

# **WHY HIRE AN EMCEE? | GUIDE**

**How an Emcee Brings Value to Your Meeting**

**AUTHORS:**

Kristin Arnold, CSP, CPFIM  
Norm Hull, CSP  
Sarah Michel, CSP

---

**CONTRIBUTORS:**

Jay Baer, CSP, CPAE  
Jeff Civillico  
Rob Ferre  
Tim Gard, CSP, CPAE  
Marquesa Pettway, CSP  
Glenn Thayer, CMP

---

**EDITOR:**

Dana Saal, CMP, CAE

---

**PEER REVIEW:**

Eliz Greene  
Randye Kaye  
Eileen McDargh, CSP, CPAE  
Jess Pettit, CSP  
Paul Rutter  
Elaine Simpson

“**W**ith a professional emcee, there is reassurance in knowing that they will deliver what we ask of them. In this virtual setting, their energy and personality can drive participant engagement, which we know is a key to our success. It is so important to ensure that we set a tone for professionalism and create great energy for our participants. The bottom line is that you need to have someone on your side, working for you, who understands your vision. I can't imagine dealing with the complexities of interacting with attendees through the chat box, the scripts, the live audience, and our *Text to Give* campaigns with just anyone.

Also, when the majority of the program is made up of elements that are pre-recorded videos, the emcee is the “life” of the event. They carry the event — and I can't put confidence in a TV/radio personality to prepare, know the script, and deliver the way a professional can.

Kaytie Lynch  
Vice President, Development Consulting  
American Heart Association

---

**A** virtual emcee helps keep the consistency and high energy up from start to end. And, often, they can help ease technology concerns, making the meeting run smoothly. We've been amazed at the level of engagement and participation we've had from attendees in meetings where we used a virtual emcee. Indispensable!

Christy Dempster  
Senior International Marketing Manager  
Major Pharma Company

---

**H**iring an emcee is an absolute **MUST** for any program or conference. They can take a boring panel to a seamless production and truly elevate the event and content delivery experience to an entirely new level. Emcees will leave your audience engaged, energized, and excited about your call to action — it's always money well spent.

Meredith Dugas  
Vice President, Fuse 5

---

# WHITE PAPER: noun

A commentary to educate readers about an issue or issues to help them implement specific solutions

An authoritative report that addresses specific issues or problems and how to solve them

Originates from the term “white book,” an official publication of a national government and the paper it is printed on

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>The History of Emcees</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Why Hire an Emcee?</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>How an Emcee Enhances Your Meeting’s ROI</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Before You Hire an Emcee</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>How to Hire an Emcee</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Core Emcee Skills</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Types of Emcee</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Master of Ceremonies</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Entertainer Emcee</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Humorist Emcee</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Conference Emcee/Moderator</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Conference Content Weaver</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Event Facilitator</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Virtual Emcee</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Hybrid Meeting Emcee</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Skill Criteria Matrix</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Meeting Organizer Emcee Checklist</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>About the Authors</b>	<b>24</b>



# 1 | THE HISTORY OF EMCEES

The master of ceremonies title was first given during the fifth century by the Roman Catholic Church to an official of the Papal Court responsible for the proper and smooth conduct of the elegant and elaborate rituals involving the Pope and the sacred liturgy.

Similarly, European royal courts maintained senior officials known as masters of ceremonies who were responsible for conducting stately ceremonies, such as coronations and receptions of foreign ambassadors.

The role of a host or emcee spans across multiple cultures, religions, and celebrations. From theatrical performances to small pipe ceremonies, often someone is present to thread the steps or stages together, welcome guests or outsiders, and protect the moment the group spends together. Building up energy and gathering crowds for performances in public squares, auctions, traveling showmen, as well as socialite macaroni parties, theater, religious gatherings of all faiths, weddings, graduations, pageants, and life cycle rituals lean on this individual to host the participants before, during, and after the event at hand for centuries.

Most recently, the role of the master of ceremonies (MC) migrated into the entertainment world with the rise of personality-driven television shows (e.g., “The Ed Sullivan Show”) and late-night comedy shows (e.g., “The Johnny Carson Show”). The MC opened the show with introductions and announcements and then set the show’s tone, frequently with a comedy set to bring flow and energy to the show. The model exists today with several late-night shows with famous MCs, including Jimmy Fallon, James Corden, Trevor Noah, and Stephen Colbert.

Since the 1970s, the MC has come to be associated with hip-hop culture, and rap music

in particular, as the vocalist who rhymes over sampling, scratching, and mixing supplied by a DJ.

Most MCs would have the triple duty of serving as the host, hype man, and rapper for events with DJs and hip-hop acts. As hip-hop culture evolved, so did the role of the MC. Over time MC took on many monikers, including “Microphone Controller,” “Move the Crowd,” and “Mic Checks.” Many hip-hop rap artists took the moniker of MC and attached it to their rapper names. For example, MC Lyte, Young MC and, most famously, MC Hammer.

A master of ceremonies also works within the business world of meetings and events. These emcees (which is another way to phonetically spell the initials of master of ceremonies), introduce the presenters, sessions, and moments during the event. They provide clarity and context, keeping participants informed, and, like entertainment MCs, set the flow and energy for the event.

Since the 1980s, event models have evolved that provide the opportunity for emcees to deliver a greater return on investment (ROI). The preference for more audience-centered meetings has elevated the emcee to a Conference Moderator, Event Facilitator, or Content Weaver. In this role, emcees are heavily involved in the meeting design, ensuring it meets the conference objectives. They also moderate conversations between speakers, panelists, and sponsors; engage the audience; and create opportunities for peer-to-peer discussions.

With the advent of live streaming and digital platforms such as GoToMeeting, Adobe Connect, Webex, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams, the event emcee has become a Virtual Emcee, but the role hasn’t changed. Digital emcees still have the same responsibilities of keeping the virtual and hybrid meeting participants engaged, connected to the content, and connected with each other.

## 2 | WHY HIRE AN EMCEE?

Some industry experts, company executives, board presidents, and meeting organizers successfully emcee their own meetings and events. They are skilled presenters who are adept at handling the unexpected. But that is not always the case.

Instead, often these folks are not skilled presenters and are unable to handle the rapid flow, the segues between people and events, and yes — the unexpected. They have learned the hard way that standing in front of an audience and trying to solve unscripted challenges interrupts the flow of the event and frustrates the audience.

If selected properly, a professional emcee will bring your meeting to life. They will enhance participants' experience, increase your meeting's return on investment and handle unexpected challenges smoothly and gracefully.

The right emcee also can contribute to your meeting's design. They are skilled at partnering with organizers to select and prepare speakers, shaping agendas to ensure sticky takeaways, and facilitating the event to keep conversations focused, productive, and advancing.

