



The Master of Ceremonies

by Ty Boyd, CSP, CPAE

This is an area where my expertise rivals just about anyone but Bob Barker or Pat Sajak. Though I have always really enjoyed the emcee role, I never dreamed it would be such a big part of my work. Years of broadcasts, hundreds of pageants, fairs, award ceremonies of every description, the annual International Retailer of the Year Awards in Chicago, the Positive Thinking Rallies, not to mention 18 years at the CPAE Banquet at National Speakers Association, have all sharpened my ax.

What I've Learned

There are 12 things I have learned over the years:

1. As emcee, you are the captain of the ship, the host. The members of the audience are your guests. Your job is to make them comfortable, to create a dialogue between them and the various events on the program.
2. The job calls for a sense of theater.
3. You are not the show, but you are responsible for the flow, the housekeeping, often the introductions, and the audience's concerns -- the total program.
4. You are not the star, but are still critical to the program's success.
5. This job requires preparation. Do your homework.
6. Either carry survival tools or know where to find them (flashlight, extra script, filler materials, etc.).
7. You are the fire marshal.
8. It's your attitude that shows.
9. Set the stage for real people and a worthy audience. Answer the audience's question of, "What's in it for me?"
10. You are the sergeant-at-arms.

11. Have fun.

12. Don't overstep your boundaries.

You can create a useful talent to enhance your value to the meeting professional. Work hard enough that the meeting planner will want you to return as the emcee next year. Then you can sell a speech to go with it!

The Introducer

Too few people are introduced effectively. I always advise speakers to write their own intros. It's sometimes the only commercial you will get. Additionally, I instruct them to print reading instructions on the page with the intro. Simply say, "Please read as written." Funny thing, when we have that instruction on the intro, people will work so much harder to do it well – and just the way you have written it. It beats some clown saying, "Well, here's an old buddy-buddy of mine. Never dreamed we'd be paying him to tell us anything about this subject. Let's give a warm welcome to this fool!"

Being the introducer requires that we create an atmosphere of mutual respect between the audience and the speaker. We need to answer several questions: Why this speaker? At this time? For this audience and at this place? As a speaker you know how much better the event goes when these questions are answered.

Here are some pointers:

- You are the stage setter.
- Create an inviting environment.
- Do your homework.
- Be really interested in the speaker and subject. Show it.
- Unless the speaker is a celebrity, use his or her name several times. Audiences forget.
- Be a little bit on the gossipy side. Make the introduction sound like a novel not a textbook. Be sure to answer the audience's unasked question, "What's in it for me?"
- Never introduce a female as "Mrs. John Smith" or in a sexist way.

- When you make an introduction, speak to the audience, not to the person being introduced.
- Do not upstage or over praise.
- While you are on stage, you are the captain of the ship. Don't leave the center spot until the speaker has arrived. Welcome the speaker with a handshake, nod, smile, or slight touch on the shoulder, and then exit. It's now his or her show.
- Model good listening.
- Lead the applause. Model the behavior you would expect from the audience.

You may not be compensated for simply introducing a speaker, but the more proficiency you display on the platform, the more desirable you become as a total package. Many times the roles of emcee and introducer are combined.

Ty Boyd, a speaker for 30 years, is a Cavett Award winner and founder of the Excellence in Speaking Institute (1980). His latest book is The Million Dollar Toolbox, a Blueprint for Transforming Your Life and Your Career with Powerful Presentation Skills. He can be reached at 800-336-2693 or 704-333-9999.

Copyright 2001, Executive Learning Systems. To obtain reprint permission, find out information about the communications training options available through Executive Learning Systems or order your copy of the book, call (704) 333-9999 or (800) 336-2693.

Web Site: www.tyboyd.com Email: information@tyboyd.com