

Becoming a professional (paid for) speaker

Turn your knowledge into cash by making paid-for presentations to businesses, groups, clubs, associations. Speak at conventions, dinners, exhibitions and even run your own expert seminars and masterclasses.

Chapter One – Why should you become a professional speaker?

The first QUESTION to ask yourself:

Why do I want to be a speaker?

ANSWERS:...

1.

2. ...

3. ...

But the best reason of all for becoming a professional speaker is that you have a *passion* about something and you want to tell people, convert people or educate people about it. So look back at your list on the previous page and choose the one thing that you feel most passionate about.

The title of this chapter was ‘why should you become a professional speaker?’ – so let’s address that right now.

Money. Professional speakers are well paid. Of course you may have to start off accepting as little as £100 for a half-hour talk and you may never attain celebrity speaker status where fees of £100,000 and more are the norm. You will also have to make the odd speech for FREE, especially when you are starting out.

Travel. Speakers travel the world – at their clients’ expense! Wouldn’t it be great to visit all those exotic places you have dreamed off – and not have to pick up the tab?

Status. As a paid speaker you will be one of the VIPs wherever you appear.

Time. You will have to put in plenty of time and effort to develop your speaking topic(s) and your business – but once your career is rolling, you can work as much or as little as you choose.

Opportunity. No other profession gives you greater opportunities to spread the word about your passions. If you have a message for environmentalists, sales people, politicians, bankers or any other group, you will be more effective as a ‘recognised authority’ – and that label virtually comes with the job. People will hire you because you are perceived as an authority on your topic(s).

So far, so good. However, there are some other things you need to consider. You need to be aware of the downside to being a professional speaker as well as the good stuff.

FACT. At any given time, there are likely to be more opportunities for trainers than speakers. (So maybe you should consider offering training as well. You’ll see later why you should be a speaker who trains rather than a trainer who speaks.)

FACT. Among members of the National Speakers Association (USA)*

Only 55% are full time speakers

32% speak to audiences of 15-50

30% speak to audiences of 51-100

44% do 21 – 50 speaking engagements a year

28% do 1-20!

Only 6.5% do more than 100

26.5% get \$3-5000 per keynote (£1500 - £2500)

3% get more than \$10,000 (£5000)

32% get less than \$2000 (£1000)

21% earn less than \$25,000 p.a. (£12,500)

Only 7% earn more than \$100,000 p.a. (£50,000)

(GROSS!)

* Data from 2005. Things have got tougher since then!

If you *still* want to be a speaker, the next question to ask yourself is

What will I talk about?

1. ...

2. ...

3. ...

NOTE:

More than one topic is probably too many!

It may help to ask

*What am I **PASSIONATE** about?*

*What am I an **EXPERT** on?*

*What do I think the **MARKET** is looking for?*

MY 'NICHE' TOPIC AND THE REASONS WHY:

If you are already an experienced speaker, now is the time to think about your potential clients. By 'experienced, I mean you speak to groups as part of your current job. This may be as a trainer, manager, sales person or in some other capacity (minister?).

Six potential clients and why they might choose to hire you:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Creating a Keynote Speech from training material

1. Find the core message that will stimulate thought in the listener
2. Find a story from your own life that illustrates your message
3. Devise an attention grabbing opening
4. Mix in some humour (real-life stories where you are the butt of the joke)
5. Check the mix – max. 70% content, min. 30% humour
6. Every point you make should be illustrated by a story about you or someone you know
7. Quote the famous – in support of your points
8. Invent a GREAT title

Add in **energy + enthusiasm + entertainment**

CORE MESSAGE

MOTIVATION

STORIES

OPENING

HUMOUR

A word about HUMOUR

Is humour necessary? Only if you want to get paid! (oft quoted speaker 'joke')

- Doesn't need to be a belly laugh
- The shorter the talk, the more humour you need
- Content is anything that stimulates thought
- Humour is anything that stimulates laughter
- Be spontaneous / dangerous

Humour ideas

How long?

Depends on when you are speaking and what the organisers want.

As a rough guide:

- **Opening talk:** 45 – 90 minutes. Sets the theme for the event. High energy, razzle, possibly more content than humour (Ratio of content to humour - 60:40)
- **Graveyard:** c. 30 minutes. Humour, participation. Keep 'em awake! (Ratio – 50:50)
- **Closing:** c. 30 minutes. Send them off on a high. Refer back to other speakers. (Ratio – 50:50)
- **After dinner.** 30 – 45 minutes. Entertainment! Be funny or magic! (Ratio – 90+:10-)

In view of the varying times for which you may be called upon to speak, modularise your material so that you can add or delete at will.

GENERAL TIPS

- Always be prepared to shorten your performance. Conferences etc often overrun and it is generally the speaker who has to adjust. So even your half-hour material needs to be 'chunked'.
- Dress right!
- Be on time
- *Never* overrun
- Be easy to work with
- Give *more* than they were expecting
- Get paid up front!
- Be an actor – perform
- Bare your soul
- Never be boring
- Ditch the PowerPoint
- Be topical

YOUR INFORMATION 'PACK'

This goes in a (preferably) double-pocket folder.

