

Meeting Planner Guide: Selecting the Right Speaker



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Selecting the Right Speaker

Whether you refer to your speaker as presenter, emcee or keynoter, this person will be in front of YOUR audience. He/she needs to convey the appropriate image, present the proper message and inspire your audience.

Here are four tips to help you select the right speaker.

- 1. Be certain of what you want to accomplish before you begin looking for a speaker.** What do you want the audience to walk away with? Do you want to provide specific information? Do you need to address a current issue? Do you want them to be motivated to act? Do you want to boost their morale? Are you looking for an interactive workshop or group activity? Be ready to share your desired outcomes with prospective speakers when you interview them.
- 2. The selection process should start with the type of speaker, NOT the price.** Think about it this way: if a \$25,000 speaker will speak for free but is the wrong person for the job, would you have them speak anyway? Of course not. Choose the right speaker for the event/audience within a certain budget range; then work on price.
- 3. Read the speaker's testimonials.** Or go one step further and request the speaker's references. Select a few and call them directly.
- 4. The speaker's letter of agreement or contract should include the following, at minimum:**
 - Travel arrangements
 - Accommodations and meals
 - Audio/visual requirements
 - Whether the speaker will attend social functions
 - If the speaker may promote and/or sell products and, if so, how this will be handled
 - An understanding of the audio or videotaping of the presentation, if necessary
 - Complete cost
 - Cancellation policy

Questions for Potential Speakers:

- What are your presentation topics?
- Do you offer customized presentations?
- Do you conduct interactive workshops?
- Are you available for our event?
- What is your daily rate? Do you offer a lower rate for partial-day events?
- Are you willing to conduct several sessions at no additional cost?
- Will you need overnight accommodations?
- Do you require payment for travel expenses? If so, what do these expenses include? Can you give me an estimate of these expenses?
- What, if any, materials do you provide for the audience (i.e. handouts, printout of slides, books, tip sheet, etc.)? Do you print these materials or will we?
- Is there any additional cost for these materials?

Questions for Your Selected Speaker:

- Do you require a deposit prior to the event?
- What, if any, A/V equipment will you need?
- When can we meet to discuss the presentation content more in depth?
- Will we be able to review an outline/sample of your presentation before the event?
- Can we see a sample of your handout materials before the event?

Speaker Selection Tasks

When creating your event task list, be sure to include speaker selection tasks. Below is a list of these tasks with a general timeframe for completing each. This list is based on a one-year event timeline but you can customize the dates to fit your specific timeframe.

Task	Timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brainstorm topic/focus of presentation/workshop • Determine budget for speaker(s) 	12 months ahead
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select topic/focus of presentation/workshop • Determine sessions, including length and format • Determine speaker needs • Begin identifying and contacting potential speakers 	9 months ahead
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select and confirm speaker(s) • Sign and return speaker agreement or contract • Forward speaker response forms, if appropriate • Forward deposit payment 	6 months ahead
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather speaker materials, including introductions, slides and handouts • Gather completed speaker response forms, if appropriate • Create speaker evaluation form • Make hotel/transportation arrangements for speaker(s), if necessary 	1-3 months ahead
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform speaker of final headcount • Confirm final A/V needs • Review final details with speaker • Finalize speaker handouts, if appropriate • Address any last-minute speaker requests/questions 	1 week ahead
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit event location with speaker and ensure all A/V equipment is working properly 	Day before or event day
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review speaker invoice • Submit payment • Share evaluation results with speaker 	Post-event

Additional Speaker Resources

- **www.SpeakerMatch.com**
The only service of its kind – matches speakers and speaking opportunities
- **www.SpeakInc.com**
Speakers bureau offering professional speakers, celebrity speakers and entertainment.
- **www.AllTimeFavorites.com**
Offers free referrals to the best vendors/merchants for your wedding, corporate or special event anywhere in the USA.
- **www.NSASpeaker.Org**
National Speakers Association (NSA) – free, searchable directory for thousands of speakers
- **www.dmoz.org**
Open Directory Project – the largest, most comprehensive human-edited Web directory

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