

Ross' Rave: What Would Oprah Do?

Ross LaBaugh, California State University, Fresno

Daughter #2 was holding me hostage in her studio apartment in Evanston. It was morning. Sunny. Cool breeze off the lake.

"Art Institute, Botanic Gardens, Aquarium?" I suggested.

Not a nibble.

"Fields, The Mile, Old Orchard?" I asked, appealing to her more materialistic vent.

"Not happenin'," she replied and plopped, cross-legged on the couch. "Oprah's on."

When she moved out a year ago I cut the cable and never looked back. Now, her digs, her rules and 120 crystal clear channels pumped non-stop through her coaxial.

This morning, Oprah had three guests: a man (called the dog whisperer) who shows the super wealthy how to control their rude pets; a designer who (I'm not sure why) did an extreme home makeover (courtesy of Home Depot) for a young, middle-class, Southern, white family; and, the best for last, Anastasia, The Eyebrow Diva, who waxed Oprah on air. The crowd was in a frenzy!

And if that were not enough, a thirty-something Mom was pulled from the audience and treated (by The Diva herself) for over-tweezing. The audience went wild. Mom was euphoric.

"Thank God for Oprah," she shouted. "Thank God for Oprah!"

"Thank God for Oprah?"

Like most of you, I always get to the classroom early. I make sure the computers are on, the systems folks haven't pulled a fast one on me overnight and "up graded" our software with new "enhancements". Then, I put on some music, tidy the chairs, erase the board, test out the controls and greet students as the trickle through the door.

"How are you? Nice hat. Good to see you again. Looks like the swelling's gone down on that lip ring."

I try to acknowledge everyone who comes in, then pick one from the herd and ask, "So what are you here for this morning?"

"I don't know. I guess somebody's going to show us how to use the computers."

I walk around and listen in on what they are talking about. It's usually the same themes: complaints about teachers, crappy work schedules, parking, sports scores, boyfriends, lunch.

"Do you have a paper to write for this class?" I ask a young doe foraging through her bag looking for lip balm.

"I don't think so, we like already wrote one."

An oversized buck slouches in the back clicking on pictures of trucks.

"You looking to buy a new truck?" I ask.

"No," he mumbles, never looking up.

"All right-y," I say under my breath and walk to the front of the room.

WWOD?

Oprah doesn't have a problem working a crowd. They adore her. They fawn. They swoon. They cheer, applaud, laugh and cry. They are filled with Oprah-ness. From His lips to Her ear. She has the BIG guy. We've got Infotrac.

Wouldn't you like a job where people applauded you just for showing up? How cool would that be? I get the occasional, half hearted, faculty primed, "Let's all thank Ross for a great work-shop" clap after I've done my job. But c'mon? Where's the rapture?

It occurs to me that a trick or two about classroom techniques from the Big O could earn us the recognition we truly deserve.

- 1.Scheduling. Never give faculty members their first choice of dates for bringing in the class. This makes it seem like it's too easy to get in. Say, you are already booked, then get back to them with a couple of alternatives. Explain that you can squeeze them in, but can *only* give them forty-five minutes.
- 2.Keep them waiting. Don't let them into the room right away. Let them gather in the hallway. Nothing gets the glands juicy like crowding into a small space. Remember, it's all about a-n-t-i-c-i-p-a- - - - - t-i-o-n. Have some lackey open the door and seat the good looking students in the front row. Explain to the teacher that you are running a bit late and will be their directly.
- 3.Walk-in, briskly, but not rushed, with a wide smile and

sparkling eyes. “Good morning,” you sing never breaking stride.

4. Welcome everyone with a huge grin and boundless enthusiasm. Tell them they all look fabulous and you’ve got a fantastic show class for them today. You are so excited that they are here because you have some very important issues to discuss with them this morning.
5. Now, get serious. Bring them down. Lower your tone. Look directly at the camera students and tell them why they are here. Explain the issues you will address, the important work we must all do. How we all have responsibility and an obligation to correct the injustices and horrors of the past.... But there is hope.

6. Take a 3 minute break every 12 minutes. Why not? They have an attention span of gold fish, so cut them some slack and let them chill. This gives you time to talk to the guest teacher, rehearse the next segment, freshen up in the powder room.
7. When you wrap-up, remind everyone how much better *you* feel about their being there today. The struggle still exists, but hopefully today’s experience has brought a deeper awareness of the issues we all battle.
8. End with enthusiasm and humility and huge superstar smile!

Oh... and make sure everyone gets a f-a-b-u-l-o-u-s parting gift!

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head off conflict by only hiring librarians who both want to teach and have the skills to do so. Careful screening of applicants may prevent this conflict from arising in the first place.

However, some librarians burn out and lose the desire to teach. Others have been with a library for a long time and have never taught much to the resentment of others. This conflict may have to be addressed. The leader should try several approaches. The first should be to talk with the recalcitrant librarians and see if there are things that can be done to facilitate their entrance to the classroom. Is more training need in teaching skills? Can other portions of the job be rearranged to give the librarian time to teach?

If this does not work, the library leader then needs to make decisions. Is forcing a librarian to teach worth it? Will it cause more problems for other librarians and students than it is worth? If the issue is forced, it is highly likely that a grievance or legal action may be initiated as a librarian argues about changes to the job description. This could result in costly and lengthy conflict resolution via binding arbitration.

Finally, the library manager needs to look at all conflict in library instruction and make choices as to when the best approach to conflict resolution is to let a non-library party win. Even if the library is right, other considerations may dictate that it is best to allow a party in a conflict to have what they want. For example, perhaps giving a faculty member a library classroom is worth the cost.

There is a lot to consider for a library leader when managing a library instruction program. There are multiple points where conflict can arise. Getting training for oneself and for other instructional staff is important. The manager should also encourage active listening, cooperation, acceptance of differences, and creative problem solving as all of these skills can help resolve conflict in a manner that allows for all to get what they need.

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