



So you've hired a professional speaker... now what?

As you prepare for the excitement and energy of a live presentation, there are several "little things" you can do that will make a BIG difference.

SOUND Of all the "little things" that matter in a large group presentation, none is more important than the quality of the sound. To maximize the benefits of the presentation, it makes good sense to use the best sound system your school has to offer. The challenge is to be able to hear well. Frequently, the best sound system is not native to the room. Older auditoriums often have older speakers that feature a distracting and fatiguing "hum." Hotel ballrooms have sound systems that are intended to deliver quiet elevator music while people eat their lunch. Gymnasiums often feature PA's that are designed to announce the score, not move the audience.

Consider importing an outside sound system. Many times, a band director, chorus instructor, or theater advisor will have a mobile system they would be willing to share given enough advance notice. Failing that, consider contacting a local disc jockey. Today's DJ's have great equipment and most welcome an opportunity to advertise his or her services. Most speakers need a handheld wireless or a microphone with a long cord and a stand.

SIGHT One-person shows are as visual as they are auditory. Everyone must be able to see the presenter. A raised platform or a chorus riser is usually sufficient. Many speakers also like to be as close to the audience as possible without sacrificing sight lines.

A non-distracting backdrop will help your audience to focus on the speaker and his or her message. If you are using a gym, consider using a portable chalkboard as a backdrop for the presentation. It seems to say to the audience that this is not a "pep rally." Some presenters work closely with the audience and prefer full house lights and no spots so they can see the audience. Check with your presenter.

SEATING One of the subtle things you can do to set the right tone is to seat people so that they feel like they are part of a "full house." Ask your staff to begin seating people from the front of the room. Ask the audience to fill in each available seat as they go

In gymnasium settings, participatory and interactive presentations are most effective when the audience faces the presenter (sitting on one side of the gym) and not each other. If you cannot seat your audience on one side of the gym, check with the speaker about the possibility of doing two presentations.

If you are arranging chairs in a hotel ballroom or conference room, it's easier for a speaker to work from right to left versus front to back. Consider a wider arrangement of chairs set up "theater style."

SCHEDULE Experience shows that the first and last periods of the day are usually less than ideal for a large group assembly. If you have the option, consider scheduling the assemblies later in the morning or in the early afternoon. Be sure to give your speaker a piece of paper with the starting and ending times for his or her presentation.

If you are scheduling multiple assemblies, it is usually easier on the speaker if the presentations are scheduled close together. It allows them to maximize the benefits of their body's adrenaline.

SYNTHESIS To extend the value of a live program, consider providing professional follow-up from your staff. Each speaker has a different way of providing follow-up; please check with her or him for more information.