Emcees are even more important for virtual and hybrid events. The at-home audience deserves someone who pays attention to their needs. A skilled emcee turns passive listeners into highly engaged participants.

You want to hire an emcee so you can leverage their perspective, experience, and expertise at every step in your planning process.

# 3 | HOW AN EMCEE ENHANCES YOUR MEETING'S RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Consider your emcee an integral planning team partner and bring them on early in your planning process; even before you finalize the program or hire speakers.

A well-prepared emcee will connect the many threads of your event, weaving together all aspects of the meeting — content, speakers, audience, suppliers — to create a cohesive event rather than a meeting with many parts.

However, having a well-prepared emcee requires a significant time commitment from both the planning committee and the emcee; even more so if you're planning a highly produced meeting, with or without virtual components. Your emcee is the team member who will partner with the suppliers that support and produce your event.

## BEFORE THE EVENT

In preparation for your first meeting, your emcee will research your audience's unique cultural norms so they can include customized references throughout your event.

### With the planning committee:

The first, and very important, step is to have your planning committee members meet with your emcee to clarify the purpose of the event and its desired outcomes, plan for the unexpected, and discuss event logistics. During this meeting, the emcee should:

- Discover your experience with emcees. Have you used an emcee before and what was that experience like?
- Clarify the expected role and contributions of your event emcee (see TYPES OF EMCEES, page 12).
- Confirm the theme, desired outcomes, and activities that will occur leading up to and during the event.
- Share the vision of the event. Agree on the tone and desired interactions with the participants.
- Review the program and suggest specific opportunities to engage with the audience before, during, and after the event, including technologies used to enhance participant engagement.
- Review the marketing materials and agree on how to support the marketing efforts.

- Inquire about potential items that get “added on” to the program, such as fundraisers, silent auctions, awards, or induction ceremonies.

- Discuss event logistics, including room sets, staging, traffic flow, and even programming.

- Provide insights and share best practices from previous events that could be relevant in the planning process.

- Agree on protocols for communicating with your emcee before and during your event, including a point of contact(s) and the parameters for making changes, interrupting, etc.

- Agree on ground rules to be shared with the audience in preparation for the program and at the beginning of the event.

- Review and establish guidelines for interacting with the participating sponsors and vendors. Discuss any promotional opportunities or announcements that need to be made.

- Inquire about any underlying issues or challenges that may impact the tone of the event and discuss any forbidden topics.

- Discuss potential challenges that may present themselves during the event. Recommend courses of action that will avoid sending mixed messages and reduce participant confusion or frustration.

- Review the venue/event team emergency plans and how to respond if needed.

- Schedule periodic meeting assessments to make adjustments as needed.

- Agree on when and how the planning team and presenters will receive post-event feedback.

### With the presenters:

Reach out, explain the emcee role to the presenters, and discuss opportunities to support, complement, and reinforce the messages they present. Specifically:

- Ask for learning points they will share to be incorporated in unscripted moments to reinforce the points.

- Coordinate ways presenters can interact and complement each other.



- Prepare, review, and/or rewrite engaging introductions and transitions for each presenter and/or segment.
- Confirm the proper pronunciation of presenters' names and any unusual words.
- Conduct production meetings to explore ways to include virtual audience interaction.

### With the projected audience profile:

- Research the industry and the event audience for a thorough understanding of their wants, needs, and meeting expectations.
- Review the event schedule and assess areas that might impact attendees' perspective.
- Structure touchpoints that incorporate the flow of learning and include audience engagement.
- Agree on the optimal use of social media platforms.
- Identify key players who will be in the room (e.g., executives, donors, board members, past presidents) and whether they are suitable choices to be volunteers or "winners" of a prize.
- Become aware of any underlying issues, current events, and emergencies happening inside and outside the venue that may be brought to the event and impact the participation, tone, or desired outcome.

## DURING THE EVENT

Based on your agreed-upon role:

### With the point of contact (not the entire planning committee):

- Adjust time schedules as needed.
- Hold periodic meeting assessments and make adjustments as needed.
- Be available and on-call throughout the day via mobile phone or other device.
- Keep a running record of what is working and areas that need attention for future programs.

### With the presenters:

- Visit breakout sessions to grab information nuggets that can be shared from the mainstage.
- Connect with them throughout the program to ensure they have the tools for their program.
- Be on-call to fill in for presenters who are not able to present because they are ill, can't get to the venue, or have technology issues.

### With the audience:

- Introduce speakers, events, and activities.
- Provide transitions (or segues) between speakers, events, and activities to allow for stage changes and unexpected delays.
- Conduct or moderate live or pre-recorded interviews.
- Moderate Q&A sessions and social media feeds.
- Coach and encourage lively audience participation, especially during virtual/hybrid events.
- Be prepared with appropriate material to fill time and cover unexpected delays.
- Actively participate in all aspects of the event and have a visible presence at social gatherings.
- Mingle with the audience. Listen for what's working, what could be better, and consistent threads among participants (e.g., service is slow, food is great).
- Summarize key points to remember and use callbacks to reinforce and build on key messages.
- Elevate memorable moments and meeting memories.
- Announce specific messages on behalf of the organization.

## AFTER THE EVENT

Based on your agreed-upon role:

### With the planning committee:

- Create a final report that summarizes the highlights and key points, as well as an evaluation from their perspective, which will help future planning teams and/or emcees.
- Provide key points and recommended resources for the planning team to reinforce in post-event communications.
- Request honest feedback.

### With the presenters:

- Provide feedback about and/or to the speakers, based on what you agree to in advance. An emcee should never give speakers unsolicited feedback without planning committee approval and even then, the message should be coordinated with them.

### For the audience:

- Draft a short message of thanks for attending and a summary of key messages for the participants that can be disseminated by the planning committee to the participants.

## 4 | BEFORE YOU HIRE AN EMCEE

An emcee's role is unique to the meeting. It's assumed that an emcee will do the basics — intros, announcements, and transitions to move things along. Yet, the emcee role should be defined on a broader level. The meeting organizer must look at the big picture; at the whole of the event.

Do you need to inject humor throughout your gathering? Will your audience need a lot of interaction to break up the content-heavy sessions? Are you wary of the content that may be shared from the stage because of a current issue affecting the audience? Are you in a new venue and concerned with the logistical and audiovisual challenges that might arise? Is your audience familiar with the digital platform?

Once you've defined the role, your next step is to identify the issues your meeting will, or could, experience — if any. These might be internal or public conflicts, a sensitive vote, or even a disruption in the host city.

Your goal is to partner with an emcee who can fulfill the role, adeptly handle your unique circumstances, and contribute to fulfilling the meeting's objectives.



# 5 | HOW TO HIRE AN EMCEE

**Y**ou should hire your emcee at the onset of your planning. By creating a mutually beneficial relationship between the selection committee and the emcee early in the planning you will reap the most benefits from your emcee's expertise.

