

Speaking's scary - you deserve a proper intro



By [Douglas Kruger](#)

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Bad intros ruin speeches. They're like flipping open the leather cover on a Dickensian classic and finding a foreword that reads, "This is a story about two cities. I haven't read it, but I'm sure it will be good. And the author will introduce himself to you."

Typically, bad intros play out like this: The client judiciously selects a speaker, agrees to their fee, flies the speaker to their city, pays their hotel fees, provides them with an hour on the agenda, then happily undoes all of their own good work by saying, "Um... Okay, next on our agenda we have a motivational speaker. We've never met, and I've never heard him speak before, but I'm sure it will be interesting. He'll tell you who he is and why he's here."

Then, without prompting the applause, the CEO sits down. Someone coughs. The speaker then walks to the front of the room to the deafening sound of very low expectations. His echoing footfalls mock him as he walks. The greatest discourtesy inflicted on any speaker is that unfortunate phrase, '...a person who needs no introduction.'

The fact is that *every* speaker, without fail, needs and deserves an introduction. Whether the person is a former president or simply the guy or gal from Sales, rob them of an introduction and you have robbed them of respect. You're also diddling the audience out of a certain degree of value.

Fortunately, you don't have to suffer this injustice. You can simply bring along your own introduction. Don't be shy to draft two or three short paragraphs about yourself, detailing:

- who you are
- what your area of expertise is
- what topic you are about to talk on
- why you are qualified to talk on the topic
- a few additional facts about yourself

Print this page in a clear font, in script large enough to be seen in a darkened conference venue. Hand it to the person who will be introducing you well before the time and ask him or her to use it. Don't ever accept, 'Oh, I was going to let you introduce yourself' as a response. . . . *Ever!* Be friendly, but insist on being properly introduced. It's really the least they can do. Also, you're not asking this for your benefit. It's for the benefit of the audience.

And don't be afraid to use a little humour in your introduction. It helps to break the ice. I once heard a leading US speaker, Darren La Croix - who actually trains on using humour in the corporate world - introduce himself with these lines:

'Darren really gets around. He has spoken to companies all over the world. And when it comes to late-night talk shows, well, let me just mention a few names: Letterman, Carson, Oprah . . . Darren has *watched* them all!'

His introduction didn't even draw on any facts. It was simply entertaining, and an excellent opening. It ensured that we liked Darren before we'd even met him, which is a wonderful advantage for any speaker.

Finally, end your introduction with the words, "Please help me to welcome..." and your name. This kick-starts the applause.

Worst Case Scenario?

Should an under-performing MC give you a non-introduction, try beginning your presentation by saying, 'Actually, I feel I *do* need an introduction! Otherwise, why would you listen to me? Let me tell you why I am qualified to appear before you, and what value I have to offer. . . '

Dawn of the Outtro:

Did you know you can script your own 'outtro' as well? If you want to sell a book, CD or product after your presentation, or you would like people to sign up for a course, go to an internet site or book you for a future event, you can have the MC announce this information at the end of your talk. Using an MC's 'outtro' as a marketing tool is much more effective than selling from the stage. You gain greater credibility by having someone else say it for you.

So make sure that the next time you stand to speak, you are properly introduced, for the benefit of your audience. And remember this principle: an intro shouldn't be a CV. It should be a warm handshake with the audience.

ABOUT DOUGLAS KRUGER

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