

How to give a proper introduction

Event planners often focus their efforts on getting the right speaker, promoting the event, and making sure all of the arrangements are in order. While it's generally understood that a speaker needs to be introduced, often little attention is paid to how the introduction will be made. Introductions are a very common point of failure in events.

A proper introduction can greatly contribute to how a speaker is received, and therefore the success of the event, while a failed introduction can throw a speaker off and scramble a great opportunity to educate and inspire an audience.

The most common forms of a failed introduction include: The introducer is not familiar with the speaker and merely reads some prepared text, seemingly for the first time; the introducer reads the speaker's bio from their LinkedIn account or from a website; the introducer wings it, giving an overly information introduction that misses the opportunity to set the speaker up correctly.

The purpose of an introduction is not merely to "introduce" the speaker to the audience. A properly done introduction sets the event up for success by focusing the attention of the audience on the speaker and their topic.

A proper introduction of a speaker has three elements:

- Who is speaking?
- What is the topic?
- Why is it important?

Who is speaking? The introducer should share the name of the speaker, and the most important elements of their background that are salient to the audience. The background is important to establish the credibility of the speaker in the minds of the audience. The more credible the speaker is seen to be, the more likely the audience will pay attention. This portion of the introduction should last no more than 45 seconds.

What is the topic? In at most three sentences, the introducer should present the topic which the speaker will address. The topic should be presented in the form of action, rather than merely a name. "This afternoon (name of speaker) will discuss the latest innovations in creating tax policies to promote economic growth," for example. Not: "This afternoon our speaker will discuss tax policy." Framing the topic as action further focuses the attention of the audience on the speaker.

Why is it important? The introducer provides additional validation for the importance of the topic, and therefore why the audience should pay attention to the presentation. "In uncertain economic times, generating strong and sustained economic growth is critical for our success," for instance. This statement speaking to the importance of the topic provides third-person validation to both the speaker and the topic.

LENGTH OF INTRODUCTION. Even the best designed introduction will begin to lose, rather than focus, audience attention if it is too long. Introductions should last less than two minutes, and ideally are less than one minute. No one is gathered to hear the introduction, they are there for the speaker. The length of the introduction should be limited to the time it takes to cover the speaker and their most salient, the topic, and why it is important, in as few sentences as possible.

HANDING OFF THE PODIUM TO THE SPEAKER. As the speaker approaches the podium, the introducer should smile at the speaker, shake the speaker's hand while looking the speaker in the eye, then leave the podium to the speaker.