

Ten Ways Meeting Planners Can Get Maximum Value from Hired Speakers

By Dean Savoca

I remember the pressure, as part of event planning teams, to find and schedule amazing speakers for the national corporate events I was planning. Much of meeting my clients' and event attendees' expectations for the overall event depended on what they heard from the stage or the breakout room. Ironically, I often felt that I had the least amount of control over this area, because I was banking my trust and reputation on someone I really didn't know and, let's just say it, I wasn't doing the speaking myself!

Now that *I am* a keynote speaker, sales trainer, meeting facilitator and executive coach, I'd like to offer **Ten Ways Meeting Planners Can Get Maximum Value from Hired Speakers**.

- **Hire for content AND style** – the communication style of the speakers you hire matters just as much as the content they'll deliver. You know your audience - do they want an informative lecture? Someone who gets them on their feet and interacting with one another? Someone who infuses humor into their message? Will they really connect with someone with an incredible back story? Once you've found your speaker, give us as much information as possible about the industry and organization, plus the group dynamics and mindset of your audience, so we can do our best to resonate with them.
- **Use a variety of resources in looking for speakers** -- associations like the National Speakers Association (www.nsaspeaker.org) have great websites that can link you to speakers by subject, style and location – for free. Another great way to find us is through referrals – more about that below. Like a speaker you hear at an association event? Book them for your corporation's event! (hint, hint.....)
- **Offer marketing opportunities** – like most businesses, we rely heavily on brand promotion and name recognition, so offer us event-based sponsorship opportunities that can increase our brand/name recognition and overall visibility to your attendees.
- **Consider other ways we can add value to your conference** – is the speaker you're hiring an experienced meeting facilitator? Bring them in a day early to facilitate your board meeting. Are they a terrific emcee? See if they'll also emcee your awards banquet. We offer a variety of skills that you can put to use in meetings adjacent to your main conference, and we often get superior results because a.) we're trained experts and b.) we're the "hired talent" – bringing a different voice and perspective.
- **Have a single point of contact** – some speakers have huge support teams, and some are just one-person shops – but regardless, most of us are juggling several events at different stages in the planning process all at once. A single point of contact and a succinct list of expectations (with due dates) is the best way to work with us, regardless of the size of our staff. This is even more important with associations planning events, since much of the planning work is done by volunteers.
- **Consider complimentary conference registration** – speakers love to attend other sessions, and we'll often refer to things we've picked up during our own presentation. By walking around and attending sessions before our event, we'll get a better sense of your attendees, and what's important to them. Circulating at sessions afterwards, we're more relaxed and can focus on networking and engaging with your attendees.

- **Maximize social events** – truth be told, while we appreciate being seated at the head table at our own keynote, we’re so focused on delivering our message that we’re not the best networkers in the world at that time. However, invite us to a cocktail event or meet-and-greet the night before, or afterwards, and we’ll shine.
- **Logistics are Huge** - walking into a new room before a presentation can be a surreal experience. Simply said, much of a speaker’s success is tied to being adequately seen and heard. If the room/AV/stage setup is different than what we’re expecting, the time we’d prefer to spend meeting your executives, and doing a few minutes of quiet meditation is spent scrambling for remote controls, cords and extra mics, and reworking our own script in our heads. Frankly, we won’t deliver our best performance. We know you have back-to-back sessions in these rooms, so many times we just want to know what to expect. Room drawings really help.
- **Use the speaker introduction we provide** – help us help you make the executive who introduces us look good by encouraging them to read the prepared introduction we provide. When read as written, it provides a smooth transition into our opening lines. More than a few times, I’ve been introduced with the wrong name, the wrong credentials, and with the wrong session title, by someone who “doesn’t need a script” to introduce me. It’s awkward, and unfortunately, the one who looks bad is the introducer.
- **Feedback and Referrals** - as always, specific feedback is appreciated. Did our performance meet your level of investment and expectations? If you had a great experience, LinkedIn testimonials are golden and take very little time on your end. Like many businesses, we’re always looking for referrals or specific introductions. At the same time, if you’re looking for feedback on our experience with your organization, just ask us!

As speakers, our goals are much like yours - to communicate a message that resonates with our audience and add value to the events where we’re invited to speak.



[Dean Savoca, M.Ed., BCC, CSP™](#) is the performance development partner for leaders who want highly-effective teams that are focused, aligned and inspired. Simply put, Dean helps leaders coach their people. A 25-year veteran of the meetings and events industry, Dean combines an early career in hospitality sales and operations with a Master’s Degree in Organizational Performance and Change, and has spent the last 15 years speaking, training and coaching on leadership and development. He helps people identify the core issues they face daily that impact performance development, people management and team alignment – and rallies them to action, *often right there in the room*. **The result is a better bottom line** – boosted by improved performance, higher productivity, and more cohesive teamwork. Dean is a board-certified coach and has conducted more than 10,000 executive coaching sessions. He is also a Certified Speaking Professional™, conferred by the National Speakers Association, and actively involved in several industry associations.