

INTRODUCING THE SPEAKER

Presented by Teri Mansur of Ventura Sunrise Toastmasters, Jan. 21, 2004

How do some emcees manage their stage and guests with such finesse? They focus on three key points, 1) the content of their material, 2) how it is presented, and 3) their positioning on the stage. Each situation is a little different, so take into consideration your audience, the location, and the subject matter – use any of the following tips that apply.

CONTENT

Frame the Speech

Just as we would not choose to frame a modern abstract painting with an old traditional gilded frame, emcees need to be mindful of how they are establishing the frame around the upcoming speech.

- Introduce both the speaker and the topic of the speech
- To do this, you will need to interview the individual ahead of time to develop your introduction content
- Who is the speaker? Provide facts about the person, let the audience know how the person is uniquely qualified to speak on the subject. Help the audience understand why they should listen to this speaker.
- What is the subject of the speech? Consider making a general statement about the topic (as long as the speaker says it will not interfere with their material, this is a good way to ease the audience into the subject).
- Set the tone – prepare the audience – Will this be funny or serious? Entertaining or educational? This is especially important if you need to transition an audience out of a light-hearted speech and into a sober one.

Help your audience prepare for what is coming. Provide them with information on the speech and the speaker and set the tone.

PRESENTATION

Focus on the Speaker, not on Yourself

People go to the ballpark to watch a ballgame, they do not go to listen to the announcer. Do not steal the show.

- Everything you do and say in the introduction is for the benefit of the speaker. Make them look good without going overboard.
- An introduction is ceremonial. A formal introduction gives the audience time to settle in and get mentally prepared for the next speaker.
- Be brief. At a roast for my uncle's 90th birthday, I was to introduce him at the end of the evening to come up and speak. What more could I say about him after two hours of roasting?! I kept the intro to just five powerfully spoken words, "*Ladies and Gentlemen...Roy Fenstermaker!*" The crowd went wild.

Gauge the situation, keep your introduction focused on the speaker, keep it ceremonial, and make it just long enough to get the audience prepared, drawn in and ready to listen to the presentation.

POSITIONING

Keep all Eyes on the Stage

Like a magician, know how to control where the audience looks. Make a smooth transition from emcee to speaker.

- Keep the attention on the stage at all times. Don't ever leave your stage alone and empty.
- While making an introduction, focus on the audience. Don't look at the speaker, otherwise the audience will follow your gaze. Suddenly, the attention you had is quickly drawn away from the stage and lands too soon on the poor speaker. Simply look at the audience while introducing, then look at the speaker as you say their name. Tada, magically the speaker appears and all eyes are on them for the walk to the stage.
- Lead the clapping, remain on the stage (remember that you don't want to leave it empty), when they reach you, shake hands, then exit stage left or right (whichever is closer).

If you forget every other tip, remember this one...HAVE FUN! If you are having fun, the audience will, too.