

## Plans for Engagement

### Audio Descriptive Text

Title: Professional Development 201: From Basic to Dynamic. Before the Webinar - Preparations; Plans for Engagement. Image of PD practices: Sustain, Design, Promote, Deliver, Follow Up, and Evaluate. CDC logo. The acronym CLOSER stands for closers, learning activities, openers, soft openers, energizers, revisitors.

### Video Summary

Webinars compete with participants' attention spans. Interactivities can combat this to keep participants involved and reinforce learning.

### Audio Script

A consumer insights study shows that the average human attention span is eight seconds long – shorter than the average attention span of a goldfish! You can read more about this study, *Attention Spans*, in the Resources section. This doesn't mean that webinars should be under ten seconds in length; however, it does mean that a webinar, more so than a traditional seminar or workshop, will be competing for the audience's attention simply because it is online.

Webinars compete for space alongside participants' web browser, social media accounts, and email inboxes. To combat this, maintain a conversational tone. Engage with your participants frequently by interacting and getting them involved to keep their attention and avoid the passive transfer of information.

The book, *Webinars with WoW Factor*, by Becky Pike Pluth, is a great resource for interactivities that could help during the design stage of a webinar. Pluth categorizes interactivities with webinar participants using the acronym CLOSER. CLOSER stands for:

- Closers
- Learning activities
- Openers
- Soft openers
- Energizers, and
- Revisitors

**Closers** are one of the most important types of interactivities. The last few minutes of a webinar are critical in terms of getting participants to revisit course material, focus on what they've learned, and leave with a positive impression. Closers don't include evaluations. Those should take place before the closer. An example of a closer is to conduct a short question and answer session, allowing the learner to refocus, apply knowledge, and review.

**Learning activities** are opportunities to take your content and make it more interactive. Developing a learning activity may be more challenging than a closer or an opener because it will require adapting

information into a puzzle or game. A “fill-in-the-blank” flow chart or logic model activity provides an opportunity to explain why that step belongs there and fits into the overall process.

**Openers** are important to lay the foundation for audience participation throughout the rest of the webinar. Lengthwise, these should be structured to correspond to the total course. That is, the longer the course content, the longer the opener should be. Openers set the tone for the webinar, get people sharing with one another, and build confidence. An example of an opener is an "Around the World" activity. If there are participants from all over the country, ask that they introduce themselves, name their location, and share one fact or idea about the topic of the webinar.

**Soft openers** are very similar to openers. These are icebreakers that usually occur five to ten minutes prior to the official start of the webinar as participants are entering the room. This could be something as simple as welcoming participants into the room through the text chat function.

**Energizers** are brief activities to help refocus tired participants and combat fatigue. These do not have to be related to the course content, but is important to build these into your webinar during the planning stage, especially for longer sessions. An energizer can be as simple as asking participants to stand up and stretch.

**Revisitors** are similar to a review. The biggest difference is that in a review, the facilitator is going back over the content. In a revisiter, the participants are going back over the content. For example, call on several of the participants to list their top takeaways at the end of each section or webinar as a whole.

Planning engagement activities will not only keep your participants involved, but will also help reinforce learning and concepts as you go along.