3 Essential Steps to Getting Paid to Speak Right Away

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When I first started out as a speaker and coach back in 2001, I thought getting paid to speak was something completely out of reach for a "regular" guy like myself. I thought you had to be a famous football coach or a five-time *New York Times* best-selling author.

But as I've learned over the years, getting paid speaking engagements is not as hard as you might think. Why? Because outside of professional sports, where they draft college players into the pro ranks, professional speaking is one of the few industries where "the powers that be" have a vested interest in bringing in new folks.

In other words, if I'm a meeting planner, there's no way I can bring in the same speakers to this year's annual conference as I did last year. To the participants, unless I bring in new names and faces on an annual basis, it looks like I'm not doing my job.

So if I'm a meeting planner with an all-day event coming up — say, two keynotes (morning and lunch) and eight breakouts — then I've got a total of 10 slots to fill. But as we already said, I can't use the same 10 folks I had last year, or from the year before. Meaning that for my 2020 conference, I need to find Competent Paid Speakers #21 through #30 from my list. And that's the challenge that every meeting planner faces for every conference, every year.

Let’s say there is a total of 100 events annually you could potentially speak at based on your expertise. And since this isn’t year one of the conference, the meeting planners for those events already hired the first 1,000 speakers in 2018 (remember: two keynotes plus eight breakouts = 10 speaking slots, times the 100 total events) and the next 1,000 in 2019, because they can’t hire the same folks twice. Meaning that if you’re the 2,001st decent speaker in your field that meeting planners are aware of, and you can get on their radar, then you too have a shot at getting paid to speak for their next upcoming event.

This is an over-simplified example, but I think you get the idea: You can actually get paid to speak without being some super-famous person. So what can you do right now to start getting paid speaking engagements? I’m glad you asked.

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Step 1: Create a compelling title for your talk

I can’t emphasize this enough, because for most speakers this is where they get tripped up. Think of the title for your talk as the speaking equivalent to the cover of a book. And while we all know that you don’t want to judge a book by its cover, I think it’s fair to say that a good-looking cover and an interesting title go a long way towards you picking up any book from the shelf.

The same is true for meeting planners. They look at hundreds of potential speakers a month, so you want to have a title that jumps off the page. Personally, I’m a “how to” man myself. “How to Overachieve Without Over-Committing” and “How to Talk So Others Will Listen” are a couple of titles I use a lot. Turns out that when you use “how to” for solving a

relevant problem people have, meeting planners are interested.

Step 2: Create a client-attracting description of your talk

After creating a compelling title, the next thing to work on is the actual description of your talk, and this doesn't have to be hard either. As long as you can describe your topic in the context of a problem that your talk will solve for audience members, then you'll be fine. Here's an example from my talk on "How Overachieve Without Over-Committing".

Do ever feel like you've got so much going on that you're not sure where to start, let alone whether or not you'll get everything done? Well say no more, as popular speaker and best-selling author Brian Hilliard shares some tips and tricks for getting stuff done … without killing yourself in the process!

See what I did? I wrote the description in the context of a problem that I believe a lot of people face, and then I presented my talk as a potential solution. Pretty straightforward, right?

Step 3: Start branding yourself as a paid speaker

Before you hire a fancy PR Firm to start "branding" yourself as a paid speaker, let's just step back a bit. All I'm talking about is having a page on your website that successfully positions you as a paid speaker. Here's what that page can look like:

- A professional headshot;
- A description of your talk(s);
- Your bio;

- A list of some clients and/or speaking appearances you've previously had (optional); and
- Some video of you actually speaking to an audience.

And that's it. Our only objective here is to show people that you do this for a living, and that if they hire you, they can rest assured that you're a competent professional who not only knows what they're talking about, but can deliver that information in an entertaining manner.

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The bottom line is that getting paid to speak doesn't have to be hard. It can be, but like most things in life, it doesn't have to be. If you really do want to get out there and start getting paid speaking gigs, you really only need to do a few things to get moving, because make no mistake about it: Someone right now with similar expertise is getting paid to speak. And my question is: Why can't that person be you?

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