When asked how they sourced their emcees, some meeting organizers said, "We don't have emcees; we just put on a program expecting great things to happen!" Others listed non-professional sources:

- local celebrities and news persons
- well-known association members
- significant sponsors who need visibility to be happy
- members who offered to put together a panel
- referrals citing that this person would be good
- Google searches
- speakers who volunteer

An emcee can be any of the above, but an emcee who will enhance your meeting and your participants' experiences should be chosen with the same due diligence you use to select your mainstage speakers.

## Checklist for hiring an emcee who is a good fit for your meeting:

### ■ WRITE A REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

This will ensure your expectations are clear and will save time for both you and emcees who are not the right fit.

- Include a brief description of your audience, your tentative event agenda, the role and special circumstances you've defined, and additional information about your event and participants that will impact the emcee's responsibilities.

### ■ ASSEMBLE A LIST OF POTENTIAL CANDIDATES

Aim high and start with the following:

- Do a Google search for "professional emcee."
- Visit the National Speakers Association at NSAspeaker.org for ideas.
- Get recommendations from reputable speakers bureau.
- Ask for references from other meeting organizers who have hired professional emcees.

### ■ CHECK CREDENTIALS

You're hiring a professional — ensure you have one.

- Request a list of similar events they have emceed. (Note: In-person emcee skills do not always translate into virtual/hybrid environments.)
- Remember, just because a person is nice and/or famous doesn't mean he or she has the skills or experience to be an emcee.

### ■ VERIFY AND CHECK REFERENCES

Ask for and check client references and see if you can audit their performance.

- Beware of the people you *think* should be able to emcee an event. They may be fabulous at reading from a teleprompter and lousy at impromptu performances.
- Ask for or seek out videos (YouTube) of them in action. Look for level and quality of interaction, a conversational presentation tone, and the ability to engage the audience.
- Request an invitation to observe your emcee candidate in action at a live or virtual event.

### ■ LISTEN TO YOUR INTUITION

If you are unable to find video or see potential candidates in action, rely on your intuition. Use these practical indicators of ability and experience during your initial phone call:

- Good emcees will ask applicable, open-ended questions about the program, the objectives, and the demographics of the participants.
- They will probe deeper where appropriate and pose questions that make you think — that's what good facilitators do.
- They will quickly rattle off several emceeing experiences and point out those with similar audiences to yours. They will share sample run-of-shows.

### ■ ASK QUALIFYING QUESTIONS

Although your intuition is a great barometer, you also need to ask revealing questions during your initial call, such as:

- Ask them to describe their typical event emcee preparation. Listen for cues that this person will be attentive to the real issues your audience cares about by:
  - researching the topic
  - connecting with speakers to identify the key issues
  - connecting with participants through interviews or social media to get a sense for what they think the real issues are
  - ensuring your meeting format is entertaining and impactful.

If their answers don't contain some concrete examples, take a pass.

- To assess how innovative emcees would be, ask for examples of how they typically engage an audience in person, virtually, or in a hybrid format. You're looking for more than, "I do Q&A at the end."
- Ask them to describe how they have managed unexpected circumstances during past emcee gigs.

### ■ TECHNOLOGY

Emcees should be able to confidently use and enthusiastically support your event technology, including mobile event apps and all aspects of virtual meetings.

- Your emcee should take the lead on polling, crowdsourcing questions, sharing speaker slides, and other ways to engage participants.
- If you don't have a mobile event app, a savvy emcee will share some ideas about how to bring the appropriate technology to the event.

### ■ ADD MORE VALUE

Emcees can also have an impact before and after your event.

- Ask emcees for their favorite ways to engage audiences pre- and post-event.
- When hiring, include the expectation that they emcee will partner with your marketing team to create energy *before* the event and reinforce key messages *after* the event.

Many factors can influence the program you and your team have spent months and countless hours planning. The professional emcee is an integral partner of your planning team who can help you think through the flow of the event. They are your frontline resource to handle any unforeseen situations or emergencies. Ultimately, they are a wise investment in the smooth functioning of your event.

## 6 | CORE EMCEE SKILLS

There are several types of emcees (see TYPES OF EMCEES, page 12) and each brings its own unique skill set and value to an event. However, there are some all-encompassing core skills you should expect every emcee to have:

- **ADAPTABILITY AND FLEXIBILITY** to go with the flow, and expand and contract as needed
- **AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT** skills to work the room and engross the audience
- **COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION SKILLS** to work with the speakers and panelists to create appropriate introductions, understand their key message(s), and ensure they are ready to go onstage
- **ENERGY** to establish and maintain the appropriate level of vitality and enthusiasm
- **FACILITATION SKILLS** to keep the program on track, tease out divergent opinions or thought-provoking information, and continually assess and react to the audience
- **AWARENESS** of group dynamics and the ability to respond to the challenges and opportunities in working with diverse people, issues, and situations
- **SENSE OF HUMOR** to be able to inject levity when and where it's appropriate
- **IMPROVISATION SKILLS** to read a crowd and situations and respond quickly and adeptly — otherwise known as thinking on your feet
- **PLANNING AND COLLABORATION SKILLS** to constructively participate in your event's design
- **PRESENTATION SKILLS** to command the stage — either face to face or virtual — and to open and close the event
- **MICROPHONE SKILLS** to use the technology effectively, coach speakers on their use, and be able to cover and/or react to malfunctions
- **RESEARCH SKILLS** to understand the audience, the topic, and/or the industry
- **SOCIAL MEDIA SKILLS** to engage the audience before, during, and after the event
- **TECHNICAL SKILLS** to work with the audiovisual multimedia or digital platforms/technicians' teams.
- **TIME-KEEPING SKILLS** to ensure the program follows its agenda and starts and ends on time



# 7 | TYPES OF EMCEES

Your emcee should come to the table with core skills (see CORE EMCEE SKILLS, page 11), plus the unique skills required for each type of emcee. Before you hire your emcee, know what type — or combination of types — will best serve your meeting.

## 1. MASTER OF CEREMONIES

This is the emcee you want for social events and award ceremonies. It's the most traditional emcee role, where the Master of Ceremonies is introducing the main components of the program and providing the awards and recognition. Other names for this role are:

- **AN EVENT HOST** is the person who invites the audience to an event or to their venue. They welcome the participants to the event and get the party started.
- **AN OFFICIANT** for a religious service or ceremony is typically a clergy person who presides over the event.
- **AN MC** is the person at weddings, ceremonies, and celebrations who presides over the flow and presentation of the many activities within the ceremony. Often, it's a role that is taken on by the DJ or works in conjunction with the DJ, band, or entertainment.

