

MARKETING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES THROUGH PUBLIC SPEAKING: WHY? WHAT? HOW?

Part 3

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If you have read Parts 1 and 2 of this article, you would by now understand the pros and cons of public speaking engagements as a marketing tool and be able to identify the types of engagements that help you achieve your marketing goals.

So the only question that remains, how do you do it? In this Part, pick up 12 practical tips to avoid common pitfalls and maximise the effectiveness of each speaking engagement, e.g. enhanced reputation, contacts made, useful feedback, leads to potential clients and ultimately, referrals. Then, you do the work by answering 12 difficult questions to clarify your thinking and develop a game-plan before you start.

12 Great Tips to Maximise Your Speaking Engagements

1. **Speaking to a group is marketing, not selling!** Your speaking should offer something of value, not a direct sales pitch. One common mistake professionals make when marketing their services is the tendency to take a supply-driven approach, i.e. focusing on their areas of expertise and the services they can offer, rather than focusing on the client's needs and buying considerations. Ensure that your speaking topics are marketing and value oriented by putting yourself in the audience's shoes – is what you are speaking about a potential solution to your audience's problems?
2. In situations where you might be trying to enter a new market to secure a client-base, **leverage on events organised by professional bodies or industry and trade organizations.** This helps minimise your risks as these bodies/organisations are often best-placed to understand their members' needs and translate these into relevant subject matter before inviting potential speakers. One quick way to create an audience for a seminar is to contact business and professional organizations, offering to speak on subjects of importance to the group. Remember that your approach should be needs-driven and not dictated only by what you feel comfortable to speak on.
3. To utilise public speaking engagements effectively, **preparation is vital!** By this, I am not just referring to the effort in researching your subject matter, writing the paper, preparing the presentation slides. One often overlooked aspect of preparation is in finding out the profile of the expected audience. An inappropriately pitched presentation (e.g. too superficial, too technical) is an audience turn-off and almost a guarantee of reputational risk. There is no worse damage than wasting your time speaking at an event where the majority of the audience feels disconnected from you or even put off by the perception that you do not understand or care about their needs.
4. **Avoid leaving it to your associate to prepare your presentation materials.** If you have to do so, ensure that you provide specific instructions on the following:
 - a. The expected audience's level of knowledge about the issues you are about to address
 - b. The expected audience's reasons for attending the session
 - c. Your objective for making the presentation
 - d. The programme for the event, including the order of speakers, what others will be covering and the time allotted for your session.
5. **Don't just offer just enough information to tease.** Elaborate on each topic you choose, supplement theoretical information with case studies or anecdotes. This is critical for professionals as it will establish the depth of your knowledge and experience along with your expertise.
6. **Learn to present!** So simple, yet so often forgotten. You not only have to be seen and heard, but you also have to persuade. If you are new to public speaking, the key is practice. Dry-run

your seminar at least twice if possible, completely free-of-charge - the cost to the delegates being that they have to give you honest feedback.

7. **Remember that people learn in different ways.** Some people are visual, some auditory and others kinesthetic (i.e. learn by doing). Appeal to all by providing the right educational stimulus for each type of person – e.g. visual charts, memorable commentary and interactive exercises.
8. **Invest in quality leave-behinds.** The better the package that you give people to take away, the more valuable they will think the event was.
9. For professionals, **the quality of the prospect is key!** Ensure that the audience you are addressing is the right one for your services (read Part 2 for more on how to do this). One obvious way to avoid this problem is simply to ask the organiser for a detailed profile of the expected audience (a) before agreeing to speak and (b) about 1-2 weeks before the event when you are hammering down the details of your presentation. Even if you discover that the presentation you prepared might be pitched or positioned wrongly for the audience, you can still invest the remaining time to the event to refine the presentation.
10. Usually, the professional is an expert in his field and not a savvy marketer. Too often I have seen potentially exciting marketing opportunities go to waste when the presenter turns up at the event just on time, sits alone at the head table, makes his presentation and then leaves. Why go through all the effort and put in all those billable hours if you do not maximise the opportunities presented? Here is a useful **"tag-team" approach** that I have seen used to great success. Always have several colleagues present and mingling with the audience at the event at which your firm's representative(s) are speaking, especially during the registration period before the session starts and the breaks. While the speaker and the firm he represents are positioned as experts in their field, a dedicated team is concurrently and actively working the ground to build personal relationships, identify potential clients and clarify doubts, thus maximising mileage from the speaking engagement.
11. Remember, **it doesn't end when you stop speaking!** Follow up is key. Always structure your presentation so that you offer some service that's free but designed to capture valuable information such as contact details. Here are some ideas for ways to establish an on-going dialogue by providing continuing value post-event:
 - a. Conduct a quick survey of your audience on a topic of interest to them that ties in with the topic you're speaking about. Have them respond to some basic questions providing their name, address, telephone, and e-mail on the questionnaire. Then when you get back to your office, tabulate the results and send a brief summary back to them.
 - b. Offer delegates a free subscription to your newsletter if they provide their contact details.
 - c. Provide some case studies as takeaways.
 - d. Always encourage delegates to call or e-mail you with questions.
 - e. Don't let the seminar be a one-shot deal. If anyone is interested in your services, offer to talk to them in person or by phone to explain your expertise and how your services could benefit them.
12. **Leverage the time you've spent preparing and presenting.** Each time you speak, make a transcript or recording or get the organisers to do so and ask for a copy. This has residual value as it is reusable. You can use the tape or transcript in several ways with both current and potential clients:
 - a. As a promotional piece to give to other groups who hire speakers.
 - b. As part of selected marketing materials to prospective clients.
 - c. To generate word-of-mouth marketing and referrals.
 - d. Offer it prominently on your Web site.

12 Tough Questions to Avoid Costly Errors

Feel all charged up and raring to go? Wait.

To borrow the words and ideas of Stephen Covey, you should “begin with the end in mind”.¹ Before you start, answer the following questions as honestly as you can so you develop a clear mental frame of reference for the mission you are about to embark on:

1. How do you really feel about public speaking as a marketing tool?
2. What specific goals do you have – in the short term, in the long term?
3. What would you be happy to achieve – in the short term, in the long term?
4. Would you use this tactic once or repeatedly? If repeatedly, how regularly?
5. How long are you prepared to use this tactic to achieve your goals?
6. What are the top 3 advantages of public speaking for you? How will you deal with them?
7. What are the top 3 disadvantages of public speaking for you? How will you deal with them?
8. Are you a good presenter? How do you know?
9. What type of audience would you like to speak to?
10. What kind of forum would you like to speak at?
11. What would you speak on?
12. How would you choose topics to speak on?

Write your answers down and this will help you formulate a simple marketing plan for developing your business through public speaking. This will hopefully keep you focused on your goals and help you stay the path.

Phew! That’s it ... the end of my 3-part essay. The rest is up to you!

Agree? Disagree? Got another point of view or something to add?

We always welcome your feedback and contributions. So do write us at june@intellitrain.biz.

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We are a hassle-free and cost-effective solution to conceptualise, market, organise and administer education and training programmes to your current and potential clients. We even provide private coaching sessions to help you be a better presenter!

¹ “The Seven Habits Of Highly Effective People” by Stephen R. Covey