

How to Select and Benefit from Using a Professional Speaker at your Conference

If you're considering bringing in a speaker at any point during your next conference, there are a few things to bear in mind that will make the experience more beneficial for everyone, from the conference booker through to each audience member and the bottom line profits of the company.

Any public speaker worth his/her fee will see the task as not simply delivering a talk. Those worthy of patronage will also undertake prior research into the client's desired outcomes, industry competition and the current and potential problems faced by that client's business. Only by doing so can the speaker hope to add value and serve the purpose for which he/she was booked.

Remember that a speaker does not have to be intimately knowledgeable about your particular industry to add value.

Frequently, you'll find that speakers are also trained and experienced coaches and/or trainers with professional business qualifications. Often, they will have climbed the corporate ladder to a senior management position so they understand the problems faced at different levels in the workplace. This means they have the *processes* in place to support staff and management so that improvements are effected from *within*, which increases morale, abilities, working relationships, communication, confidence and, ultimately, bottom-line results.

This is why a good speaker is likely to also want to discuss requirements with your company's decision or policy-makers, and may also want to survey a selection of conference attendees prior to your event. This all forms part of the speaker's due diligence that ensures relevance in the subject matter and a good return on investment for the client.

A competent speaker is also likely to be able to offer a package of options including workshops, coaching, facilitation and training, in addition to a keynote speech.

In summary, here are my five top tips for getting the most out of working with a speaker:

1. Know why you're booking a speaker, i.e. what are your desired outcomes?;
2. Book far enough in advance to allow the speaker sufficient research and preparation time;
3. Seek a speaker who focuses on providing value to you, the client, rather than one who sees the role as just delivering a speech;
4. Be prepared to co-operate in providing the access the speaker needs to best meet your expectations;
5. Remember that true change is a process. Find out whether your speaker can provide follow-up support and training.