



## **Speakers' Bureau Master Of Ceremonies**

Being the Master of Ceremonies is similar to being the Toastmaster for club meeting or other event and most of you have had that opportunity or at least know what that involves.

In the book *Speak and Grow Rich* the authors Dottie Walters and Lilly Walters define the role of Master of Ceremonies (MC) as follows:

A Master of Ceremonies acts as a moderator and connects the separate sessions of a meeting together. An M.C. might also act as the Introducer for the other presenters. This person might also be thought of as the Toastmaster/mistress, and preside at the banquet, announce the toasts, call upon the various speakers, etc. A warm, outgoing personality is usually what is required. Being good at customized fun and humor is a definite selling point.

An Introducer is a person who introduces the speakers and usually leads the audience into a look at the speaker's history.

To compose and perform or deliver a speech without previous thought of preparation is called improvisation and having this skill is very helpful.

### **Opening the Meeting**

You will want to make a few opening remarks to set the tone for the meeting. You might tell a brief anecdote related to the topic of the meeting, provide a thought for reflection, etc. Remember that the speakers are the stars of the meeting, so you will want to keep your remarks brief.

### **Running the Meeting**

One of the most important responsibilities of the MC is to keep the meeting running on time. Watch the timing lights and watch the clock. If a speaker runs over one or two minutes, that's not a big deal. If the speaker runs over by as much as five minutes, you need to have a strategy ready to intervene. One possibility is to stand and walk to the front of the room. A notch above that would be to slowly walk toward the speaker. In extreme cases, look for a pause, stand and begin applauding while thanking the speaker.

### **Introducing the Speakers**

Before introducing the speakers, remind the audience about the green sheets on their tables, so that audience members record comments for the speakers to take home with them.

Another important responsibility is to introduce the various parts of the program, including introducing the speakers to their audience. The speakers are responsible for providing their

introductions. Practice reading these aloud. You do not need to memorize them: it is acceptable for you to read introductions when you introduce the speakers. Just be sure you can say all the words and names correctly.

Some speakers will not get you their introduction in advance. In this case, read it over several times if possible, and just do the best you can.

If you do not receive an introduction at all, introduce the speaker only by saying their name and leading the audience in applause.

Remember that the speakers are the stars. Lead the audience in applause when you introduce a speaker and when they return control to you. As they are leaving the stage, always say something that will show you listened to the speaker and that the message was received. Even if you disagree with the speaker you must show interest and respect.

Introduce humor when possible but never at the expense of a speaker or an idea. If you do not have appropriate humor then you will have no humor at all. Do not think of yourself as Billy Crystal working the audience at the award presentation. You should keep it light and fun when possible and remember to always make the others the center of attention.

### **Evaluations**

An important segment of a Speakers' Bureau meeting is the evaluation of qualifying speeches. As MC, you are responsible for leading evaluations appropriately. Keep the speaker with you at the front of the room for their evaluation.

As you open the evaluation segment, you might want to remind the audience to:

- Keep their remarks brief
- If something has been mentioned, there is no need for anyone to repeat it
- Provide constructive information the speaker can use to improve speaking skills and the presentation.
- Be sure to note comments on green sheets

You might open the floor for evaluations by saying something like, "Who has a comment for our speaker?" Wait a few seconds (count to 5 slowly if you need to) because people may take a moment to respond.

Call on as many people as possible, from as many parts of the room as possible, but maintain control of the evaluation.

- If someone offers a comment that you think is not valid, you might provide a "reality check" by polling the audience and saying, "How many of you agree (or disagree) with that statement?"
- If someone offers a comment that repeats what has already been said, you might say "As previously noted" or otherwise remind the audience that we don't need repetition.
- If someone offers an extended evaluation that seems to go on and on, you might look for a slight pause and interject, "Thank you. Who else has a comment?"

Be sure to watch the clock and the timing lights. When about 2 minutes remain for the evaluation time, look to the co-chairs at the back of the room and call on them—even if others still have their hands up.

After the co-chairs have offered comments, thank the speaker, shake his/her hand, and lead the audience in applause once more for the speaker. Then move on to the next portion of the meeting.

### **Special Circumstances**

When you are the MC, you are in charge of the program and that includes emergencies. If someone shows signs of having a heart attack or if there is smoke in the room, you will be expected to take charge and instruct the audience exactly what to do. You should know the exits and the plans to evacuate the room if necessary.

If a speaker goes way overtime, you will need to interrupt the speaker and lead the applause while saying something nice as the speaker is leaving the stage. If you have hecklers you have the authority to request the heckler to leave the room. No matter what challenges you encounter, remain positive or at least neutral at all times.

Being a **good** Master of Ceremonies will not be noticed as much as being a **poor** Master of Ceremonies. You will be remembered and appreciated for keeping the program on time and on track. Remember the quality of the program is won or lost in the preparation and planning. An ill planned program will fail no matter how well the MC does. Plan well and practice well and lead well and you will do well.

***One last thing.....*** Have fun and let the audience have fun with you. It is very rewarding to know you have accomplished a program in a truly professional way.

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