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EVENT PRODUCTION

# How to Vet an Event Speaker

11 things to consider when choosing someone to inspire your event

by Tom Kenyon-Slaney, London Speaker Bureau | December 14, 2015



Over \$1 billion is annually spent throughout the world on engaging speakers and lecturers for all sorts of meetings and special events. American colleges and universities, for example, spend \$200 million a year on speakers. Considering the level of investment involved, a speaker needs to have impact and must stand out in the minds of attendees and become an important part of the value that they take away from the event. Using an inappropriate, ineffective speaker can tarnish and even ruin the entire effort.

Here are some recommendations for dealing with a speaker bureau or directly engaging a speaker. These initial tips will help determine exactly what it is you want to accomplish with your event. You can then begin to decide what type of speaker you might want to hire to help you achieve your objectives.

**1. Have clarity and agreement about the objective of your event.** Is there a specific reason for the event, such as bringing together your staff executives for an annual sales conference? Is it an employee training conference? Is this supposed to cover issues like human resources policies or ethics? Be very specific about why the audience is being brought to the event and what you want to achieve through staging it.

**2. Be comprehensive about the demographic of attendees.** Consider their age range, position in an organization, income range, and education level. Who have the attendees heard speak at past conferences and meetings? What was the outcome of those experiences?

**3. Articulate the challenges the audience might be facing that the event aims to address.**

**4. What are the attendees' expectations for the event and what do they want to get out of it?**

**5. Be specific about what will best benefit the audience.** How do you want them to act, improve, or conduct themselves differently after the event?

*After considering the five things listed above, you can then reach out to a reputable speaker bureau and provide them with your thoroughly thought-out brief. The next tips will help you get the most out of your chosen speaker bureau.*

**6. Select a speaker bureau that is well-established and has direct relationships with the kind of speakers who might be appropriate for your event.**

**7. Ask the speaker bureau to recommend speakers for your event that align with your brief.** Ensure that their message is appropriate for your audience and that it is in keeping with your organization's philosophy.

**8. Ask the bureau to share video clips of the speaker, if possible, so you can see him/her in action.** You'll want to be certain that you hire someone who can deliver his or her message in an interesting and entertaining manner.

**9. Be open to ideas.** The best speaker bureau can save you many hours of research. They already know many of the speakers and should know who is best for any given situation.

**10. Don't be afraid to ask!** Speaker bureaus are there to help you identify the ideal speaker for your event. They should be able to efficiently determine who is available, fleshing out issues like schedule conflicts and budget requirements. They'll work closely with you before, during, and after the event.

**11. Ask the speaker bureau about the speaker's travel and accommodation costs.** These costs can sometimes be large. For example, is first-class or even private aviation required? A limousine? What level of hospitality does the speaker expect? Sometimes contract demands and expectations from a speaker can be outlandish or even extreme. A knowledgeable, quality speaker bureau should be a good mediator in these matters.

Speakers and presenters can make or break a successful meeting -- and often define it. There's increasing scrutiny on the cost and time going into a meeting. Planners are under pressure to have a rigorous, critical approach to their speaker procurement decisions. Following these tips will help

planners ensure that their speaker is well-vetted and the right choice for their event.

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