



Toll-Free: 1-888-818-3900

Professional emcee vs staff emcee

"Welcome to our convention! We have a great agenda, but first, I've got a few dozen announcements. . . and you're off to the races with a great event hosted by a not-so-great emcee. As an agent who has seen his fair share of events destroyed by a poor emcee, I'll give you a few reasons why you should hire a professional emcee but if your budget doesn't allow it, here are lots of tips on how to emcee and more importantly what not to do.

A professional emcee

An emcee is someone who will keep your conference humming instead of having the audience snoozing? To make sure your people come back after the break, you need a professional Master of Ceremonies.

There are a ton of good reasons why a professional Emcee is excellent investment, but here are just a few:

- It is a shame to invest thousands of dollars in a convention and not protect your investment with a professional behind the microphone. Reminder that old saying, "You only have one chance to make a first impression"!
- Allow your top managers and executives to do what THEY do best. Bring in professional emcee to introduce your speakers and events, not your managers. A pro will do it smoothly and professionally. And — best of all in the minds of your audience — they'll do it with humor.
- Your top speakers will thank you for hiring a pro to make them look good. They'll especially thank you for hiring a professional MC to make sure the audience is awake for their part of the meeting or convention. And they'll thank you for protecting the convention/conference against the hundreds of things that can — and will — go wrong, by booking a pro who can joke away the problems and focus them right back to where they should be. Back to learning and not snoozing. You have to make the event interesting so people will pay attention.
- A humorous and professional Master of Ceremonies will re-cap each event and speaker's main points and themes in a lighthearted way. By tastefully poking fun at the program and the presenters, you accomplish two things: 1) People laugh and they feel really good about being at the meeting. 2) The main points are reiterated and re-emphasized. How cool is that?

Staff emcee – following advice given by a professional emcee

"Take the bullet."

This is ancient comedy club wisdom. The emcee is not just hired to be funny; they're also there to sacrifice themselves by going first, or "taking the bullet". More important than just being entertaining, they have to focus the cold, chatty, drink-ordering crowd, so that the other acts/speakers do well. If you're not comfortable with jokes, then don't do them. Instead focus on your first few tasks, which are to welcome your guests, tell them about the great experience they're in for, and what's on the agenda. Sure, slip in some details, but don't focus on the bathroom locations first.

Come Prepared

"Papadopoulos" is the most popular surname in Greece. You may have to say it one day. Practice the speaker's name out loud several times fast, so it rolls off your tongue, and most importantly write it out phonetically. Many professional speakers will send you a written introduction. Take the time to read it in advance. The same goes for titles and intros, whatever you do, just don't get up there and try to wing it.

Tie It All Together

Thanking the last speaker is a dismissal, not a wrap-up. Instead mention something you just learned, repeating a website, giving a personal fact about the speaker, or taking a silly survey. You should tie the event together, not run speakers through on a conveyor belt. I once polled the audience, after the president gave a long analogy between the Super Bowl and life, by asking "how many people hope, during next year's game, Bill just drinks a beer like the rest of us?" Of course I had permission to be funny. Don't get yourself in trouble!

It is the emcee's job to keep the program moving on time.

Even though the speaker(s) have been given a time schedule, not every presenter stays within the limit. It will be your responsibility as the emcee to keep everyone on time. You don't want your event to be like The Oscars, now do you? Before you start, tell them that you will give them a signal when they have five, three and one minutes left, and stress that the time schedule is important for the success of the program. If they are going way past their time, you might have to gracefully take to the stage. As emcee, keep your comments as short as possible.

Plan to Stall

There are a million things that can interrupt your perfectly arranged session, but you still have to keep things moving. Have a plan for power point presentations crashing or the noise from the group next door setting up a petting zoo. You can stall like a pro by highlighting a sponsor, taking a few questions, listing five great area restaurants, asking people to shout out one thing they've learned, or inviting everyone to go pet the goat next door. "Plan B" shouldn't include staring at the banquet manager until they fix the problem.

Change the Energy

In comedy clubs, if the first act dies, the emcee tells a couple jokes to change the mood so the next act has a fighting chance. You, too, need to help the audience switch gears from funny to serious, serious to high energy, and so on. One quick line can do it. I once followed a CEO whose depressing speech focused on how the company was, quote, "toning down the glitz & glamour." I came back with "great, you're toning down the glitz & glamour. . .and then I'm introduced! Like I'm the blandest speaker you could find!" It gave the crowd a license to laugh and helped them to move on. When the energy in the room takes a huge dive, it is up to the emcee to raise that level again.

Make Them Want To Listen

People will listen if they like you - just ask Oprah! Be personable by sharing details about your family, hobbies, hometown, or pets. You can even have a recurring theme, such as mentioning your dog frequently. Every time you go back on stage, the crowd will be wondering what you'll say about Rover next.

Have fun. It's YOUR party

If you have fun, they will too. Use top ten lists, funny quizzes, and silly slide shows to keep things moving. And close with something memorable like an anecdote from the conference or a challenge for next year. Then take a bow, you've just given the event some "glitz and glamour!"

Being asked to be the emcee is an honor.

The emcee is probably the most important function of the program -- keeping every part moving smoothly. Take it seriously, prepare well, and be proud of the part you've played and you will be asked again and again. A good emcee is hard to find, so be one or call Giggles Comedy Agency!