Need a Side Gig? Become a Motivational Speaker.

Booking speaker gigs as a side hustle can be fun, profitable and a great way to network. Here’s how to get started.

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Cash flow can be key to entrepreneurial success or failure. In fact, 82 percent of small business failures could reportedly be attributed to cash flow problems. If you’re looking for extra money on the side to fund your business, consider this: Adding “motivational speaker” to your resume could be a great way to establish yourself as an expert, make a difference in people’s lives, expand networking opportunities and create an additional revenue stream.

As for how much you can earn? It depends on your expertise, niche, experience and message. Job Monkey predicts that many people starting on this path make between $0 and $200 per gig. However, through self-promotion and building your reputation, you could eventually make between $2,000 and $10,000 per engagement. And while $200 might not sound like a lot, it’s only a starting point, and every little bit helps as you grow your primary business.

Demand for speakers seems to be growing at a significant rate. While the Bureau of Labor Statistics doesn’t provide data on motivational speakers directly, it does have information on meeting, convention and event planners. This category of occupation is projected to grow by 7 percent between 2018 and 2028, which is greater than the average for all occupations.

This growth likely reflects a similar demand for speakers, who can be key to the success of meetings, conventions and many other events.

For some people, being a motivational speaker is a full-time job, but for many others, it’s an additional revenue stream that can help pay the bills and hopefully lead to more opportunities. As a side gig, speaking can be fun, profitable and a great way to network, so book that first job and get started.

Are You Qualified?

Unlike many professions, you likely don’t need a degree to be a motivational speaker, but you should have something unique to share and an engaging way to say it. The place to start is with what you know best.

There are several types of speakers, from professional to inspirational to entertaining, so begin by identifying which is the best fit for your background and experience. In general, entrepreneurs tend to focus on being an industry expert, subject matter expert or inspirational speaker. Industry expert speakers share insights about the state of their industry and how to respond to globalization, resource scarcities or other topics. Subject matter experts are brought in to share information on more narrow topics and are seen as specialists in this niche area. An inspirational speaker is one that shares an emotional topic or story.

Regardless of whether you are sharing insights on growing sales or how to be successful as an online print shop, you need to provide value to your audience. This means giving them practical information to support their business or personal goals but also the motivation for them to act on your advice.

How to get started

There are many different paths to becoming a motivational speaker. For one speaker, Megan Gallagher, it began with a need to share her journey in addressing struggles with anxiety and panic attacks. She has written books on this subject and has established a profitable side gig as a motivational speaker, even landing a TEDx Talk after starting out speaking for free at YMCAs and Boys & Girls Clubs.

One option to consider to train for this type of role is attending Toastmaster public speaking meetings. Another is the National Speakers Association (NSA), which has a speaker directory that allows for event planners to find you, as well as monthly webinars and other resources that could help hone your skills. Through the NSA, you can also become a certified speaker to help you stand out from the crowd.

There are many additional resources to help you select a niche, develop content and create an engaging audience experience. The Meerkat Motivator website has several articles, checklists, and other tools to help establish and grow your speaker side gig. You could also go old-school with a Dale Carnegie course for public speaking or take one of the many online courses and certification programs available online. If money is tight, spend some time with free online resources to help get you started.

How to book the first gig

You need credibility to shift from no- or low-paying gigs to those that pay what you’re worth. Understand that this is a journey, which can be frustrating, but that also gives you time to improve your skills. The experience will help put satisfied customers on your speaker resume and provide opportunities for growth and development.

Look for opportunities anywhere that are reasonable for your expertise and niche. Many industries hold conferences, and snagging a spot on their schedule could be worth your time (even if it doesn’t pay). Also, check whether the local Rotary Club, Lion’s Club, Entrepreneurship Group or Chamber of Commerce is planning an event with an opening for a presentation. Understand that your initial goal is to establish yourself as a speaker who delivers value, and that will lead to bigger, better and more lucrative gigs.

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