

PRO ACTION ITEM OF THE MONTH

GETTING FEEDBACK FOR YOUR SHOW. FAST.

I love feedback.

If you've ever been to a reading, workshop, or performance of mine, odds are you got a survey asking you for your input (or at the very least, I cornered you and grilled you for your thoughts). I've done quantitative research, qualitative research, and even used dial testing during an out-of-town tryout.

Quality feedback (especially from peers, as written about in this book), is the 2nd most important ingredient you need to create something magnificent (the 1st is you and your awesomeness!).

But feedback can also be overwhelming. Ask people for their thoughts, and, especially in this biz, they'll vomit up notes on everything from the climax to the costumes to the coffee served at intermission.

And often you don't have much time for fancy research companies to analyze it for you.

So how do you get the feedback you need and make sure it points you in the right direction?

Here's a 30-second, 1-question "Top 3" tool that I've started using at all of my readings.

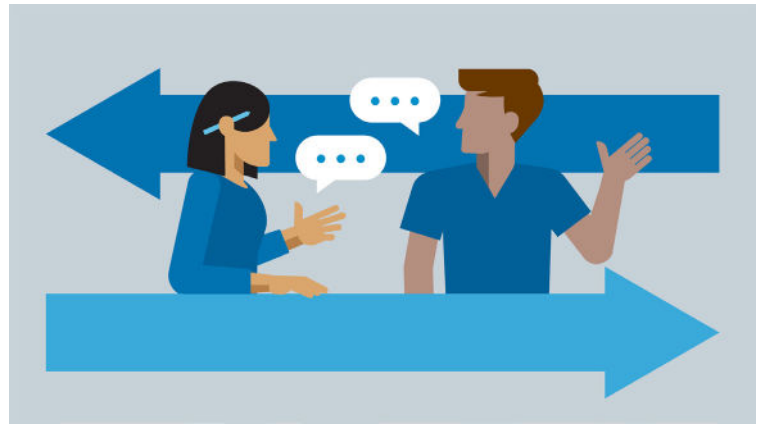
Ready?

At the end of the reading, I ask the cast, audience, creatives, crew, and everyone who was within earshot of the performance this one question.

"What are the Top 3 Moments in the show that are the weakest?"

I ask them to be as specific as they can (e.g. the lyrics for "Name of Song," the love scene in Act II, the title), and to send them to me in order of "weakness" (#1 being the weakest). (You can also send people this question anonymously using a tool like Survey Monkey.)

Then, I group all the responses and count up how many times a specific weakness appeared, and put them in order from most responses to least responses. When I'm done, I have a list like this:



TITLE — 12

LYRICS FOR "NAME OF SONG" — 7

LOVE SCENE IN ACT II — 4

And guess what I just created?

A punch list for my writers and for me.

At our next meeting we'll go down this list and tackle each area, paying specific attention to the Top 3 Weaknesses of the longer punch list, and less attention to the things at the bottom that may have only been mentioned by one person. We're looking for some kind of crowd consensus here that might indicate what a much larger audience would think. (Note to all: feedback isn't always meant to be followed – I'm not suggesting you DO everything that gets put on the list, but you better at least consider it.)

And boom, we're done.

Until, that is, the next reading when you repeat the above exercise. Not only will you create a new punch list, improving the show each and every time you present it, but you'll also see what progress you are making on your previous Top 3 Weaknesses.

See how that works?

It's a simple, structural feedback tool that takes no time, and no fancy tools, but guarantees you'll always be improving your show.