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NF93-109 Better Introductions

Robert D. Fritschen

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, bobnhaz@hotmail.com

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Better Introductions

by Robert D. Fritschen, Director, Northeast Research and Extension Center

Speaker Introductions

Preparation must take place for anything to be successful. This certainly holds true for introductions, where the role of the introducer is essential in setting an effective stage for a speaker.

The role of introducer cannot be overemphasized. First impressions are hard to break, and it is the introducer's job to create a good first impression for both the audience and the speaker. A poor introduction can get the speaker off to a poor start or lose the audience's attention. A strong introduction, however, is the first step to a successful learning experience.

A Good Introduction

A good, effective introduction is one that properly identifies the speaker while creating anticipation for what they will say.

Preparation

Talk to the speaker several days before the presentation. Many speakers will provide specific information about themselves and their presentation. Some may even have a ready-made introduction. When talking to the speaker, ask about their background, residence and accomplishments to determine what tone the introduction should take. Your introduction should complement the speaker's message and style.

Always Introduce

Every speaker deserves an introduction. It is, simply, polite to introduce the speaker. After all, the speaker is a guest and as the introducer, you are acting as their host. Your function as an introducer is to bridge the gap between the speaker and the audience, even if the speaker is well known. Introductions also help prepare the audience for the next portion of the program.

Be Brief

Your mission is to invite the speaker to come forward while at the same time encouraging the audience into an attitude of active learning. The best way to do this is to be brief, yet complete. Strive for simplicity with dignity.

Delivery

If you understand your audience's needs and the speaker's qualifications to address those needs, you are well on the way to a successful introduction. First, offer information about the speaker's background, present position and accomplishments. Next, explain how the presentation will relate to the audience. It is best to announce the speaker's name both at the beginning and at the close of your introduction. Be certain to pronounce the speaker's name correctly. A well-planned introduction can be spoiled by a mispronounced name. Remember, your introduction establishes credibility for the speaker, the assembled group and yourself. Honest mistakes can, and will, happen. A little preparation can eliminate some mistakes.

Always

1. Check with the speaker as to how he/she would prefer to be introduced.
2. Match your introduction to the tone or theme of the meeting.
3. Tell who you are first -- very briefly.
4. Correctly state the name of the speaker and the subject of the talk.
5. Use humor only if it is in good taste, appropriate to the situation and acceptable to the speaker.
6. Be positive, upbeat and sincere. Speak clearly and with enough volume.
7. Be brief, but complete.

Never

1. Never make an introduction without carefully planning its beginning, middle and end.
2. Never allow a speaker to come before your group without an introduction.
3. Never apologize for yourself or for the speaker.
4. Never use humor that could offend the speaker or the audience.
5. Never wander from the introduction into other reports or announcements.
6. Never steal the speaker's thunder.

F-3, Relationships
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