

SPEAKERS LOVE WORDS; AND I'VE GOT ONE TO ADD TO THEIR VOCABULARY

You wouldn't be in the business of speaking if you didn't love words.

It's impossible to accurately say how many words we each know as individuals (scrabble players aside!) Well here's a new word that might come in handy as a speaker because it defines what some of us do a little clearer. The word is "Compere", pronounced the same as 'compare'.

A compere is a different version of what Americans call an emcee or MC. Many other western nations use the word compere to distinguish between the different roles each person plays when they are *up front & in control*. The term compere is of French origin meaning godfather and is adapted from the word conferencier.

Am I an MC or a compere?

The *Oxford Dictionary* is no help on this one – it gives the same definition for each word. Semantics aside, a compere is someone who is running the entire show or event, the focal point, a solo performer; an entertainer without being musical. A compere will take an audience from one situation to the next and be totally involved in all of it. A compere is there for the whole time, 'hands on', always commenting on the action on stage and building a real dynamic relationship with the audience in the process. If something is happening on stage, then the compere will be involved somehow. If nothing is happening, then the compere is also 'not happening' and some music will probably be playing.

Both an MC and compere have a responsibility to link the audience with the action on stage. The skills are the same for each role, but as I point out in Chapter 6 of *UP FRONT IN CONTROL*, the preparation and responsibilities are not the same because the *objectives* are distinctly different.

Instead of being totally involved in all the action on stage, the MC will get the show started, and then move on and off the stage, introducing, announcing, commenting and housekeeping. An MC will *share* the lectern with a lot more people than a compere will.

compensate *verb* 1 give a person money etc. to make up for a loss or injury. 2 have a balancing effect. *This victory compensates for our earlier defeats.* **compensation** *noun*, **compensatory** *adjective* c

compère (*say kom-pair*) *noun* a person who introduces the performers in a show or broadcast. **compère** *verb* [French, = godfather] c

compete *verb* (**competed**, **competing**) take part in a competition. c

competent *adjective* able to do a particular thing. **competently** *adverb*, **competence** *noun* c

competition *noun* 1 a game or race or other contest in which people try to win. 2 competing. 3 the people competing with yourself **competitive** *adjective* c

A CORPORATE COMPERE

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Comperes and MCs serve different functions in the marketing campaign of a product launch. A compere will be required where there is more audience interaction and flexibility and also less formality.

Where the dialogue is less structured and the run sheet more adaptable (given that the amount of audience interaction is difficult to pin down precisely from a time point of view), comperes are defined by their ability to speak spontaneously and without notes. This flexibility naturally creates a less ceremonial atmosphere.

In Australia, many speakers extend their income base by using the skills they already possess by working as the Master of Ceremony for the convention they are also speaking at. Emceeing is one of the real growth areas of the speaking industry; promoted by the book 'UP FRONT IN CONTROL -Great MC's reveal their trade secrets'.

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