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What are you reading this summer? Where are you traveling? I'd love to hear about it. As I travel for both business and pleasure this summer (hello cruise to Venice!), I'm providing a few tips in this month's article to travel well and READ well along the way.

Also this month, don't forget to stay tuned on the Powerfulpanels.com blog where I will be commenting on the debate moderator's performances on July 30th and 31st!

Kristin

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CREATE A TEAM CODE WORD

When I was growing up in the San Fernando Valley, California, whenever my father and brother started prattling on too long about their love of cars (which happened frequently), one of us would start singing "Jingle Bells." If others in the family agreed that it was time for the conversation to move on, they would join in the singing! Singing "Jingle Bells" was our family "code word" for us to move on.

Teams need a code word too. Whenever the conversation gets too desultory, someone needs to call it.

When he sees a team get too tactical, my colleague, Scott Halford, asks if they are getting into the "bug dirt." Pretty soon, the team starts catching themselves getting into the weeds by calling "bug dirt!"

My friend, Susan Stark, uses the phrase, "it's blue!" referring to a non-consequential decision her team had to make. They were wrestling with a color choice – blue or red – and finally figured out that it really didn't matter! Nevertheless, they had spent all this time talking about the color, when it didn't really matter. So now, when her team digresses into the trivial, someone shouts "it's blue!"

One of my first clients uses the "three knock rule." Whenever anyone would stray off-topic, someone would gently rap on the table. Three knocks was just about enough to get the team's attention!

What's your "code word" to bring the team back on track?

HOW TO USE BINGO DURING A PANEL DISCUSSION

You might have noticed that I've been [reporting](#) on the Democratic Presidential Primary debates! And as I was trolling about looking for tidbits of information, I stumbled upon several versions of "BINGO":

- Daily Caller's [Radical Democrat Bingo](#)
- New Hampshire Democratic Party's [Dem Debate Bingo Card](#)
- The Root's [Democratic Debate Bingo Card](#)
- On Politics' [Debate Night Bingo](#)
- [Heavy.com](#) even pointed me to a [homemade version](#)

What do these bingo cards have in common? They all have topics or phrases that they expect the candidates to say or do.

The Root encourages you to "print out the bingo cards. Then, grab a pencil and paper and mark off each square whenever you hear a candidate utter that word or phrase (trust me, they've all said these at least once, [we tested it](#)). The first person to get four consecutive squares wins dinner with Andrew Yang!"

So how can this work during a panel discussion?

1. Make a list of topics and/or phrases that you think the panelists will address.
2. Make a bingo card – there's a free online tool called "[BingoBaker](#)" that makes this super easy!
3. Hand them out to the participants as they walk in or place them on the chair.
4. Explain the directions during the panel opening: Encourage the participants to note when a panelist mentions the topic/phrase. When you have noted the topics/phrases have five in a row horizontally, vertically or diagonally, ask them to shout out "BINGO!" (It's always a bit of fun to ask the audience to shout out "BINGO"! Then state the "prize" (or keep it a secret) for the first person that shouts "BINGO!")
5. Moderate the panel discussion as you would normally do – but when the first person shouts out "BINGO" be ready with "the prize"! (Note: you will probably have the entire audience shout out "BINGO" – so be prepared to be able to give the prize out to everyone!)

Yet my favorite variation on the BINGO theme was used during the [Outlander panel](#) during Emerald City Comicon. The moderator projected a BINGO card with questions she thought the audience might want to ask the famous panelists. It served as a "sneak peak" into what the panel was going to talk about!

Here's how you can use BINGO with the panelists during a panel discussion:

1. Make a list of interesting questions that you think the audience wants to ask.
2. Make a bingo card.
3. Project the bingo card on to the screen.
4. Explain the directions during the panel opening – that you will be drawing from these questions periodically.
5. Then, during the panel discussion, pause to select a question from the bingo card (or have a panelist or audience member select the question) and pose it to the panelists.
6. Don't worry about keeping track – the audience will let you know when/if you hit "BINGO"!

So there you go: Two ways to use BINGO during your next panel discussion!

FROM THE BOOKSHELF: TOP TIPS TO TRAVEL WELL AND READ WELL

“Doesn’t all that traveling bother you?” As a top tier flyer for the past decade, I get asked this question all the time. The answer is an emphatic “No!” as I try to travel well. The two keys are 1) not to rush and 2) be selfish. And in my crazy life, this is pretty much the only time where I actually make an effort to give myself more time (and grace) than needed and to be absurdly selfish. Please let me explain:

I always get to the airport in plenty of time. I go hang out at the airline lounge (AMEX Centurion Lounge is my favorite and bought a lifetime US Air Club membership twenty years ago – man, that was one of my best decisions EVER!) and put a timer on for 10 minutes before I need to leave for the gate. When the timer goes off, I then leisurely pack up my things, fill up my water bottle and do a washroom run.

When there is a delay (and there will be from time to time), I use my airline app to keep me posted. No worries! I keep a good book with me, download a Netflix movie or catch up on all my magazine/articles.

And when there IS a big delay (which just happened last week – Quelle Surprise! – on Air Canada no less!), I don’t fret. Life happens. And because I know that I will get stuck sometime...somewhere, I don’t take the last flight out. I book enough time to still get to where I need to be. That’s called “contingency planning” and it is critical in my line of work. I also carry on my suitcase so I am never without my toiletries and a change of clothes (I always pack for a day more than I’ll need!).

So there is no rushing, no stress, and I am incredibly selfish as I consider this to be my private time. Time to indulge in whatever I want to do. Nap, watch a movie, or my fave: read a book or a magazine.

Now, you might be thinking that I only read business books as that’s what I normally review. Au contraire! I read all kinds of books: non-fiction, biographies, fiction, – although I confess to a passion for paranormal, historical fiction and biographies.

When you are exposed to a wide variety of information, your brain absorbs and learns more than if you just stick to what you know. I’m a big fan of Amazon First Reads – which is part of Amazon Prime. Every month, you get to choose from six different books for free. Which would you choose? The genre that you like the best or the one that you don’t get exposed to so much? (I do both... Depends on my mood and book descriptions!).

If books aren’t your thing, try expanding your mind with an online course, a trip to the museum, or simple people watching! Try to think of five ways to describe the same event you witness.

By seeing the world in novel ways, we significantly increase our ability to think critically and make better decisions as we take this journey through life.