

How to put your audience to sleep

Yesterday Friday I was called by an old contact to come along to a lecture about 5G. The venue was in Dorset but only 40 minutes from our home so we thought 'why not'.

About 50 of us gathered in a light (too light as it turned out) and modern village hall to hear the speaker (I will not name him) talk about aspects of 5G

The talk was given by a mechanical engineer of 20 years standing. It's one thing knowing about a subject but it is quite another getting it across to a group of people. It was quite clear from one glance that the audience was knowledgeable. If I had been a lecturer I would have started by some interaction asking where the audience was from and what interest they had in 5G

He started off in a hesitant fashion. He had a rather small projector which unfortunately wasn't capable of focusing. I believe that the lens was dirty. All lenses need cleaning from time to time, but also that the projector was very ancient. My eyesight is fairly good but I could not read anything beyond the headline of the screen and had this lecturer been less concerned with what he could see on his laptop and more concerned with what was on the screen behind him the the talk would have taken a different turn.

It is not quite the English thing to interrupt a speaker during the first minutes of his talk but it was quite clear that we would not be able to rely on anything we saw on the screen or did not see on the screen and this put a damper on the proceedings.

The first law is to make sure your projector is setup and working properly. Please arrive in good time. This enables you

to set up and then meet with the public and engage with them.

He also did not have a remote control. He was standing between the projector and the screen and interrupting half the image that was to be seen by the audience. It was extraordinary that no one had told him about this. I would have done so but I do hate to be the one who is always complaining.

Some people have voices that are just plain dull and monotonous. I said to someone outside that if I wanted a cure for sleeplessness I would listen to him. It was also clear that he had not prepared his talk and he was going to and fro finding references instead of there being a flow.

Someone said to me that if you try to appeal to everybody you appeal to nobody. I am sure that that most of us knew as much as he did and so we became progressively more bored. I dropped off to sleep at one point.

I eventually escaped outside and found about half a dozen other people who felt the same. We had a wonderful chat and found we have a lot in common. Francoise and myself met another couple with whom I shall correspond and meet with in the future.