



INFORMATION SHEET

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HOW TO PREPARE A CLASSIFICATION TALK

When a lawyer, a coal dealer, a mining engineer, and a merchant tailor first met in 1905, they gave birth to Rotary and, by the nature of their diverse occupations, to the association's most distinctive feature - the classification principle. Today, the classification principle remains a cornerstone of Rotary, promoting fellowship and service that is based on diversity.

By limiting active membership by classifications, each club becomes a cross-section of the business and professional life of the community it serves. Also, the classification principle makes sure that no one profession or business becomes the dominant force within the club.

Another benefit of the principle is that representatives of many fields are brought together, providing the opportunity for Rotarians to broaden their knowledge of the contemporary workplace. This, in turn, enables Rotarians to fulfill one of the basic obligations of Vocational Service - *recognizing the worthiness to society of all useful occupations.*

A way to share information about your vocation is to give a classification talk at a club meeting. The following guidelines are designed to help you give a good presentation.

Preparing the Talk

Obviously, the more inexperienced you are as a speaker, the more preparation you should put into your presentation.

Start by writing a comprehensive outline of all the points you want to cover in the order of their importance. Work your way from the general overall characteristics and activities of your career field to the specific duties involved in your particular job. Consider touching on the following:

A brief history of your career, including why you chose your particular business or profession.

- The parts of your job you find most rewarding and most difficult. (Don't be afraid to express personal feelings; sincere emotion always increases audience responsiveness.)
- Standards of practice within your field - the ethical issues you face in your work.
- The characteristics most needed for success in your business or profession.
- The changes that technology, regulations, environmental factors, and other outside forces have generated in your field.
- A forecast of employment opportunities in your field for the coming decade.
- Educational requirements for entry-level jobs in your vocation.
- The advice you would give to young people thinking of entering your career field.

Using your outline, write a complete draft of your speech, including examples and anecdotes that help explain complicated information and make your talk more lively. Avoid using professional

jargon, as your listeners will lose interest if they are puzzled about what you are saying. Leave some time for a question and answer period.

Continue practicing and refining your speech until you feel comfortable with it. Then try it out on a colleague who would easily recognize points you had missed. Also, present the speech to a family member or someone else outside of your field who could point out details that are not clear and who will help you with your delivery.

Giving the Talk

The following guidelines can help you give a good presentation and keep your audience interested.

Speak clearly and in an audible tone.

Stick to your prepared text. People who are unaccustomed to speaking extemporaneously tend to ramble if they try to ad-lib and lose the thread of the talk.

Avoid nervous habits, such as shifting from one foot to another, coughing, or toying with a pen or pencil.

Use hand movements sparingly. Gestures can help you be more expressive but will only be distracting if they are continuous or jerky.

Maintain eye contact with your audience. Even if you are speaking from a prepared text, look up every few sentences, directing your gaze to various parts of the audience.

Avoid the urge to rush through your talk to "get it over with."

Try to relax as much as possible. Books on public speaking contain information on breathing exercises and other relaxation.

Putting *genuine* emotion into your voice will help you to establish a rapport with your audience. However, your audience will see through an attempt to exaggerate emotions.

Visuals such as slides, an overhead transparencies or flip chart can enliven your presentation.

Be sure they are organized and arrange for the equipment to be at the meeting place. Do not have your back to the audience constantly during the program.

Other Programs on Classifications

The classification talk is only one method of sharing vocational information. Conducting a tour of your workplace is also an excellent way to *show* club members what you do. A panel discussion offers another approach. For example, you might team up with two other Rotarians and discuss how specific issues, such as pollution or computerization, are affecting the practice of your vocation.

How you share information about your field is up to you. The important thing is that you do so. After all, as the representative of your vocation, you will be the best qualified member in your club for the job.