## 2. EMCEE FOR BUSINESS EVENTS

The emcee introduces the presenters, sessions, and important activities at an event. They also share important information and keep everyone on time. Some emcees further specialize as an entertainer or humorist, which includes these responsibilities:

- **AN ENTERTAINER EMCEE** performs entertaining segments and segues throughout the event to boost the energy in the room and break up repetitive formats.
- **A HUMORIST EMCEE** provides humorous commentary on the meeting, organization and/or industry.

## 3. CONFERENCE EMCEE/MODERATOR

You want this emcee for business events to go beyond the traditional emcee role. They facilitate discussion among the speakers, panelists, and audience to achieve the desired business outcomes. Some conference moderators specialize as:

- **A CONTENT WEAVER** to help the audience intentionally connect the dots and weave the threads of the conference's content, overarching issues and themes
- **AN EVENT FACILITATOR** to help shape the overall agenda, flow, and experience of the event for the participants — typically for groups with fewer than 500 participants.

## 4. DIGITAL EMCEE

When you hire this type of emcee, the presumption is that the event is taking place in the same location. However, it may also be conducted virtually or as a combination of in-person and online. The different types of digital emcee include:

- **A VIRTUAL EMCEE** is best for virtual events. The Virtual Emcee has a live audience, where all the participants are not physically in the same location and are connected through a common digital platform. The program can be streamed or replayed.
- **A HYBRID MEETING EMCEE** is best for blended onsite and virtual events. The hybrid emcee has a live audience (typically in front of them) as well as a streamed component (live or recorded) of individuals or smaller groups of people who are in a live setting at a different location or broadcast at a different time.

In the subsequent pages, we will go into further detail for each of these emcee types.

## TYPES OF EMCEES

# MASTER OF CEREMONIES

The **MASTER OF CEREMONIES** introduces the main components of the gala or awards program. From the moment they welcome the attendees to the final closing remarks, the Master of Ceremonies provides the gravitas and authority to move the audience smoothly through the program. They let their personality shine and highlight the brilliance of the guests.

The **EVENT HOST** takes a more casual, entertainment-driven approach to an awards and gala program. The Event Host has most of the same duties as a Master of Ceremonies but the stakes of the event aren't as high.

The **OFFICIANT** performs the same duties but for a religious service or ceremony.

The **MC** presides over the flow and presentation of the many ceremonies within a wedding or other ceremony.

### Types of events that lend themselves to hiring a Master of Ceremonies

- Awards shows
- Galas and charitable events
- Multi-day events
- Community events
- Private events
- Corporate meetings
- Wedding, bar/bat mitzvah, or other religious ceremony

### Key Master of Ceremonies skills

- Adaptability and flexibility — Ability to go with the flow
- Coordination skills — Ability to manage all moving parts
- Improvisation skills — Ability to read the crowd and improvise by acting/reacting quickly and appropriately (think on feet)
- Memorization skills — Ability to read and memorize parts of a script
- Planning skills — Ability to retain comprehensive knowledge of the event outline and flow
- Presentation skills — Ability to command the stage and open and close the event
- Teleprompter skills — Ability to effectively and expertly use a teleprompter

### Unique things to consider when engaging a Master of Ceremonies

- Experience with hosting a variety of events
- Personality on, off, and behind stage
- Willingness to be included

## TYPES OF EMCEES

# ENTERTAINER EMCEE

**ENTERTAINER EMCEES** are performers first and foremost. They have at least 60 minutes of material they often perform as a standalone show at venues such as performing arts centers, colleges, or cruise ships, in addition to corporate events. They have specific talents they utilize as their medium to connect with the audience, such as magic, juggling, or impressions.

Entertainment emcees often entertain at the start of the meeting, after lunch, and between segments to boost the energy in the room and break up repetitive formats. They also make interesting and/or funny observations about what has taken place at the meeting. They recap sessions and bring out certain themes that recur throughout an event.

Their material is flexible since meeting schedules often change so quickly. For example, a comedy magician can walk on stage with a duffel bag and do 30 seconds or 30 minutes depending on what the situation calls for, as opposed to an illusionist who has a seven-minute piece that can only be viewed from certain sight lines and with certain lighting effects, and requires extensive camera setups.

### Types of events that lend themselves to hiring an Entertainer Emcee

- General sessions
- Awards shows
- Multi-day events with a lot of content
- Incentive trips/celebrations

### Key Entertainer Emcee skills

- Adaptability and flexibility — Ability to expand or contract content based on how much time is needed
- Audience engagement skills — Ability to get and keep the audience excited and engaged
- Customization skills — Ability to tailor bits for the tone, style, and theme of the meeting and/or the content from speakers
- Energy — Ability to sustain the energy throughout an event or entire conference
- Humor — Ability to make the audience laugh
- Improvisation skills — Ability to read the crowd and improvise by acting/reacting quickly and appropriately (think on their feet)
- Planning skills — Ability to break up dry content
- Presentation skills — Ability to command the stage and open and close the event

### Unique things to consider when engaging an Entertainer Emcee

- How the state of your organization and/or industry impacts the meeting. Entertainer Emcees will resonate with fun companies that have a positive corporate culture — think Zappos or Southwest Airlines. If the company is about to file bankruptcy or be acquired and everyone is afraid of losing their jobs, that card trick probably isn't going to go over very well.
- Positioning an Entertainer Emcee for your audience is paramount and most effective when it is overt. For example, introduce the emcee by saying, "This year we brought in a professional emcee to keep us on time, on task, and also to ensure we're having some fun! We have a jam-packed three days of sessions, and we appreciate you taking time away from your businesses and your families. Our emcee will ensure you have an enjoyable experience. Let me introduce ..."
- An Entertainer Emcee can tap into popular game shows, trivia quizzes, or competitions that fit with the theme of the event. These types of interactive activities help break down barriers as well as encourage and support networking and team-building efforts.
- A third-party Entertainer Emcee can get away with more from a comedy standpoint than someone internal. They can use their outsider position to poke fun at rivals, use self-deprecating humor, and play with the audience. However, it is still a delicate line to walk and your emcee should know that line.



## TYPES OF EMCEES

# HUMORIST EMCEE

**HUMORIST EMCEES** provide humorous commentary on the meeting, organization, and/or industry. The Humorist Emcee makes interesting and/or funny observations about what is going on at the meeting using humor to allow people to perceive things differently. They recap sessions and bring out certain themes that recur throughout an event.

Most Humorist Emcees prefer to present their programs at the beginning of the show, following the model of late-night comedy shows. By being the opening speaker, the audience gets to know the Humorist Emcee quickly and gets in tune with their humor. From then on, they use the opening keynote as a springboard into the emcee role.

