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If I Knew Then, What I Know Now *Everything takes Time*

As a speaker, each time I add a new dimension to my speaking, I am surprised by the lead time in this relationship-dependent business for the marketing materials to begin to take effect, and the cost (in money and time) of a marketing and sales campaign. In building a speaking business, I have learned the value of conserving resources.

1. Keep the elements of risk and discovery in balance. Speaking presentations are a speaker's best marketing tool, and, like any facet of business, involve a blend of safety (repeating a formula that works) and risk taking (to achieve discovery to lead the field). Repetitively stamping out a tried and true product is safe but limits discovery of new and possibly better ideas. Professional speakers seem to keep risk and discovery in a dynamic balance on the platform, testing new material, but assuring a dynamite presentation.

Knowing what I know now, I volunteer my speaking time once a month to local charitable organizations, where they understand that I will be using portions of "untested" material. With a featured speaker, the organization gains more than if I had provided cash or volunteered non-platform time. In turn, they provide me the live experience I need to enhance my abilities with new material and lots of "recovery" opportunities. By working together, we reduce our individual risk and maximize the opportunity for discovery.



2. Experiment with desktop marketing material. A brochure has three elements: message, positioning, and impact. These are affected by headings, subheadings, copy, graphics, layout, and white space. It takes great effort and skill to move from a “feature”

focus brochure to a customer “benefit” focus brochure that is effective for your message, your presentation, and your audience. It is easy to forget that national advertisements and direct mail packages are tested extensively before going to final print.

Knowing what I know now, I experiment with desktop versions of marketing material. Using a quality stock paper, I test new speaking titles and brochure copy with titles that have already proven to be effective. I solicit feedback on the new titles and copy from bureaus and meeting planners as part of my marketing calls. By continuously updating copy, I have the chance to discover the “message” the recipient is getting before going to the “experts” to design a final brochure.

3. Experiment with “home” version video and audio recordings. I was speaking to a big international audience in a new market with a new topic. The meeting planner, industry experts, and the audience loved the topic and the presentation. I was thrilled that I paid for a professional videographer to capture the moment with two cameras and special lighting...that is, until I saw the footage. The video camera picked up each and every hesitation and timing fault. Most of the footage was useless for promotion. This was an expensive learning opportunity.

Knowing what I know now, I experiment with “home” video and audio productions to learn what the camera or recorder sees and hears with new material. I would never expect to get a great video from a presentation of new material, to a new audience, and new market. There are too many unknowns for me to handle all at once.

4. Relationships take time. I was convinced that I could beat the odds and that my telephone and sales skills could bring me instant success and revenue from speaking. I knew that I could announce a new keynote, do some mailings, make a few calls, and *PRESTO!* a full calendar.

Knowing what I know now, I realize that there is no advantage for decision makers to risk a long-term relationship on a one-time booking. Also, it may take as long as a year just to have a presentation reviewed, let alone actually considered, by every targeted



prospect in your database of bureaus, meeting planners, and companies. Accepting these conditions, I use a combination of daily telephone calls, mailings, and faxes timed to the needs of my contacts to build our relationship and keep them informed of changes that are beneficial to them.

Ron Arden said, "On the platform a speaker shifts through the presentation, as if driving Le Mans, to keep the audience interested." The same holds true for your speaker marketing efforts. By marketing at different speeds (a personal note, a telephone call, an update flier, an announced fax) to achieve optimum performance for that moment, you conserve everyone's resources and present the most useful snapshot of your abilities.

Knowing what I know now, I have learned that being a great speaker means bringing years of experience, work, and refinement to the stage, which might inspire someone to contribute to themselves and others. The more I learn on the platform, the more I realize there is more to learn. By marketing myself more effectively, I earn the resources to continually invest in my platform skills.

And remember, if none of your marketing and sales efforts seem to be working, you're building some great experiences and stories for the platform.

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