

Would you like to see some magic?

Approaching the Group

This is a most commonly asked question at my lectures, and one that requires careful thought. There is a stigma shrouded around the sometimes 'awkward' moment of approaching a group of unsuspecting people to find out whether they want to see our magic. If, like me, you work a lot of restaurants, you would have your tried and tested ways of approaching people, but my guess is that you found out the hard way, like me.

Some of us at some point in our career would have had that difficult feeling of finding 'a way in' to the crowd. This may have been caused from a previous bad experience from the group before or we just can't find our individuality of feeling comfortable at the approach.

Let's put this into perspective, if we have been hired to perform at the corporate event, we suddenly feel a little more at ease to the approach. This is simply because we know that the guests are highly likely to be expecting some sort of entertainment. However, if you are performing at a restaurant then the customers are there to eat and may not be expecting entertainment. This is what makes us as magicians feel subconsciously aware that we may get turned away, resulting in a set back and a feeling of failure.

Conquering the Feeling

Firstly, it is important to appreciate the feeling of rejection from a 'turn away' and to understand the consequences of the situation.

The consequences are ABSOLUTELY NOTHING!!!! Yes, nothing is going to happen when you get turned away from a group of people. They say "No, we don't want to see your magic, but thanks anyway".

They don't say " No, we don't want to see your magic, how dare you ask us, you are the scum of the earth and because of your cavalier attitude you now owe us your house and first born manchild"

The feeling of rejection is one of uselessness, it has no use to us whatsoever. There is no bad consequence. We simply move on to the next group and start again or do we? Unfortunately, most of us, at some point, would usually get caught up in the moment and let it bother us and beat ourselves up about it. However, if we now understand that the consequences are zero, then we are able to continue with our job.

Let's say what shouldn't need to be said, if you are seen to be too scared to perform your magic then you are in the wrong job.

The way not to approach

I've tried them all, over the space of 20 years so far. I've found that getting turned away from a group will happen often if you trick people into watching you perform magic.

For example: "Did you ask for a spoon Sir? Oooh look it bends all on its own" !!

This, in my opinion, can cause a feeling of unease with our onlooker. It's a feeling of having to 'beg' for their attention, which, in turn, they have the upper hand on and that's when we get turned away.

In my humble opinion I feel there is only one way to do this, honesty!!

Let me tell you how I approach my groups and tables at my residencies for the last 17 years. This is why I feel I hardly ever get turned away. The following is a broken-down description on how and why the approach works so well.

1) I politely apologise for interrupting immediately tell them my name

Good evening ladies and gentlemen my name is Wayne Fox

2) I then explain to them what I am doing there

I am a professional magician.....

3) A brief description follows to tell them I've been hired for the occasion

..... and I have been hired tonight to perform close up magic for everyone...

4) I then ask if I can join them all for 5mins

.....Do you mind if I join you all for 5 minutes?

What's good about this simple approach is that all their doubts are answered before they get the chance to ask, and by that time I'm into my performance and they are having a great time.

No 1, I've politely introduced myself

No 2, I've explained what I'm doing and not tricked them into watching

No 3, I've told them that I have been hired and this cements in their heads that I must know what I'm doing because I'm getting paid to be there and gives them confidence in me (I know it seems crazy but take my word for it, they're thinking it)

No 4, By asking if I can join them for 5 minutes tells them that even if they don't want to watch the magic, it's only going to last a short while. It's up to me to completely blow them away now.

Now.... even if they still say "No" I politely wish them a good evening and move to another table at another part of the restaurant. Why? Because if the table next to the one that turned me away overheard the 'turn away' it kind of fuels the fire and they feel "Well if they don't want to see him, there must be something wrong, so we don't want to watch either". So, start again at the other end of the restaurant or venue.

I'm telling you now though, those people who turned you away for whatever reason will look over and see all the other guests having a great time watching you. More often than not, those guests will be calling you back over to see what they're missing and when that happens.....Guess what I do?..... I tell them to get lost!!!! No, I don't, I'm kidding. I end up performing for everyone in the room.

I encourage you to try this easy approach, I'm confident you'll use it all the time.

Wayne Fox