SMART SPEAKER SELECTION

The Must-Know Guide for Event Success

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When to Hire a Speaker

Bringing in a speaker isn't just for large conferences—organizations of all sizes can benefit from an outside voice to inspire, educate, and engage their teams. Whether you're planning a company-wide meeting, an industry event, or a leadership retreat, the right speaker can make a lasting impact.

Here are some of the most common settings where a professional speaker can elevate your event:

- All-Employee Meetings
- Corporate Leadership Meetings
- Company Celebrations
- Industry Conferences
- Association Meetings
- Client Appreciation Events
- Executive Retreats
- Chamber of Commerce Meetings
- Professional Development Events
- Networking Events
- Team-building Events

This guide is designed to help you ensure a smooth event, as well as making the most of your budget.

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Before Hiring a Speaker

Before even embarking on the speaker selection process it's important to know 4 things:

1. The date and location of your event
2. Your overall event budget
3. Your speaker budget
4. The overall outcome you want from the event

Being very clear on these 4 things will help you narrow down the right speaker for your event.

Event Date and Location

The date is the easy one. You may not need a precise location before hiring a speaker, especially if you are selecting from several venues.

However, a speaker would need to know the overall city or metro area in case he/she needs to account for travel.

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Event and Speaker Budget

Determining a budget is one of the most difficult steps, especially if this is not a large conference, but rather a private corporate meeting or all-employee meeting.

However, knowing your budget and having contingency within the budget will keep your stress down.

Regardless of what your budget is, make sure to avoid surprises by determining your speaker budget in advance.

Main Speaker Budget Items to Include:

- Overall speaker fee
- Travel expenses, if applicable

Recommendation: Simplify the process by offering a flat fee with travel included.

(This eliminates booking and managing travel details while protecting you from increases in travel pricing as the event date gets closer.)

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Stretching Your Speaker Budget

While budget should never be the sole determination for speaker selection, there are ways to maximize the bang for your buck:

- At larger events, offer an additional speaking slot to a single speaker for an incremental amount
- Prioritize local speakers without travel expenses
- Find another local event in the same week and hire their speakers, offering to pay the additional hotel & meals in addition to a smaller speaker fee (flights are already covered!)

Caution: Use these strategies wisely - it's still good practice to pay speakers a fair rate!

Don't risk a bad experience by choosing the wrong speaker out of convenience.

Ways to Sweeten the Pot

Don't underestimate smaller "perks" that can sweeten the deal for your speakers. Ideas include:

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- Including your speaker in the whole event (meals, other sessions, etc.)
- Providing an event photographer and/or videographer so the speaker gets free footage
- Promoting the speaker as part of your event
- Access to the audience, whether it's a booth or another meaningful way to allow connection
- Allow an offer from stage*

***Caution:** **It is not typical for paid speakers to make offers, BUT if you have a very low budget this is an option that allows the speaker to generate additional revenue.**

Be sure you come to an agreement so the presentation is not a pitch-fest! Have the terms of an offer specified in your contract.

Event Outcome

Getting very clear on your desired event outcome is often skipped, but it's critical! You not only need to convey what you hope to achieve from your speaker's session, but also

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the overall goal of the event and any other details that impact how the speaker delivers his or her speech.

Things to Consider:

- Is your speaker addressing the audience right after lunch?
- Does your audience need energy for a multi-day event?
- What overall experience do you want your audience to have?
- Are there key learning objectives you want from the event?
- Are you looking for inspiration and motivation, or actionable insights?

If you are struggling to determine outcomes, spend time time thinking about how you would fill in the blanks:

> After the event, I want my audience to
>
> think _____.
> do _____.
> feel _____.

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Speaker Selection

Now that you are ready to hire a speaker, consider what the speaker brings to the table in terms of the content itself AND the administrative process. Use the checklists below when interviewing potential speakers.

Speaker's Content Checklist:

- [ ] The speaker asked questions and listened to ensure understanding your event needs
- [ ] The speaker was able to make suggestions regarding content ideas as well as audience interaction
- [ ] The speaker demonstrated confidence in addressing your needs
- [ ] The speaker made you feel heard, and served
- [ ] The speaker has experience and references
- [ ] The speaker answers all questions to your satisfaction

You ultimately want assurances that the speaker can deliver exactly what you need on the terms in which you need it!

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Your experience with the speaker OFF the stage is just as important as on the stage. Take note of these administrative details to ensure you are using a credible and professional speaker who has invested in his or her speaking business.

Speaker's Administrative Checklist:

- [ ] The speaker has a professional contract to cover all the terms of the speaking engagement.
- [ ] The speaker has an invoicing system that accepts multiple forms of payment (credit card, physical check, etc.).
- [ ] The speaker is willing to share any slides or other materials at least two weeks before the event.
- [ ] The speaker provides a cell phone number (you want peace of mind you can reach him/her the day of the event).
- [ ] The speaker can provide a W-9 upon request.

Whether you work directly with your speaker or his/her administrative support, the entire process should be organized and professional.

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“Day Of” Details

It’s your speaker’s job to take the stage with confidence and deliver an experience that matches the outcome you need.

It’s YOUR job to ensure everything is in place so your speaker can do his or her job.

To ensure a smooth event:

- Make sure your speaker knows when to arrive
- Provide any parking information or directions in advance
- If the meeting/event is already in progress, assign someone to greet the speaker upon arrival
- Have the speaker’s slides loaded and ready
- Ensure your speaker knows how to use the microphone and how to advance the slides
- Provide a bottle of water on stage for the speaker
- Make sure your speaker knows where to go when leaving the stage
- Pay all invoices on time

Your speaker will appreciate it!

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Final Checklist for a Successful Speaker Experience:

Before your event, make sure you can confidently say YES to these:

- ✅ I know exactly what I want my audience to think, feel, and do after the event.
- ✅ My speaker is a great fit for my audience and goals.
- ✅ All logistics (arrival time, A/V setup, payment, etc.) are squared away
- ✅ My speaker has everything needed to deliver an outstanding presentation
- ✅ I've set up the event for success by ensuring a smooth experience for both the speaker and attendees.

Need a speaker who checks ALL the boxes??

If you're looking for a speaker who brings energy, insight, and practical takeaways, let's talk!

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