

Send in the Ringmaster not the Clowns!

Working with a Professional Emcee.

Do you remember going to the circus as a kid? Afterwards, you excitedly reminisced about the jugglers, clowns, daring lion tamers and trapeze artists. But did you remember the ringmaster? Probably not, but could you imagine a circus without one? Chaos as animals and entertainers collide, boring interludes while the wires and equipment was sorted, and worst of all, no warm welcome or witty repartee.

Like the ringmaster, the professional emcee is your insurance against chaos. He or she can energise your event to be exceptional, and must manage the people, functions and protocol, which all contribute to the experience.

Celebrity agent, Max Markson says, “a good emcee is vital to the success of the event, they will make or break your day”. So what is a ‘good emcee’ and how do you recognise one? Here are a few tips on selecting a professional emcee for your next event:

◆ Pre-Event Planning

Pre-event, you want a totally professional approach which includes the necessary homework and preparation required for your event. To use an old Broadway phrase, “if it ain’t on the page, it ain’t on the stage”. Once briefed, they should understand the objectives, theme and team they will be working with, and be willing to share their expertise to support you.

◆ Experience & Expertise

How much will it cost your business if your event is poorly hosted or emceed? At a recent awards evening, the emcee thought he too should celebrate with a few drinks, and almost fell off the stage. A professional emcee has integrity, flexibility and is not a prima donna, and you will find one through relevant industry groups, speaker’s bureaux and the National Speakers Association. Ron Tacchi, Speakers Network International says, “A proven professional is dedicated to the audience and objectives of the event, and once committed to the project they must be willing to do “whatever it takes” to deliver a successful event.”

◆ Master of the Ceremony

In the hands of a good emcee, the audience will be oblivious to hitches even if there’s a riot backstage. When the guest speaker was more than an hour late to a lively Christmas function, I. took the microphone out into the audience and conducted on the spot ‘Christmas wish list’ interviews. It was hilarious and filled the spot perfectly but please note that this is not a trick for the inexperienced emcee! A professional emcee can handle contingencies, and needs to have an eye for detail as well as management skills to ensure the programme is on time and on track.

◆ **Engage the Audience**

Mentioning the ample cleavage of the upcoming speaker is one (very unprofessional!) way to engage the audience, as happened at a business function recently. And the CEO or HR manager may deliver your objectives; but a professional emcee can go beyond to creatively inform, entertain and motivate your delegates. Janette Beedell, organises the largest annual event in Australia, for the Financial Planning Association of Australia. She looks for an emcee who can effectively open and close, as well as highlight relevant points and outcomes from the speaker's presentation. Whether it's 200 or 2000, engaging the audiences' attention and relating to them is paramount.

◆ **Add Value**

You can save on your event budget with an emcee who offers more than just good introductions. A professional can double as an interviewer, facilitator or debate moderator, or may offer tailored trivia, team building activities and energisers that can add fun and variety for your delegates. Post event feedback or 'Conference Keepers' © from your emcee, can also be valuable for your future event planning.

◆ **Success without Stress**

As the organiser, you are juggling a lot of balls, and your credibility hinges on the success of the event. When you work with a professional emcee, you can relax and concentrate on what you do best. Your event will come to life and your objectives delivered successfully.

Every event deserves to be managed professionally, don't leave yours in the hands of clowns. Send in a professional emcee for a truly unforgettable, stress free event.

Camille Valvo, emcee and accredited speaker is the 2006 President of the National Speakers Association, NSW Chapter. Camille has co-authored a unique emcee learning resource, 'How to MC *almost* Anything', audio CD. Visit www.emcee.com.au for more information.