

Facilitate for Impact

Module 11 Transcript

Welcome back to Facilitate for Impact where we're taking learning moments and turning them into lasting change. This is module 11 and in this module we're going to dig into engagement a little bit more. Engagement doesn't just happen, it's designed and practically everything we've discussed up to this point ties to engagement in some manner.

We've talked about the importance of it, we've talked about a little bit about how to do it, we've talked a little bit about how it makes learning stick. When it comes to adult learners engagement tools can make or break your session and here's the thing, you can't just pick a tool and wing it. Great facilitation means being intentional about what you use, how you use it, and why it fits your audience and learning goals.

So let's talk about how to make engagement tools work for you not against you. Engagement tools come in two main categories, organic and technological. Organic tools rely on you, your presence, your communication, your facilitation skills.

Technological tools rely on platforms, apps, and digital experiences. Both can be powerful but both require planning, awareness, and finesse. So let's start with the most timeless kind, organic engagement.

Organic engagement doesn't need fancy software, just smart facilitation. These are the human connection moments that build trust and curiosity. So here are a few that make a big impact.

Make eye contact, use your body language to connect, nod, smile, lean in. It shows that you're genuinely present, that you're there with them in the same room, but don't force it, don't fake it. Use your natural, authentic personality to do that.

Use names carefully. Calling someone by name can build connection, but we need to make sure they want to connect first. If they didn't volunteer to speak, calling them by name, that can feel like pressure and that can cause them to disengage.

So I typically wait until after someone else speaks first. So let's say a learner injects an insight after I make a point. I'll say, great point Amy, I'm calling her by name, I'm connecting with her, but only after I know that she's spoken.

We have to be respectful of our introverts. Don't force that participation. Give them choices instead.

Let them choose group or solo work, verbal or written responses, and growth doesn't always require being pushed outside of their comfort zone on command. So be careful about that. Respect those introverts.

Don't be controlling in the words we use and the things we say. Telling an adult to put their phone away or save questions till the end, that might shut them down. Your job is to make them want to stay engaged, not to force that engagement.

Make sure we try to keep it about them, not you. So instead of saying, oh I'm so passionate about this topic or I love this topic, you know what, try to talk about what it's going to do for them. This will help you lead your next meeting with less stress.

Shift the spotlight from you to them. We want to set clear expectations. That can help with engagement.

I like to start sessions by telling them what I'm responsible for. I'm responsible for making this session worth your time. You're responsible for choosing how you want to learn here.

That simple line reframes the partnership and tells them what I'm there for, basically. Rethink your rules. Rules like no phones or only break when we break.

You can make an adult feel like a kid and that's not always in their best interest or your best interest. Let go of any unnecessary control. I typically tell session learners right up front, I have no rules.

There are no rules here. This is your session. I have the experience to facilitate in a way that's going to keep you engaged and we're going to meet our learning goals, yada, yada, yada, but in the end, this is your session.

I have no rules. Something like that. Now, I did teach a session one time on election day when it was a very volatile election happening and I did say that morning, I only have one rule and that is no politics in this room.

Political conversations need to happen outside of this room. So, there may be an occasion where you have a rule specific to what's going on in the environment or in your part of the world, but rethink your rules. If you go into a session with a list of rules, you really need to think about letting go of any unnecessary control.

Move around. Literally, move around. Walk the room.

Standing too long in one spot drains your energy and theirs. Movement draws attention and re-engages drifting learners. It helps you stay focused, but move with purpose.

Don't just pace back and forth. I use movement to change the direction of what they're looking at because that can change the way things land in their mind. So, I will literally turn and look to the side or I will look at this side of the room for a minute or two and then I'll change and look at this side of the room for a few minutes.

Move around. Ask thinking questions. Mix it up between rhetorical questions and open-ended ones.

And when you ask questions out loud, unless it's a rhetorical question, give people time. Give your learners a moment to answer out loud if they choose to. Create collaboration opportunities.

Now, these don't have to be full-blown activities. It can be even asking the group to build a quick list on the whiteboard to help you build a list or something like that. That can create ownership in that collaboration piece that can get them engaged in the conversation.

Use emotional connection. Replace cartoonish looking slides with realistic, meaningful visuals and stories. Words connect the mind.

Emotion connects the memory. Shift gears often. Every five to ten minutes, change something.

Format, tone, activity, the medium. Attention spans are short. Variety keeps brains alert.

Never read your slides. Know your content so well that you can talk through it and not read from it. Adults don't want to be read to.

They want to be guided. And if you master these organic tools, you may rarely need technology. I use very little tech myself, but what I do is by choice, not by necessity.

Now, technology can elevate engagement or completely derail it. Before jumping into a platform, remember these four Ps. Pick, prepare, practice, and plan.

We're going to pick one tool, just one, and we're going to master that tool before we add another one. Less is more. If it works beautifully and your learners enjoy it, stop there.

You've already won. Prepare. Learn the platform inside and out.

Know the features. Know the quirks. Know the pitfalls.

Set up mock sessions and test them. Nothing kills credibility faster than bumbling through technology in front of a live audience. Practice it.

Practice like you're presenting to 10,000 people. Try it on different devices. Run it with friends.

Rehearse how you're going to transition in and out of it. Competence with the tech isn't about perfection. It's about preparation.

And plan. Always have a plan. Have a plan B and a plan C. Maybe sometimes you're even going to need a plan D. Tech glitches happen, and adult learners have zero patience for them.

If something fails, move seamlessly to your backup without missing a beat. Just act like it was what you planned. That calm recovery keeps your credibility intact.

If you skip any of these four steps, engagement can fall flat, and you'll likely lose your learners in the process. There's a couple of different types of technological tools for engagement. There's collaborative tools.

There's experiential tools. The key is to follow those four P's and to remember that the tool should never be the learning. It should serve the learning.

Reinforce the learning. Now engagement tools are like spices. They enhance the flavor, but they can't replace the main dish.

So if you rely too much on tools, learners might remember the activity, but forget the lesson. If you use them sparingly and strategically, they'll remember both. The goal isn't to show off the technology.

It's to create that experience that sticks. So learner prompt number 11 is going to walk you through thinking about engagement tools, but I'm going to leave you with this. Engagement isn't about flashy tools.

It's about connection, curiosity, and intentional design. When we use tools with purpose, adults don't just pay attention. They participate, they contribute, and they remember.

So that's it for this module. We will see you in module 12.