### Types of events that lend themselves to hiring a Humorist Emcee

- General sessions
- Awards shows
- Multi-day events with a lot of content
- Incentive trips/celebrations

### Key Humorist Emcee skills

- Adaptability and flexibility — Ability to be flexible and make changes on the fly as needed
- Coordination skills — Ability to introduce speakers throughout the day, bridge between segments, and keep agendas flowing smoothly
- Customization skills — Ability to tailor bits for the tone, style, and theme of the meeting and/or the content from speakers
- Deliver original material — Ability to write and deliver original material for the audience
- Energy — Ability to lighten up an otherwise serious event in appropriate ways for the audience
- Humor — Ability to address deep topics in a funny and interesting way
- Improvisation skills — Ability to read the crowd and improvise by acting/reacting quickly, humorously and appropriately (think on their feet)
- Presentation skills — Ability to open and close an event filled with high-content speakers

### Unique things to consider when engaging a Humorist Emcee

- Humorists are aware that regardless of time of day or location, if people are mandated to be at an event due to their employment or educational requirements, the same rules of conduct apply as if they were at work on a job site. Inappropriate language or inappropriate humor are not used and all humor is in line with the norms of the planning team.
- Much like the Entertainer Emcee, the state of the company and/or industry is important. If the company is about to file bankruptcy or be acquired and everyone is afraid of losing their jobs, funny anecdotes and observations probably won't go over very well.
- Most of our audiences today are very diverse — delegates may be from all over the world. As such, all humor must be universally understood and not dependent on idioms, colloquialisms, or slang.
- The issues outside of the event play a role in what can be used for a laugh inside the room. Humor is a stress reducer and also has been used in a subtle way to highlight social and political points of view. It is vital to share the guardrails within which the Humorist Emcee can operate. Like art, humor is in the ear of the listener.

## TYPES OF EMCEES

# CONFERENCE EMCEE/MODERATOR

**CONFERENCE EMCEES/MODERATORS** for business events go beyond the traditional emcee role. They also coordinate and moderate the various event components, including presentations, interviews, panel discussions, and Q&A sessions. They synthesize the content presented by the professional speakers, executives, and industry experts, as well as summarize it into a context for implementable actions by the participants.

Conference Emcees/Moderators also work with clients to design and produce sessions that engender lasting learning and achieve the desired business outcomes, and develop a general session content delivery strategy that implements and blends various presentation models that might include interviews (celebrity, executive, and political), panel discussions, keynotes, and/or creative sponsorship.

### Types of events that lend themselves to hiring a Conference Emcee/Moderator

- Multi-day general sessions
- Content-heavy meetings and conferences
- Association conferences and conventions
- User conferences
- Customer meetings and events

### Key Conference Emcee/Moderator skills

- Audience response system skills — Ability to effectively and expertly use audience response systems (ARS)
- Event design — Knowledge of event and meeting design
- IFB skills — Ability to effectively and expertly use an interruptible foldback (IFB) earpiece for taking direction from the show director or producer while continuing to address the audience.
- Improvisation skills — Ability to read the crowd and improvise by acting/reacting quickly and appropriately (think on their feet)
- Interviewing skills — Ability to skillfully interview an executive or subject-matter expert

- Panel moderation skills — Ability to skillfully moderate a panel discussion
- Planning and coordination skills — Ability to run a general session with little to no direction
- Presentation coaching — Ability to coach C-Level executives on delivery strategies
- Presentation skills — Ability to present complex content in simple terms
- Production and technical skills — An understanding of production and audio/visual
- Research skills — Ability to research the industry, the organization, and the participants, as well as the topics that will be covered during the event
- Synthesis skills — Ability to combine several strands of content into implementable actions for the audience
- Teleprompter skills — Ability to effectively and expertly use a teleprompter

### Unique things to consider when engaging a Conference Emcee/Moderator:

- The conference emcee as a facilitator/moderator is a role that is often underestimated and should be filled only by emcees with proven facilitation and/or moderation skills.
- Since the Conference Emcee/Moderator is an essential part of the meeting planning team, bring them on as early in the planning process as possible.
- The Conference Emcee/Moderator walks a thin line as a proxy for the audience and an ambassador of the organization. In order to be effective, their primary focus must be on the audience.

## TYPES OF EMCEES

# CONFERENCE CONTENT WEAVER

**A CONFERENCE CONTENT WEAVER** acts as the bridge between the audience, the content, and the speaker(s). They leverage the intellectual equity in the room and facilitate networking to elevate the value proposition of the conference.

The Conference Content Weaver intentionally connects the dots and weaves the threads of the conference's content, overarching issues, and themes as they guide audiences through transformational experiences. They facilitate learning by identifying unifying factors, curating ideas, and identifying context for the audience. They help participants pinpoint the big ideas and takeaways for relevant application.

Similar to a Conference Emcee/Moderator, the Conference Content Weaver opens and closes each general session, while also asking provocative questions and framing the context of the conference's learning opportunities. They also challenge attendees to carve out intentional time to engage with peers and reflect on the important content and topics being shared at the meeting.

### Types of events that lend themselves to hiring a Conference Content Weaver

- Association conferences and conventions
- Annual conferences and conventions
- Leadership conferences
- Multi-day meetings

### Key Conference Content Weaver skills

- Audience engagement skills — Ability to facilitate peer-to-peer discussions and lead interactions between the presenters and participants
- Coordination and improvisation skills — Ability to introduce concepts and presenters, keep sessions moving, and improvise as needed or directed.
- Facilitation skills and understanding of the group dynamic — Ability to identify pertinent and provocative questions and ideas that participants should listen for during presentations
- Networking skills — Ability to promote networking and community building through intentional exercises and activities

- Panel moderation and interviewing skills — Ability to moderate panel discussions and conduct interviews with executives or subject matter experts (SMEs) that may include audience participation activities
- Planning and event design — Ability to work collaboratively with the client on the meeting's content strategy, basing it on solid adult learning theory
- Presentation coaching — Ability to coach mainstage executive leaders, SMEs, and others on presentation style and delivery
- Presentation skills — Ability to make intentional opening and closing remarks for all general sessions to reinforce and thread the content, context, and learning experience
- Synthesis skills — Ability to actively link and weave the content for greater understanding and comprehension, and to summarize key points to consider and take away

### Unique things to consider when engaging a Conference Content Weaver

- Must have experience using audience interaction techniques and have the ability to facilitate large audiences in peer-to-peer discussions and exercises.
- Must be knowledgeable of and experienced using networking and community-building exercises.
- It is helpful for a Conference Content Weaver to have experience creating run of shows and flow/agendas for general sessions so they can be a productive contributor to the meeting organizer.
- There will be many preplanning calls with the meeting organizer, AV producer, and executive leaders on the content strategy and goals of each general session.
- It is beneficial if Conference Content Weavers have production experience as they may be needed to assist with or actually run all mainstage, onsite rehearsals with the AV producer.



