other homeowner's loss at their home. I would go in, assess the damage, give an estimate of what we thought it would cost to fix the situation, and then I'd write a check.

So as I was training, of course I had no idea to do any of this, I was not - didn't have a contract or background or anything. I had some insurance background previously having worked in insurance agent offices. But so they sent us off for these trainings, and they put a lot of time and energy into these trainings, and you would think that these trainings could have been really boring, right?

There was tons of policy. It used to be that you'd get this like, little folded up booklet in with your insurance policy every six months or a year or however frequently you had yours come to you, and it was like, tiny, tiny print, really thin pages in this little packet of policy language. We had to know and understand all of that policy language. I am not a detailed person, I am super creative. You would think I would have been bored out of my mind, but I wasn't. I was actually captivated.

Because here's the thing: insurance can completely change people's lives. If your house burns down or you have a major loss, even in your kitchen, it totally changes the life of a family. If there's an accident and somebody gets hurt on your property, being sued can totally change the livelihood and financial situation of your family.

So because they use so many stories and examples of what could happen, and then how we come in and really make things better by writing these

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checks, I stayed really engaged. I wanted to understand that language because I knew that I was going to be getting those phone calls, and I was going to be connecting with those people and I was the one who was going to serve them. I was the front-line person.

So as a trainee, I was never bored. Now, I don't know if that's true of everybody there, but I absolutely wasn't. We climbed on real roofs and then we had - we actually like, learned about shingles. Roof shingles, for goodness sake. Something I never would have thought I would have wanted to learn. Even that I was interested in.

But it was because they came from where we were. They started where we were. We've got a bunch of trainees who don't know anything about this. How do we help them connect with it and then teach them what they need to learn?

So another example, many of my clients who are speakers and aspiring speakers, they want to write a book, right? This desire, this deep desire, it's a call for them, much like speaking is. And a desire at that level, as you may know, can be agitating. It's not just fun. You know, like, how fun, I wish I had this. It's like, I want this so bad, right? But they don't know how to get there.

So when you promise to teach them exactly how to write a book, as for example, Angela Loria, who has *The Author Incubator* does, in fact, if you go to her tell her I sent you. I'm sure we'll put a link here in the show notes, and I wrote my book with Angela and it was an amazing experience. She promises to tell you how to write a book that actually serves your audience, allows you to make a difference, and then she teaches you that actual process and of course, she had my and all of our rapt attention throughout the whole training process.

So these are both examples of training processes. This is true in any kind of a talk. When you know what a person needs and wants and you give them what they're wanting, you directly give them what they're wanting, you're going to have their attention.

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So the first part is what are they most struggling with, and then you need to lay out the solution in a way that they can take it in and take some real action. So what's the first thing they need to know to get some traction?

For example, with writing a book, you might think it's like, well they need to know what their book is going to be on. So they have to come with a title or topic. And yes, that's true, but actually interestingly, one of the very first things that Angela taught us is that you need to know what your goal is with writing the book. What do you want this book to bring into your life?

And for example, with Angela Loria's program, if you're writing a book through her, you really want to be using that book as a way to attract clients, as a way to serve your clients and attract additional clients, and then she teaches you how to write a book that reaches those particular goals.

If those aren't your goals, then Angela Loria's program isn't really designed for you. There are other reasons to write a book. You might just want to write a fiction book because it's been living in your mind and heart for years, right? Or you might want to write a non-fiction book that's just a book that you're not looking for additional new clients, or you just have something you want to say. And it's not about necessarily making a difference in this sort of rich, deep, client serving way.

Again, what is your goal with writing the book? Another example. Let's say you want to start speaking. What do you want to shout from the rooftops? That's the question that I offer as the first step. Now, oftentimes, I'm surprised at how kind of new and unexpected this question is, how powerful it is for people as they go to answer what they want to be speaking about. It changes things for people.

So this is the beginning of the solution, and you want to lay it out in a way that they can take real action. And then just one more example, let's say the people that you want to serve want to get out of debt. Maybe the first question they should be asking themselves is why they want to get out of debt. So this might be a new idea for them that actually what will drive their

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ability to stick to what it takes to get out of debt is to know why it matters to them. What will being debt free give them? I'm not an expert at this one so I'm not sure if that's the first question.

So the idea is just to lay out the solution in a way that they can take it in and take some real action. So that's all part of the first part. You've got to know what they need and want and give it to them in a way that they can take some action.

Now second, you want to hold their hand while you walk them through your solution. You want to structure your talk in a way that makes it easiest for them to stick with you. So to do this, you use a clear outline structure. And I will offer to you the vast majority of the time this means three main points. Yes, only three. Not seven, not two, although actually, sometimes it's two. And that's a lot easier to work with because it's a lot easier to remember.

