

The

# LAST STAND

..... A VIEW OF THE WORLD WITH A WITTY QUIP OR TWO! .....



*Jill Edwards wants to look you in the eye*

**W**hen did we all stop talking to each other? While technology is advancing at a breathtaking pace, the essential skill of engaging with people face-to-face is getting left behind. Technology is sprinting ahead, leaping every hurdle, while face-to-face conversation putters along like a Seventies school sports day egg and spoon race. It's still there in our memories, but it's something we don't get involved in now we're all grown-up and we don't have to.

But we do have to, don't we? Your ability to meaningfully engage with people could land you that job, pay rise or a refund on those shoes you shouldn't have bought.

I'm not going to bang on in a 'no mobiles at the dinner table, kids' way. I love technology, but there is no more life-affirming experience than engaging face-to-face with another human being and feeling a connection with them. We're wired that way. The only thing that beats it is creating a connection with a whole room full of people. You can do it. It starts with you. Engage yourself in what you have to say, even if your subject matter is more tedious than a "what route did you take?" conversation with your father-in-law. Find a way.

You know preparation is key and winging it isn't for you (trust me – it's not). If you're not interested in what you have to say, don't expect them to be. And if you're staring at your notes, a screen or a carpet stain while you're talking, you've disconnected. Eye contact is *the* engagement point. What did you think the last time you talked to somebody and they weren't able to look you in the eye?

If you focus on your intention to connect with everyone in the room, everything else will follow. Petty rivalries aside, they want you to succeed; it's the only way they



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can avoid embarrassment or boredom.

Smile. Take your time. Make eye contact while you talk, as if you're having a conversation with everyone in the room. If you can get your information across with passion and humour, they will respond to both. There's nothing more engaging than a speaker who talks passionately about their subject. If you can make them smile or even laugh you'll know they're listening to you.

A quick word about humour: keep it subtle and appropriate. Think 'family viewing'. The art of using humour in presentations is to make it look as if you're not. Make a simple witty comment on something you've just said, and say it the same way as you've said everything else. If nobody laughs, nobody will notice and it doesn't matter. In-jokes are great for creating a connection. Again – subtle, appropriate.

If we don't pass on the skills of engaging meaningfully with people face-to-face, future generations will replace us all with robots. Mobiles at the dinner table is how it starts. **TJ**

*Jill Edwards has been training stand-up comedians and non-comics interested in using humour in business for more than 20 years. Find out more at [www.jill-edwards.co.uk](http://www.jill-edwards.co.uk) or follow her on @thejilledwards*