## TYPES OF EMCEES

# EVENT FACILITATOR

**EVENT FACILITATORS** design and facilitate a collaborative event to obtain the client's desired results. Their focus is on creating a structure that supports the audience experience of the event. They engage the audience using specific processes and techniques to achieve a specific course of action. The Event Facilitator is constantly attuned to the needs and interests of the audience and adapts as necessary.

### Types of events that lend themselves to hiring an Event Facilitator

- Corporate retreats
- Board meetings
- Annual conferences
- User/customer conferences
- Association conferences
- Leadership conferences

### Key Event Facilitator skills

- Adaptability and flexibility — Ability to foresee any pitfalls, make adjustments in the moment, and extend or shorten appropriate sessions without loss of impact of message
- Adult learning theory and event design — By understanding adult learning and human behavior principles, the Event Facilitator provides insight into the flow of information a group can digest, as well as offering suggestions to ensure implementation processes are included.
- Audience engagement skills — Ability to retain a library of activities, processes, and techniques to enhance the audience experience and create memorable moments that complement the messages being sent from the mainstage and breakout sessions.
- Coordination and improvisation skills — Ability to manage the audience to keep programs on track and improvise as needed
- Energy — Ability to regulate the flow of energy to ensure the presenters are in alignment with the audience and make adjustments as needed.

- Facilitation skills and understanding of the group dynamic — Extensive facilitation skills that can be used in small- to large-group settings
- Panel moderation skills — Ability to skillfully moderate a panel discussion
- Presentation skills — Ability to provide valuable content as needed
- Synthesis skills — Ability to observe a situation and pull the appropriate parts from models, tools, and techniques to address a challenge at hand or enhance the experience

### Unique things to consider when engaging an Event Facilitator

- Be sure to clarify the Event Facilitator role as the event architect and onsite facilitator.
- It is helpful if the Event Facilitator has a leadership and personal development background.
- The Event Facilitator is instrumental in the creation of the agenda and the flow of the experience for participants, while using process tools and techniques to achieve the desired outcomes. They point out opportunities in the agenda to engage the audience and provide an energy change.
- It's key for the Event Facilitator to understand the various personalities that are in any audience and help craft an experience that reaches all in attendance.
- When you need to steer a discussion in a certain direction or you need an outcome from a gathering, an Event Facilitator has the skills needed to make this happen in an obvious or subtle manner. Experienced facilitators choose the right process to ensure that arriving at the desired point or outcome does not come at a personal cost for people in the audience or part of the meeting group.

## TYPES OF EMCEES

# VIRTUAL EMCEE

As more meetings and conferences shift to a digital platform, the role of the **VIRTUAL EMCEE** has become more in demand. In a virtual event, the audience is 100% virtual with each attendee participating as a singular person in front of a digital device.

Not meeting in person changes the audience and the role of the emcee. The Virtual Emcee has even more responsibilities, which now include creating an atmosphere where participants feel like they are together in the same room. This requires a much more deliberate and intentional set of skills that are unique to the virtual environment.

### Types of events that lend themselves to hiring a Virtual Emcee

- Virtual conferences and conventions
- A virtual summit that is live and does not include an on-site component
- Multi-day virtual events
- Facebook Group live sessions

### Key Virtual Emcee skills

- Audience response systems — Ability to use the digital platform or other systems to solicit engagement from the audience
- Camera skills – Ability to effectively use the camera, including eye contact and energy in the virtual environment
- Chatbox moderation skills – Ability to respond quickly to high-speed, real-time chat and Q&A feeds while keeping with the organization's brand and theme
- Digital platform skills — Experience and expertise using the event's digital platform
- Energy — Physical and vocal energy to keep the audience interested and engaged
- Panel moderation and interviewing skills — Ability to moderate panel discussions and conduct interviews with executives or subject matter experts (SMEs) that may include audience participation activities

- Production skills — Ability to guide organizers and producers in camera, lighting, and audio set-up; and to assist with slide design, music, and other components to complement the presenters
- Social media skills — Ability to engage the audience before, during, and after the event
- Technical skills — Ability to use various digital platforms and engage the audience
- Virtual environment skills — Ability to skillfully facilitate and monitor the group dynamic in the virtual environment

### Unique things to consider when engaging a Virtual Emcee

- There must be a technical dry run prior to the event, especially with presenters who are not familiar with the digital platform.
- Clearly articulate the expected participant experience, including the technical support tools needed to achieve the end result so the Virtual Emcee can include or exclude appropriate special effects.
- Virtual Emcees are competent and comfortable in the technology being used and will explain to the audience and presenters how to use and implement it during the meeting.
- Virtual Emcees will partner with the event and in-house technical teams to manage all needs and requests.
- If your budget is tight, a Virtual Emcee may be able to manage the technical side of the event while managing the group. In most instances, however, the Virtual Emcee proposal will include fees for a support team to run these incredibly important, off-monitor technical components.

## TYPES OF EMCEES

# HYBRID MEETING EMCEE

**THE HYBRID MEETING EMCEE** serves both a physically co-located audience and a digital/streamed audience (either live or replay). Historically, an emcee serving a live audience would marginally serve a virtual audience, using social media or other back channel communications to keep them motivated, entertained, and informed.

With the rise of hybrid events, the Hybrid Meeting Emcee will become an expert at managing both the live audience and the remote audience contemporaneously and equitably.

### Types of events that lend themselves to hiring a Hybrid Meeting Emcee

- Any event that has concurrent live and virtual components

### Key Hybrid Meeting Emcee skills

- Face-to-face (F2F) emcee skills — All the key skill sets you desire in the particular type (or types) of F2F emcee
- Camera skills – Ability to effectively use the camera, including eye contact and energy in the virtual environment
- Chatbox moderation skills – Ability to respond quickly to high-speed, real-time chat and Q&A feeds, while keeping with the organization’s brand and theme
- Digital platform skills — Experience and expertise using the event’s digital platform
- Energy — Physical and vocal energy to keep the audience interested and engaged
- Panel moderation and interviewing skills — Ability to moderate panel discussions and conduct interviews with executives or subject matter experts (SMEs) that may include audience participation activities
- Social media skills — Ability to use social media to communicate to all participants
- Virtual Emcee skills — All the key skill sets for a Virtual Emcee (see previous page)