But three usually gives them enough sort of fullness to the solution, but it's a small enough number where they can remember it. And I have a podcast coming up where I'm really going to talk you through and outline how to outline a talk, what you put in those three main points, how to choose them, what to do if you have 10 main points you've been covering. So there are lots of ways to do that. But for now, just know that three main points is kind of a magic number.

There's some great examples out there. Sheryl Sandberg's TED talk - she has a TED talk that's called Why We Have Too Few Women Leaders. We'll put that talk in the show notes so you can see it. She has three main points. It's very clear, it's a great example. Neil Pasricha also has a great three main point TED talk, three A's of awesome. You can even hear it, he's like, listen, I'm going to cover three things. They all start with A.

So those are two great examples that you can watch and see it in action. So in this clear outline structure, the main structure of great speaking, you tell them what you're going to tell them, then you tell them, then you tell them what you told them. So you have a preview of your main points, you talk through your main points, and then you summarize those main points.

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Maybe specifically like, what each of the points mentioned, and it could be that you summarized a thesis there, but the point is you really are - it's such a gift to your audience. It's like you're - I always have this image in my mind where you're walking out to them and you're putting your hands out and you're saying, here take my hand, let me tell you where we're going to go. First, we're going to go here, then we're going to go here, then we're going to go here.

And a great talk you actually do that throughout, throughout the talk. This is why you have transitions that say okay, now that we've talked about main point one, let's talk about main point two. Now, no, it's not always that formulaic, but I will tell you, starting and practicing from that formulaic place will help you bring your own artistry to that process, but it is a structure like that that serves your audience with such ease and peacefulness and grace so they can just relax and trust the content.

Also, as part of holding their hand while you walk them through the solution using this kind of a great structure, you want to have a clear call to action at the end. Tell them how to go move forward. You've just given them a bunch of content, right? So you're going to give them a clear call to action so that as they leave that room, they know what to do. This helps them meet those needs and desires.

So for example, you might say, start today by setting a goal that feels exciting to you, then telling one more person about it. Maybe that's your call to action if you're doing a talk on goal setting or trying to reach a specific kind of goal like writing a book or starting your speaking career.

Or it could be - your call to action might be, listen, get support. If you do nothing else after you leave this room today, get support. I have a retreat coming up, I'm going to share a little bit about that with you. If that's not a fit for you, please just find the right mentor, guide, or program, or group of colleagues where you can support each other. Because doing this alone just doesn't work nearly as well or as fast.

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So the call to action might be to invite them to join a program you have coming up in a graceful, loving way that lets them know that there's another way for you to provide support, but that it's not the only way that they could solve that problem. So there's the second tip I'll give you on how to just never be boring to the right audience. You're going to hold their hand, walk them through it by using great structure in your talk.

Now third, use captivation techniques. So even while you're making sure you meet their needs and you've got this really great structure to your talk, you can still of course lose them along the way, especially if you've got a lengthy period of time and you have a lot that you want to cover with them. So you want to consciously actively weave in captivation techniques, and I've talked about some of these before, I'll certainly talk about them again because these are how we keep our audience engaged.

But let's talk about some of the most powerful ones. Number one, tell them a story. Stories are magic. Remember Brené Brown's first TEDx talk? If you haven't seen it, be sure you go check it out, it's about vulnerability. Do you recall the story she shares about sending her family away for the weekend and this visual of her flinging around research papers like Jackson Pollock? Every time I hear that line in there, I just immediately get this scene of her like, both paint being flung and also papers being flung around while she digs through all the research and just sort of is like, astounded by what she's finding, and passionate about it.

So stories are just magic. Use stories in your own speaking. Our brain lights up in a different way when a speaker is telling a story, when you as a speaker are telling a story. Your audience actually, their brain lights up when you tell a story well in the same way that yours is. It's almost like you're just syncing up together magically.

So another way to captivate them is to use rich description. Take your audience into your world, into a particular experience through rich description. Now, sometimes this is happening within a story and sometimes it's not.

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So I tell this story about a time back in graduate school. I was standing on a stage in San Francisco, and it was completely black out in the audience. I could just see the shapes of people's bodies in the auditorium, and they were like, staired seating, so they were kind of stacked on each other. And there was a light shining just on me. I'm in a completely spotlight. And the floor is all painted red. I'm the only one out there, I'm standing alone. And I'm about to do something I've never done before. I'm about to be someone else on stage.

And then I go into talking about the rest of the experience. I'll tell you that story another time. That's a little mystery building there. So I tell you the start of that story because I use a lot of description to set the scene to bring the audience in with me. I want them to be sitting in that audience with me watching what's about to happen. So rich description does that.

