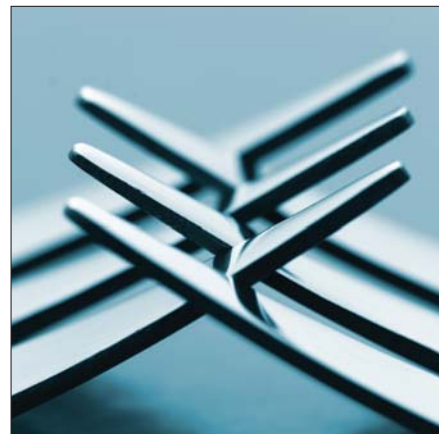
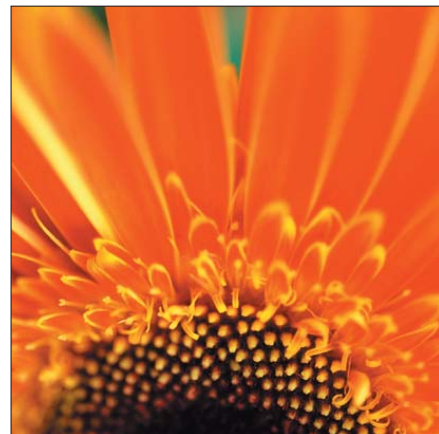


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Choosing speakers key to boosting event success

By Gail Davis

More businesses are using keynote speakers to differentiate an event and to reinforce their message with important audiences. But choosing the right speaker for an event isn't always an easy process. Should you use a marquee name? What type of speaker is best? Is the speaker's background important? These are just a few of the questions that come up in the decision making process.



Gail Davis owns one of the nation's largest speakers bureaus representing more than 2,100 leading names in the worlds of business, politics, media and entertainment. Her firm Gail Davis & Associates also specializes in finding unknown experts and bringing their personal stories to a national speaking stage. Contact her at gail@gdaspotlight.com or visit www.gdaspotlight.com.

all types of personalities and budgets. They know helpful details such as what speakers have been no-shows, used inappropriate jokes, or their travel preferences and calendars.

Bureaus can make recommendations for a speaker that best fits your event goals and budget. Some bureaus also specialize in a certain niche, whether it's booking social media experts or finding undiscovered names.

Another advantage to working with bureaus is that they handle all the contract negotiation and booking logistics. Since some bureaus have event planning experience, this can also be helpful expertise as well. You can locate a bureau or learn more from the International Association of Speakers Bureaus at www.iasbweb.org.

Leverage current events. With today's record-breaking headlines, there is a greater public interest to hear from those who are politicians, economists, former Olympic athletes, and environmental experts. A planner can leverage these current affairs to drive attendance at events.

There are a few things to remember when booking these types of speakers. First, keep in mind that the lead time for booking former politicians or prominent leaders can range from two months to a year out. Also, some former officials are still involved in public affairs which means their cancellation rate can be high. So it's always best to have a contingency plan in the event your highly-paid speaker gets pulled away at the last minute. Having a contingency plan is a good idea for any event.

Create budget-friendly contracts. While using the most budget sensitive approach is a requirement for events these days, try to avoid asking professional speakers to reduce their fee. The last thing you want is a discounted presentation.

However, there are some ways to contain costs without breaking the speaker's fee integrity rule. For example, for an out-of-town speaker you can negotiate travel expenses by capping travel costs or doing a buy-out. You can also reduce a travel budget by using a local speaker.

If your speaker is an author, another cost-effective tactic is to purchase a certain number of books from the speaker for on-site book sales and autograph signings. Since attendees value a signed book greater than purchasing it online, many speakers welcome the opportunity to sell their books at events full price. It can also be cost-effective to use a speaker's bureau since these agencies only get paid in commission by the speaker and never by a client or planner.

These strategies will help you master the art of choosing keynote speakers that spark the imagination and ingenuity of your attendees.

A great keynote has the power to motivate an attendee to record levels of performance. The wrong choice of speaker, however, can set an organization back from achieving its annual goals. The best approach is to plan as far ahead as possible and know your vision for the event.

Once you have a date on the calendar and have identified your event goals, the next step is to begin the search process. Here are four strategies to use when booking keynote speakers for your next meeting or event.

Connect with the audience. Before you begin your hunt for a speaker, ask yourself, "How do I want the audience to feel?" This is the most critical answer that will guide your speaker selection process.

If the real priority is to incite your sales force, then you'll want a motivational speaker who can deliver regardless of whether it's on a golf course or at a convention hall. But if the bottom line goal is to make a room full of customers feel greatly appreciated, then you might use an inspirational messenger with an amazing story that makes your clients feel privileged to be at the event. If your audience is cutting-edge, then you might wow them with an undiscovered name on the verge of stardom. Your purpose as a planner should be to find a speaker that connects with your audience in a way that makes a lasting impression for your organization.

Tap a speakers bureau. Another strategy is to call on a speakers bureau for help identifying the right keynote speaker for your event. Bureaus have experience working with

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