### Unique things to consider when engaging a Hybrid Meeting Emcee

- For very large events, consider having two emcees who work side by side to simultaneously serve each audience.
- Treat both audiences as equals. The live event and the remote event are of equal standing.
- Avoid diluting meeting conversations by using no more than three modes to obtain audience interaction — for example, the official conference app, the virtual platform’s chat function, and one social media channel.
- Enlist a spotter to follow attendee commentary in the official channels (and unofficial channels). The spotter feeds the Hybrid Meeting Emcee material that can be discussed or shared. The ideal spotter is an organization or industry expert who can easily sift through comments to decide what is relevant or irrelevant.
- The Hybrid Meeting Emcee should engage both audiences with participation challenges, including gamification and awards for participation.
- Set up an onsite production base camp that is staffed for the entire event. It’s typically located offstage or in the wings.
- Creatively cross-pollinate by bringing the remote audience into the live event, and the live event into the remote event. For example, share questions or comments from the remote audience onstage to demonstrate that the people who are not in the room are also participating. Interview the speakers when they come off the live stage for the remote audience and create little micro-segments for social media.
- Show behind-the-scenes content because people are really fascinated —whether in person or in remote locations — about what is happening behind the scenes in a big event. For example, show the tech table, the director, or the greenroom.
- Communicate to all attendees that the Hybrid Meeting Emcee will be hosting both the live and virtual audiences. Share the audience engagement plan and give them a sneak peek into some of the exciting event content to pique their curiosity.



As described on page 11, all emcees should have core skills to some degree. The nature of your event will dictate the core and unique skills your emcee must possess to be effective.

Using this Skill Criteria Matrix, consider the skills and experience required for your ideal emcee and match them with the appropriate type of emcee. You may find that your ideal emcee is a combination of two or three different types.

## 8 | SKILL CRITERIA MATRIX

CORE SKILL	Master of Ceremonies	Entertainer Emcee	Humorist Emcee	Conference Moderator	Content Weaver	Event Facilitator	Virtual Emcee	Hybrid Meeting Emcee
Adaptability & flexibility	✓	✓	✓			✓		
Adult learning theory					✓	✓		
ARS <sup>1</sup>				✓			✓	✓
Audience engagement		✓			✓	✓		
Camera							✓	✓
Chatbox moderation							✓	✓
Coordination & collaboration	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		
Customize existing content		✓	✓					
Digital platform							✓	✓
Energy		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Event design		✓		✓	✓	✓		
Facilitation					✓	✓	✓	✓
Group dynamics					✓	✓	✓	✓
Humor		✓	✓					
IFB <sup>2</sup> skills				✓				
Improvisation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Interviewing				✓	✓		✓	✓
Memorization	✓							
Microphone	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Networking					✓			
Panel moderation				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Planning & collaboration	✓	✓		✓	✓			
Presentation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Presentation coaching				✓	✓			
Production				✓			✓	✓
Research				✓				
Social media							✓	✓
Synthesis				✓	✓	✓		
Technical				✓			✓	✓
Teleprompter	✓			✓				
Time-keeping	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Write & deliver original material			✓					

<sup>1</sup>ARS is an audience response system.

<sup>2</sup>IFB is an interruptible foldback which is in the ear of the emcee to receive directions from the show director or producer.

# MEETING ORGANIZER EMCEE CHECKLIST

## PRIOR TO THE EVENT

### Logistics

- Confirm date, times, location.
- Confirm room sets and production details.
- Map out emcee attendance schedule and contact information: social, on-site staff meetings, and other events to attend.
- Agree on protocols for communication between the emcee and the meeting organizer before, during and after the event.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities including support staff location and contact info.
- Confirm demographics of attendees. Identify participants with mobility and physical impairments (e.g., wheelchair, sight-impaired, hearing-impaired, etc.).
- Schedule periodic check-ins to review how the event is going.
- Agree on how sponsors/vendors will be recognized.
- Agree on guidelines for interacting with sponsors/vendors and any promotional opportunities or announcements that need to be made.
- Review published promotional materials.
- Confirm social media plan, optimal platforms, and how to contribute to/enhance the plan.
- Confirm use of technology (meeting app, crowdsource technology, and digital platform).
- Confirm how the event will be evaluated and how to share suggestions for future consideration at the next event.
- Review venue emergency plan and contact info.
- Create a list of worst-case scenarios and solutions — for example, presenter no-show, presenter goes over/under time, technical issues, emergencies — as well as recommended courses of action
- Agree on process for unhappy attendees and how to handle negative feedback and underground rumbling.

### Design

- Confirm of event objectives/theme/focus/desired outcome.
- Share the “vision” and tone for the event and the success criteria.
- Review run of show, including sessions, segments, breakouts, networking, and activities.
- Provide relevant insights and best practices from previous events.
- Inquire into any additional activities that might be added on later (fundraisers silent auctions, awards, induction ceremonies, etc.).
- Clarify format: formal or more informal? Scripted — if yes, who will provide?
- Identify when announcements and housekeeping comments will be made, including upcoming events.
- Research industry and audience.
- Discuss planning team’s experience with emcees.
- Discuss what the audience has enjoyed and disliked about previous events.
- Review key audience interests, needs and concerns.
- Inquire into taboo areas, subjects to avoid, or underlying issues or challenges that exist within the organization.
- Identify specific opportunities to engage with the audience before, during, and after.
- Identify specific points where technologies (meeting app, electronic polling, etc.) can be used to engage the audience.
- Agree on specific marketing messages and teasers to promote the event.

### Presenter coordination

- Connect with presenters and share the role and responsibilities of the emcee.
- Discuss opportunities to support and complement each other.
- Provide or create speaker introductions.
- Confirm proper pronunciation of names and unusual words.
- Identify key learning points/messages to be reinforced.
- Clarify if any collateral material will be left for the audience to use to reinforce event learnings.

## ONSITE

### Before the event

- Review the layout of the venue, stage layout, and seating set-up, and view the area.
- Meet the venue site person who can get things needed and share the role.
- Secure a place for props, materials, and other supplies.
- Meet AV personnel. Check computer connections, tech set-up, etc.
- Connect on-site with presenters and confirm role.
- Connect with key influencers of the organization.
- Find “pre-selected” volunteers for examples, audience interactions, and references.
- Interact with participants to get stories, learnings, and applications to share and highlight when onstage.
- Scan for service animals, children, caretakers, interpreters, and translators in the audience as well as key players in the room.
- Walk through exhibit halls and interact with sponsors.

### During the event

- Emcee the event as agreed.
- Connect with the presenters before each segment.
- Visit breakout sessions and mingle with the audience.
- Be readily available and accessible to the meeting organizer and planning team.
- Meet with meeting organizer and/or planning team at specified intervals.
- Keep a running record of what is working and areas for improvement for future meetings.

## AFTER THE EVENT

- Draft a short message to be disseminated to the participants.
- Write a summarization of the event, along with suggestions, and insights for the planning team.
- Send thank you notes after the event.
- Have a follow-up personal phone conversation with planning team. Ask for and be open to feedback.
- Provide feedback to presenters, if asked for.



## CONCLUSIONS

Every meeting can benefit from an emcee — it is an investment that will pay in dividends.