I remember seeing Glennon Doyle Melton speak at Wisdom 2.0. I think it was Wisdom 2.0, it was either that or Emerging Women, where she was describing the first time she saw her wife, Abby Wambach walk into a room. I think she was standing somewhere, but she just describes Abby walking in and their eyes meeting, and this sort of like, magical feeling between them, and she describes what Abby looks like as she's walking in and all these feelings that she's having in her body.

And I just remember I feel like I was there. I felt like I was there standing in a circle talking with Glennon and watching her first see Abby. It was so captivating. So as I said, this does often go with storytelling, but it doesn't have it. It could just be that you're setting a scene or describing a feeling inside your body. But you're doing it to bring the audience back in because it's an important time in the talk for them to be paying attention. So you want to use this strategically.

Alright, let's talk about another captivation technique that is a way to bring your audience back. And this is to engage your audience either physically or mentally, like, in an actual activity. So do this with me. Close your eyes unless you're driving. If you're driving, keep your eyes open. I think this will still work. But I want you to imagine a juicy golden yellow lemon. And then I

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want you to picture that you have a knife in your hand. A nice sharp knife, and you have this lemon on a cutting board, and you're actually cutting a wedge from this lemon and you place that wedge in your mouth.

I wonder what's happening for you right now. Is your mouth watering? Because mine is. It waters every time even though I know what I'm about to do. So it - this is just such a great example of how when we describe a situation, when we describe something and we invite our audience into the experience, they physiologically engage with that experience.

So you can do this just even mentally, but you can also have them engage physically, right? You can have them practice self-massage on their own arm. I had one speaker do that one time. If you're - it might be a demonstration. You might have them stand up and sometimes when I'm doing a training at a company - actually, pretty much every time I'm doing a training at a company, I have them stand up and physically move with me while I talk about presentation skills. Like, physical delivery skill and moving your body and how you can move your arms all the way out and use the space. And I have them walk around.

I remember at World Domination Summit a few years ago, a main stage speaker had us turn to a neighbor and describe one of our dreams to the neighbor. And a few things happened from that. I felt a little bit more connected to the conference. This was on the very first day, the very first talk that I was hearing. So I felt more connected, I knew one other person, and I knew something pretty cool about them, and I got to share something exciting and fun about myself too.

So we made a connection and we also had to articulate our own dream clearly enough for that person to hear so it was purposeful for the topic at hand. So there are lots of ways to engage an audience. There are all kinds of books that you can get on this and on audience engagement activities, but consciously weaving in ways to activate your audience mentally and physically is another way to make sure that you are never boring to an audience. It's one of the great captivation techniques.

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So I've learned over the years that many of us carry the fear that we will bore our audience. I know because so many of my clients and people in my workshops, trainings, and speaking have said this to me. It's almost always up on the board when I ask for a - when we do a brainstorm about what we are most afraid of. And it seems like it feels almost like it's out of our hands. And this makes sense because we have had to sit through so many boring presentations.

And some of us, myself included, have even delivered some of those years ago because I didn't know any better, because I didn't feel like I had the time, I didn't have the skills, or sort of like, a format for creating it any other way. And all the examples I saw were kind of boring. And so I thought, I guess this is just how we do it, right? But it's totally not out of our hands, and it isn't how we do it if we want to make an impact.

In fact, we can do so much to make the experience captivating and engaging for our audience. Not necessarily for every person, that's not even a reasonable expectation. But for those you are meant to serve. Never forget, you are uniquely qualified to serve a particular set of people who have particular needs and desires, and it is them you are doing all of this for. Enjoy creating a transformational experience for them.

So as you think about your next presentation, whether it's for your work, a community event, or something else entirely, get super connected to their needs and wants. Give them the best of what you've got. Deliver it using some of these best practices techniques that we know work to light up brains and hearts and enjoy it. In fact, enjoying it may be the most captivating element of great speaking of all.

So you know I love being here with you every week so much. Thank you for being here and for doing your beautiful work in our world. If you are ready to delight as many audiences as you can and you want to know how to get started on reaching further and wider with your message, go to [michellebarryfranco.com/start](http://michellebarryfranco.com/start) and you will get access to a free really rich and full guide of the whole process of getting started or even up leveling

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your speaking. I put that together specifically for you and I'm excited at the idea that you might have that in your beautiful giving heart and hands.

So that's all for this week, my speaker friends. I already can't wait for next week. Never, never forget, you are made for this. They are waiting for you. Get out there, go change some lives.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *Beyond Applause*. If you like what was offered in today's show and want more, head on over to [michellebarryfranco.com/start](http://michellebarryfranco.com/start) to get your free complete guide to stepping into leadership speaking right away.