

## **THE 7 TIPS FOR SHOW PA ANNOUNCERS**

From Mike Sells

Over my 30 years or so in broadcasting and providing PA systems for all types of events, I've enjoyed working with all types of commentators, speakers, announcers, and broadcasters, both amateur and professional. With this priceless experience under my belt it behoves me to offer these 7 tips to those of you who will have to "do the announcements" at your local fete or show. Whether you love it or dread it, follow the tips below and you will surprise yourself, do a great job and hopefully get the thanks you rightly deserve!

### ***Speak into the right end of the mic***

Forgive me for stating the obvious to most of you, but I've lost count of the number of times announcers have held the mic away from them, and expect to be heard. Not too helpful to the audience. Most microphones are directional, which means that they are only sensitive to sound that enters from the end, so hold the mic about six inches away from your mouth and speak into the end, not the side. Speak normally, and you will be heard clearly

### ***Don't blow into the mic***

To me it's a hanging offence! If you want to be assured that the mic is working, just tap the end gently. The moisture from your breath can easily damage microphones, and can be very annoying to your audience.

### ***Be yourself***

If you can fog a mirror, you have got a personality, so don't try to hide it! Few things sound worse when we try to be somebody else when we get behind a mic. Pace yourself, breathe normally, and try to keep announcements short, especially if you are feeling nervous. The nerves will soon disappear, and your confidence will improve rapidly

### ***How to do the important announcements***

Obviously, if there's an accident, emergency, or lost child to find, you want to be heard everywhere and get immediate attention from your visitors. To do this, I suggest turning up the volume slightly, and get their attention by saying something like "Ladies and gentlemen, please listen to the following important public service announcement" Then wait a short time for people to turn their attention towards the announcement, and then continue. It's important to make important announcements sound different and more authoritative to avoid people "tuning out" and missing something vital.

### ***What to say and what not to say***

Controversial territory this! The general rule I try to stick to (with variable success) is to recognise who the PA system and announcers are there to serve. In order of importance, these are:

The Visitors

The sponsors

The Stallholders and arena acts

The Committee

The staff and Volunteers

You.

That means that most of the announcements should be for the benefit of your visitors! If your show is a specialist event such as a horse show, vintage cars, or a sports event, most of the commentary and announcements will be of interest to all the visitors. That makes it easy not to bore the audience, both them and you have the same interests.

Shows which cater for more than one interest, however, need a bit more care. For “mixed interest” shows most of what you say will be of little relevance to most of the visitors, so there’s all the more reason to keep them short. If you take, for example, a gardening show, a good strategy is to arm yourself with a notepad and do a quick tour of the various stalls and establish if they are going to be showing new products, doing demonstrations, or have special offers. You can then work out a “timetable” to announce each demonstration or display five minutes beforehand. It also means that you don’t hinder someone’s demonstration by “talking over” it. Other announcements such as those for “special offers” can be done in between, so that the visitors are not bombarded with a series of unrelated announcements done close together.

This bit of planning will pay more dividends in addition to those mentioned above. Keeping the visitors well informed will also keep them from “drifting off” the show site well before the event ends, thereby keeping their interest, and hopefully, their money being spent with your stallholders right up to the end of the day. Both the stallholders will thank you and come back next year, and your visitors will go home appreciative of how well informed you have kept them.

As far as what not to say, it’s common sense! It’s best to stick to facts and not make comments or judgements. Bear in mind that some visitors will think of you as an unfairly elevated authority figure, and will delight in pointing out your mistakes or opinions which they disagree.

### ***Don’t prattle***

The visitors and others only want info that’s relevant to them. It does not mean that you have to sound like you are announcing special offers at the supermarket. Use a little creativity and a sometimes mild humour to show off your verbal dexterity if you can pull it off and add to the atmosphere by all means, but it’s best to stick to keeping it short. If people want meaningless prattle, they can always tune in to the local radio station! This rule may not be so relevant to single interest events, where visitors will avidly lap up intimate details on every rivet on a steam locomotive, but certainly not with shows that are meant to appeal to a mixture of tastes.

### ***Enjoy yourself!***

Follow the recommendations above and you will get the lasting gratitude of the people who bring the money to your show, the visitors and stallholders. Hopefully they will come back tomorrow and bring their friends. I hope that this will help you feel more in control of your task, have some confidence in doing it, and maybe discover a hidden talent.

I do not have the monopoly on all good ideas out there, as with practicing any skill, you soon get to realise how much more you need to know. This is a living document, and will evolve with further input from colleagues and show organisers. If you have any questions, suggestions, or even disagree with me, you are welcome to email your comments to me at:

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