RHS

1. One sheet
2. Fee sheet
3. Detailed biography
4. Client list
5. Testimonials
- 6.

In die cut

7. Business card
- 8.

LHS

9. Speech description(s)
10. Your newsletter
11. Articles about you
12. Articles by you
13. Photo
14. Books list (or book)
15. Showreel

Don't overload – probably not all of these – customise.

Your one sheet

- Headline describing the topic area you speak about (i.e. Change management, Customer Service, or whatever).
- A title and short blurb for each of your talks. (Though hopefully you will at least begin with only one!)
- Background, describing your career, any qualifications or awards, biographical information, a short client list and testimonials.
- A list of benefits your talk(s) will deliver to the audience. (WIIFM)
- Your photo.
- Telephone and email contact details.

- Fees (?)

Your book

If you do not already have a book – start writing today! A book establishes you as an expert and can be profitable. It can be:

1. Short.
2. Self-published.
3. Any size you wish (A4, A5, A6).
4. Developed from your training programmes if you are a trainer.

A book can be a valuable revenue producer – or a promotional giveaway.

A book can be turned into an audio product – or even a multi-cassette (disc) training programme.

A book can be turned into a series of booklets.

Titles

Topics

Raising your profile / marketing

Your success will be directly proportional to the amount of marketing you do. Market yourself extensively as:

1. Your book
2. Columnist
3. Spokesperson
4. 'Free' talks
5. Celebrity

Opportunities

1. Existing clients (?)
2. Associations
3. Institutes
4. Databases
5. Business schools
6. Conferences, trade shows etc
7. Charities

Best / worst prospects (can you establish relationships with these types of people?)

CEO / MD

HR Director

Marketing Director

Training Manager

Events Director

Speaker Bureau

Your list:

Learn from the greats

Subscribe to Speaker Net News. www.speakernetnews.com

Visit NSA website and sign up for some of the free programmes offered by top speakers. www.nsaspeaker.org

Attend conferences and study the top speakers.

Join your local speaking club!

A 5-step plan to launch your speaking career:

1. Create a short (25 minutes maximum) speech. Offer this speech FREE to anyone who will book you, *who is involved with business in some form*. Chamber of Commerce, networking groups, Round Table. This speech must contain ideas that your audience will find usable!
2. To help you improve, video every talk (audio record if the organiser's aren't keen to let you film).
3. If you think you need it (you do!) take some acting lessons.
4. Have some free and some saleable booklets available for your audience. These should all contain contact information and details of your business talk(s).
5. Follow up relevant audience members with non-threatening offers. (Subscribe to your free newsletter / free reports / no-obligation surveys.)
6. Always be amazing.

As you improve and if you are giving them useful information, people will ask about your business, fees etc.

Pre-booking questions

Logistics

Where	Room set up
When	Lighting
Travel	A/V
Accommodation	

Programme

- Type of event
- Publicity material / programme etc
- What time
- How long
- Chairperson (introducer) and other VIPs
- Other speakers (pre and post)
- Balance of programme

Objective (what do you want from me?)

Audience

- Background
- Numbers
- Breakdown

Organisation

- Structure
- Operations
- Products

Contracts

Sample contracts are available on the Institute website.

Your Introduction

Do not leave this to the organisers!

Write the introduction *you* want and give it personally to whoever will be introducing you. Explain that it is vital they introduce you exactly as written because you will be referring to parts of the intro during your talk. That generally works.

Take warning from the experience of ex-footballer, Paul Fletcher. Paul was booked to speak at a dinner at Manchester's Piccadilly Hotel. Shortly before he was due to perform, he discovered that the organiser was about to introduce an entirely different footballer with a similar name! Disaster was narrowly averted but it could have been a very embarrassing time.

Example introduction

How do you introduce an old marathon runner whose career has spanned bag filler in a grocery store, IT consultant so long ago it wasn't even called IT, insurance salesman, society photographer, taxi driver and more? Probably by asking him to explain why he can't seem to hold down a job! But that might be unkind. Instead let me just say that Jim Ewan, speaker, author, coach and trainer will speak to us today about trade show success.

Depending on the audience, I will change the list of jobs, add in a couple of client names and, of course, make sure the speech description fits the client's topic!

Your introduction:

THE BEST ADVICE I EVER HAD

Never take a booking just because it is offered

Make sure you have some expertise to bring to the client's topic. A common error, especially among speaking club graduates, is to believe they can speak on any topic. Of course, they can. We all can since we all have an opinion about everything under the sun. But an opinion is not enough to sustain a 20-minute talk to an audience familiar with the topic!

Useful resources

Speaker organisations

www.nsaspeakers.org

www.professionalspeakers.org

'Gurus'

www.larrywinget.com/speakers.html - esp. for book writing

www.Wmitchell.com

Associations

www.is4profit.com/associations/associations.asp?cpage=1

www.britishcompanies.co.uk/britishorganisations.htm

www.aeo.org.uk

(Association of Exhibition Organisers)

Databases

www.marketlocation.com

Business schools

www.the-abs.org.uk/index.php

Trade shows

www.exhibitions.co.uk

Charities

www.charitychoice.co.uk

Publicity

www.insidenews.co.uk

www.mediacoach.co.uk

Miscellaneous

www.speakernetnews.com

NOTE This has been a brief introduction to a big topic. Contact the Institute for more information and resources.