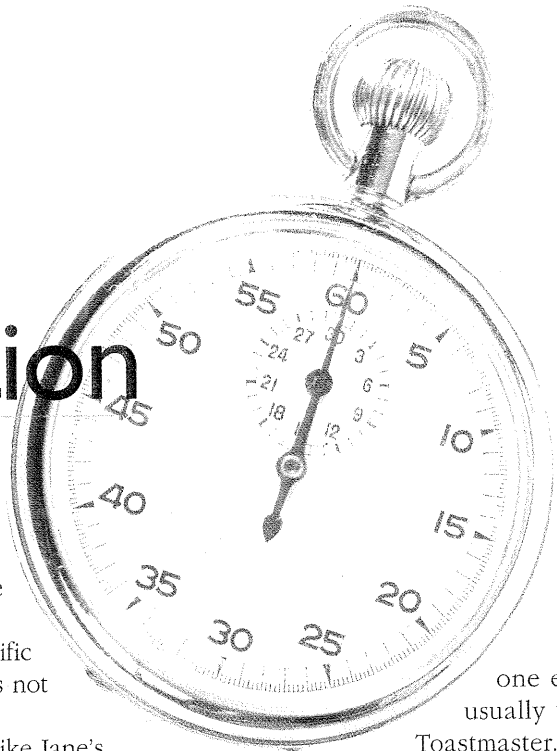


The One-Minute Power Introduction



Every speech should be unique, because every audience is unique. Likewise, every speech deserves its own unique introduction. Never leave it to the Toastmaster to “ad-lib” an introduction; prepare a “One-Minute Power Introduction”!

A powerful introduction sets **you** up (as an ‘expert’ on the topic), sets **your topic** up (to be of interest to the audience) and sets **the audience** up (to better understand your message).

The introduction should explain **who** you are (your background that makes you the ‘expert’ on the topic), **what** you do (that will make the topic interesting) and **why** you do it (what the audience will get out of your message).

A powerful introduction will be no longer than 150 words – about one minute of speaking time – and they should be short words, preferably one syllable. Why? Because you want your message to be understood. Avoid words like *dialogue* and *interface* when what you mean is *talk*.

If you want to be seen as an expert on a topic, tell people what you do in relation to that topic using words like *works*, *helps* and *builds*, – action words that set you up as someone who actually does things.

Be specific. Which sounds better: “Jane Doe’s job is to dialogue with stakeholders.” Or “Jane works with 24 community groups such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters, the Red Cross and Girl Guides”? The first description makes poor Jane sound like a bureaucrat; the second makes her sound involved and an expert in community service.

Avoid acronyms that might not be understood. The R.S.P.C.A. in one country is generally referred to as the Humane Society in another. Likewise, avoid industry-specific jargon if your audience is not from that industry.

Use groups of threes, like Jane’s example above. Or, “Sam speaks, trains and writes about good nutrition.” Threes are easy on the speaker, easy on the listener and easy to remember. They add structure to your message.

Say something unique about you. For example, “Chris Lee was given the ‘Employee of the Month’ award for attaining the highest sales ever achieved in February.”

Maybe you collect baseball cards, or you are a gifted gardener. Say so, even if it has nothing to do with your topic, because it will make you sound human, and you want your audience to connect with you on a human level, don’t you? Real people are always interesting to listen to.

Make a statement of belief that sums up your topic. “Kim believes that you ALWAYS communicate – even your silence speaks volumes when facing racism, sexism or homophobia in the workplace.” This tells the audience that your topic – communication and diversity – is important to you as a speaker, and shows your audience that you have a passion for your topic.

Write it in the third person. Use “he” or “she” instead of “I” or “we.” Introductions are meant to be read to your audience by some-

one else, usually the Toastmaster.

It is important for introducers to have a copy of the introduction as far in advance as possible so they can practice reading it. Ask them to read it exactly as it’s written, with no embellishments.

Then, make sure you take the time to actually listen to the introducer read it before you speak, for timing purpose and also to ensure correct pronunciation of any unfamiliar words. (I usually print out a hardcopy for my introducer in at least 16- or 18-point font, bolding words I want emphasized, and I use hyphens instead of commas to ensure appropriate pauses.)

Finish the introduction with a slogan or a catchy phrase, something that will stick in the listeners’ memory. For instance, “When it comes to the workplace, Pat believes in the old saying, ‘Safety is our number one priority.’”

With every speech, you want to be seen as an expert on your topic, with an extensive and interesting background that is relevant to both the subject and the audience. Make sure your introductions assist you in this goal. ■

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