To ensure your emcee will support your planning process, fulfill your event objectives, and create a memorable audience experience, you should:

- Clearly articulate your meeting's objectives, identify your meeting's unique challenges, and describe your audience.
- Hire your emcee early in the planning process.
- Communicate regularly and honestly.
- Leverage your emcee's experience and expertise.



# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**KRISTIN ARNOLD, MBA, CSP, CPF|M**, is a high-stakes meeting facilitator, professional panel moderator and emcee of live, virtual, and hybrid events. She's been facilitating conversations between executives and managers to make better decisions and achieve substantive results for more than 27 years. She is the author of the award-winning book *Boring to Bravo: Proven Presentation Techniques to Engage, Involve and Inspire Audiences to Action*. She is also past president of the National Speakers Association (NSA), founder of the NSA Emcee Community Group, and primary author and cat-herder for this white paper.

**JAY BAER, CSP, CPAE**, is a seventh-generation entrepreneur, author of six books on marketing and customer experience, and the creator of five multi-million-dollar companies. A CPAE keynote speaker and emcee, Jay is the President of Convince & Convert, a consultancy that works with the world's most interesting brands to strengthen customer relationships. Jay often emcees large, business-focused events, where he combines his nearly 30 years of experience as a high-level strategist and advisor with his playful attitude and quick wit. Given his deep expertise in online marketing, he is often hired as a virtual or hybrid emcee, where he also assists with program design and technology selection. You'll find Jay clad in plaid, as before each event he allows meeting organizers to select which of his plaid suits he'll wear onstage or on camera.

**JEFF CIVILLICO** is a Las Vegas headliner, host personality, and philanthropist. Jeff recently celebrated a 10-year run on the Strip as a headliner with Caesars Entertainment at the iconic Las Vegas hotel properties The LINQ, The Flamingo, and The Paris. His "Comedy in Action" show is highly acclaimed, having been named "Best of Las Vegas" by the *Las Vegas Review Journal* multiple years in a row. Jeff is also the founder and chairman of Win-Win Entertainment, a national nonprofit that brings smiles to children who really need them by arranging in-person and virtual visits from entertainers, athletes, and celebrities. Win-Win Entertainment has touched 100,000-plus lives to date, with more than 20 programs at children's hospitals and foster homes all over the country.

**ROB FERRE**, Celebration Collaborator, is an entertainer, emcee, speaker and game show host from Salt Lake City, Utah. He founded his entertainment company, Life of the Party, in 2007 after training three years in the family entertainment capital of the world, Orlando, Florida, where he worked for Disney, Universal Studios, and Nickelodeon as a game show host and DJ. He has been speaking to and entertaining audiences for more than 20 years. He is one of the most sought-after speakers in the wedding and event industry. Rob has spoken to audiences in Italy, Armenia, Dubai, and all over the continental United States. He is a proud member of the Wedding Industry Professionals Association, American Disc Jockey Association, and the National Speakers Association.

**TIM GARD, CSP, CPAE**, is a tears-in-your-eyes-laugh-out-loud keynote speaker and emcee who teaches how to be more resilient and inspires employee enthusiasm and creativity. "Talented, Innovative and Memorable," TIM provides amazing take-home value delivered with his one-of-a-kind presentation style. Becoming more resilient is not about telling jokes or laughing at everything. Instead of making light of serious issues, Tim shines a light on unseen possibilities for solutions to difficult situations. He demonstrates how to be professional yet light-hearted, throughout all his programs. Recognized as a pioneer in humor-based training, Tim's down-to-earth style and real-life humor leave a lasting impression. His skillful use of ordinary items in extraordinary ways and extraordinary items in everyday ways make him one of the most popular mainstage speakers on the platform today. The author or co-author of *Just Plane Funny*, *My Policy Manual*, *Motivational Leaders*, and *Just Humor Me*, he also is an inventor of stress-reduction office products that are marketed and enjoyed worldwide. In his 25-year career as a professional speaker, Hall of Fame Speaker Tim Gard has spoken worldwide at more than 2,000 events from Texas to Tasmania and everywhere in between.

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**NORM HULL, CSP**, Customer Alchemist™, has been a certified meeting and event facilitator for 35 years. His consulting clients choose his services to achieve productive results, create strategic direction, and design rewarding meetings. As the principal for Norm Hull & Associates, a forward-thinking personal development company, he focuses on enhancing the leadership skills of executives and their staffs. As an Event Facilitator for conferences and association meetings, Norm works hand-in-hand with clients to create memorable moments and opportunities for alchemy to take place with his audience. He is the co-author of several leadership books including *Customer Alchemy: How to Use Transformations to Create Lifetime Clients*.

**SARAH MICHEL, CSP**, is an experienced meeting architect who has been working in the meetings industry for more than 20 years to create dynamic audience experiences. Her vast knowledge of next-generation learning and facilitation skills help design dynamic educational sessions that guarantee more participation, opportunities for networking and peer-to-peer learning to make content sticky. Sarah is vice president of Professional Connexity for Velvet Chainsaw Consulting helping organizations deliver on the networking promise at face-to-face meetings. She is a professional speaker and Conference Content Weaver for global meeting clients and author of *Perfecting Connecting®*, *A Guide to Mastering Networking in the Workplace*, and the e-book, *Conference Connexity*.

**MARQUESA PETTWAY, CSP**, is known as the Queen of Zoom. Former CNN associate producer turned business reinvention strategist and professional speaker for 15 years, Marquesa helps experts and organizations leverage the Zoom platform, resulting in engaging virtual events, smart productive meetings, and multiple virtual-based income streams. Marquesa's clients rave about how she up levels their results with client acquisition, designing and producing virtual events, and serving as an emcee, speaker, and virtual host. The 27-year resident of NYC is also asked often for Zoom basics training.

**DANA L. SAAL, CMP, CAE**, has been a meeting professional and association manager since 1986. She was an association department director 13 years before becoming an independent meeting planner, and then an association coach and consultant. She is a Certified Meeting Professional and a Certified Association Executive. Dana has been recognized by Senior Planner Industry Network (SPIN) as a 40 Over 40 honoree; by PCMA as a *Best in Class* for her presentation at Convening Leaders 2016; and by ISAE as a Distinguished Member in 2000.

**GLENN THAYER, CMP**, is known as The Voice of Meetings & Events. As a professional conference moderator and brand spokesperson, he specializes in creating dynamic general sessions; enhancing the audience experience through the use of technology, compelling content, and open, interactive dialogue and interviews. Glenn is a Certified Meeting Professional (CMP), and a contributing author to the meeting and event design section of the Event Industry Council's CMP manual. In addition to emceeding live, virtual, and hybrid events over the past two decades, Glenn also speaks on general session and event design.