GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR SPEAKERS

Provide the correct equipment

Check that appropriate equipment is provided at the venue. In most cases this will consist of a microphone and lectern but on occasion various visual aids will be required. Check also that this equipment is working immediately before the address and that the speaker will be able to be seen and heard by the whole audience. Be particularly careful not to locate your speaker too far from your audience. This location can affect the degree of interaction between the speaker and the audience which can be crucial to a successful address.

Create the right atmosphere

In your planning, allocate appropriate time at your function when all can be quiet and the audience can give their undivided attention to the speaker. At a dinner, for example, this will usually be after the main course but a good rule of thumb is to make is as close to 9pm as possible. A tired audience spells disaster for all concerned. It is advisable to check that there will be no interruptions during the speech. If possible increase the lighting on the speaker.

Introduce your speaker

The speech of introduction should bring the speaker and the audience together, establish a friendly atmosphere and create a bond of interest between them. Unfortunately this all too rarely happens – no speech is more poorly delivered than the speech of introduction. Even though it is usually very short (rarely exceeding one minute), if it is to be delivered properly it demands careful preparation. You will need to gather your facts which will usually include the subject of the talk, the speakers qualifications to speak on the subject, the speaker’s name and why the address is of particular interest to the audience. The following sequence will act as a guide for most introductions.

- Start by giving the exact title of the speaker’s talk
- Explain why this topic is important to the assembled group
- List the speaker’s qualifications to speak on the subject
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Some hints to avoid common traps

- Write down your speaker's name and other essential information such as qualifications. You may not need it now but it will be there in the event of one of those panic situations.
- Speak into the microphone until you have distinctly and clearly given the speaker's name. Turning away from the microphone to face the speaker while giving their name can leave the audience without a clue as to who is addressing them.
- If you are giving the speech of introduction do not leave its preparation until the last minute—prepare it early and go over it many times as it will avoid unnecessary pressure in the public speaking situation.

Checklist

- Contact your speaker before the function to confirm final details.
- Assign someone to meet your speaker at the start of the function and look after him/her during it. Remember a speaker will often appreciate the opportunity to freshen up after a long journey.
- Check that you have provided the correct equipment and that it is in proper working condition.
- Check that your speaker can be heard from all parts of the venue.
- Understand that your speaker may refuse alcoholic refreshments before his/her address. A professional speaker will usually prefer to relax and have a drink after the address.
- Do not put your speaker on too late (if at a dinner, after the main course and as close to 9pm as possible) and make sure that all is quiet during the address.
- Make sure that your speaker is properly introduced and thanked afterwards.
- Do not upstage your speaker prior to his/her address, e.g lengthy announcements should always be scheduled after your speaker.