



3 Roles of a Great Emcee

Facilitator of the Audience Experience

In 2018 I had the privilege of being asked to emcee an event in Singapore as part of my companies series of global customer events. This particular venue was hosting over 1,200 customers from all over Singapore and surrounding countries. And while I had coached several other emcees during my time working this was the first time in over 3 years that I was personally asked become the facilitator of the audience's experience as an emcee.

I was both excited for the opportunity and, I was a bit nervous. Well, to be honest I was very nervous. For several reasons:

- One, I was rusty. It's one thing to coach someone on their role as an emcee from the safety of the audience and completely another thing to get up on the mainstage and host an event.
- Two, as the go to person for coaching on all things presentation related, I had better deliver a master class in the art of emcee'ing. The expectations from others was high, not to mention there was a lot of pressure that I placed on myself to be excellent.
- Three, while it may not look it, I have a big case of stage fright and nerves that hit me every time I have to deliver at a big event, especially in a live in-person setting. In fact, in this particular event I remember having a mild internal panic attack about 30 minutes prior to the conference starting and was doing everything in my power to not let on to anyone else the amount of anxiety that was flowing through me at that time.

The good news is that I had all the tools at my disposal to deliver as emcee, I had been teaching others to do this for years, and all I needed to do was take several deep breaths and follow my own advice.

My role as emcee was simple, my job (and the job of every emcee) was to accomplish 3 things.

Here are the 3 Roles of a Great Emcee:

1. SET THE TONE

The emcee or Master of Ceremonies is responsible for setting an enthusiastic tone to help get the audience engaged and excited. As the first person to come on stage it is incumbent upon the emcee to create an inviting, collaborative, educational, open environment that will lead the audience in the direction he or she would like to see them go based on the message or intent of the event. At times they will need to build enthusiasm and other times it will be important to set a more formal or serious tone if that is what is called for.

Three Ways to Set a Great Tone:

- **Bring the Energy** – Selling is a transference of feelings, and the job of emcee is to sell the audience on the value of the training or event they are participating in.
- **Set Expectations** – At the beginning take time to outline to the audience what will be covered over the course of the training. Explain what the expectations are and how knowing and understanding that information will be instrumental to their ability to learn and ramp faster.

- **Maintain the Focus** – When things get off track as they sometimes will it is the responsibility of the emcee to bring the group back to the purpose and the focus of what the training is about.

2. MANAGE FLOW

In your role as Emcee, you are in charge of the flow of the program or training. You are the facilitator of the audience's experience. A good emcee will keep the pace moving smoothly with no gaps in between presenters and will be available for moments when something occurs to derail a training.

Three Tips to Manage the Flow:

- **Start and End Sessions on Time** – As the one in charge, the emcee must ensure that the events/trainings/sessions start and END on time. A big task, but it is essential to running a great event or training. There is nothing worse for the audience's experience for the event to go over time. This will damage any selling opportunity that you have planned at the end of an event so, do your best to end on time. I have yet to hear someone complain about an event ending 5-10 minutes early, but plenty of people complain about it going late.
- **Manage the gaps between speakers and presentations** – Your job will be to be the transition from one presenter to the next and nothing destroys the flow of an event like huge gaps and dead space between presentations. So, managing looks like coming back immediately following a speaker or panel to enthusiastically share a significant learning point from the previous presenter and to properly tee up the next guest. Additionally, if it calls for you, and you notice the previous speaker brought the collective energy down of the audience, you may want to come back with higher energy as you set up the next presenter. The opposite can be true if you want to strike a more somber tone and slow things down.
- **Make sure each speaker knows when they are scheduled to present and for how long** – Prior to the event you MUST make certain that each of your speakers know how much time they are scheduled to speak to ensure they don't go over the allotted time for the section of the event. In fact, I recommend encouraging them to go under the planned time to improve the likelihood of ending on time. Or, simply tell them they have less time than they actually do. In other words, if you have 15 minutes allotted for a particular speaker, you tell them that they have 15 minutes. This will give you a 3 minute cushion to work with. The reason is that most presenters are not good enough to properly plan their time and, unless they have practiced it multiple times, will usually go over.

3. EFFECTIVELY INTRODUCE THE SPEAKER

A great introduction can really grab the attention of the audience and create additional enthusiasm for the topic to be presented. If done well, it can also serve as a conduit to building up the speaker's likeability, trustworthiness and credibility with the audience that may not have been there previously.

5 Guidelines to Stellar Introductions:

- At minimum, be sure to include in your introduction the speaker's name, background, topic being discussed, and close with a request for applause for your presenter. "So, let's welcome _____ to the stage." **Side Note:** Make sure you pronounce your speaker's name and how they like to be referred.
- Introduce the topic the speaker is addressing, but don't share too much about their speech
- Keep the introduction brief and on topic – Any information you share about the speaker should be relevant to the topic at hand. Humorous anecdotes, inspiring quotes, or a milestone the speaker has achieved should be held to 30-60 seconds.
- If possible, memorize your speaker introduction. By doing so, it will appear as though you know them more and will enhance the credibility of the presenter.
- Remember, your job is to make the presenter look as good as possible without over exaggerating. Share honestly and from your heart because the audience is fortunate to have the presenter speaking with you.

- **Bonus Tip:** At the end of your introduction, you may consider giving your audience some advice on how they can pay attention to the speaker. I call this Coaching. Take a moment and share with them what you think they should be looking for, thinking about, considering, or be aware of while they are listening. Should they take notes? Tell them. Do you want them to focus on a specific feature and talking point that will help them make a better decision about your service or the event? Tell them that too.

Alright, I hope this was helpful and you are feeling more equipped with some ideas and tools to deliver a world class emcee role!

If you would like to learn more, check out www.AceYourPresentation.com and/or join me and other professionals looking to up their game as presenters and leaders in the ACE Community at Circle.so

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