

## Speaking Engagements

### Speaking and Prospecting from the Stage

#### By Evelyn Gwynn

I am guessing that you are not having as much success in prospecting as you would like. If you are like most entrepreneurs, you don't believe that prospecting is a real part of what you do. You tolerate it because you need clients, and everybody tells you its something you must do.

I recently had a client tell me that the reason he does door-to-door cold calling is that it is the easiest way for him to get in front of his prospect. He stated, "If I can get in front of a prospect. I can close the sale – guaranteed."

If you agree with his statement, and prospecting is the least favorite thing you do, then you need to hear this! There is a way to get in front of many qualified prospects, make a connection, and have all your prospecting done for the week in one session.

#### Want to try it?

If you are fidgeting in your chair right now, as visions of public speaking horror fill your mind, don't worry, speaking from the stage, like most things, is not difficult once you know how. Before you begin, you need to take these three steps: find your ideal audience, find a place to speak, and prepare your talk.

#### Step 1 - Find your ideal audience

Your prospecting efforts will not give you a maximum return until you have a solid idea of who your target audience is. To maximize your efforts, you need to identify the person that is most likely to benefit from your help. ***A word of warning – this is not a demographic!***

To make this a little easier, try creating a client avatar. A client avatar is a fictional character that represents your ideal customer — allowing you to talk directly to them, addressing their dreams, goals, pain points, and challenges. Your avatar will help you to focus your efforts in a single direction, so your speaking and programs will resonate with that person.

*Brian Clark from Copyblogger* describes this relationship as a hero's journey. Your customer is on a trek or challenge, and you must act as the mentor and help them to reach their destination, bringing it to a successful conclusion. You do this by helping them to implement the solution that solves their most significant pain point.

Questions to help you build your avatar:

- Who is your client? Where do they work? What do they drive? What is their gender, income level, marital status, hobbies, values and interests, favorite social media, books, magazines, movies, and TV programs?
- What are their goals, challenges, and pain points?

- What could you offer to them to help them in their journey?

If you need more help, you can use an option like *Optinmaster* – it has 188 questions, you can use to build your avatar. You can read, do research, use web analytics, check out social media, web sites, and industry blogs. Copyblogger’s empathy map or persona generator will help you with your avatar creation. If you would like to use surveys that allow prospects to self identify, use programs like Survey Monkey or Polldaddy.

## **Step 2 - Find a place to speak**

Speaking engagements are easier to find than you would imagine. Here is just a small sampling of places where you could begin your quest to add speaking to your prospecting efforts: homeowner’s associations (HOAs), service clubs, community centers, most banks and credit unions, alumni and professional associations, and networking groups.

Once you have determined who it is, you need to speak to; save time, money, and effort by qualifying your speaking engagements. ***Ensure that your target audience will be at this event.***

This checklist will help you to narrow down the possibilities. Ensure that:

- The organization’s social media, posts, blogs, and website align with what your avatar would be interested in
- The business challenge of your audience matches your solutions
- If it is a multiple speaker event, ensure the other speakers and topics are in line with your presentation

You will need to approach the person responsible for arranging speakers. Initiate contact by sending an email to the contact person offering your services – *see bonus email script*. These people are generally extremely busy. The more you can prepare ahead to help them see you are the right choice as a speaker, the more success you will have. Write a description of your talk – prepare a 20, 40- and 60-minute version and prepare a slide deck. It would also be helpful to send customer testimonials and pictures or videos of you speaking. This will shorten their research time and place you as a dependable professional who can be counted on to deliver as promised.

## **Step 3 - Prepare your talk**

One of the most important things you need to do to prepare is research. Your research will involve reading everything you can find on your topic, following blogs and other related online content and applying your experiences.

As you are reading, put yourself into your prospect’s shoes, search for pain points, and trigger events. Use the most interesting, relevant, or innovative ideas in your talk. Be sure to address the things your prospects are thinking about, describe their pain to them, then show them a solution that works.

Put together a series of talks that focuses on what your audience wants: an overview of a problem or situation they are facing, an easily implemented solution, and a benefit that your solution gives

them. Use your talk to show your prospect that you understand where they are today and where they could be tomorrow with your help and guidance. If you make that connection and give your prospect the “aha” moment they are looking for, they will reach out to you for more solutions in the future.

Offer a takeaway article, PDF, or checklist to the audience that they will be willing to exchange their email address, text, or phone number. This will aid in allowing you to follow up with them.

The mechanics of a presentation are not overly difficult to apply. You should not use your time on stage to sell directly to the audience unless that is specifically the intention of the engagement. Instead, your challenge is to give them useful content, help them address a problem or situation they are facing and convince them that you are the person that they need to move them forward. Your presentation requires you to be specific – do not use more than three new ideas, do not bog the audience down with too many facts or data points, and be sure to keep the presentation light and easy to follow.

Speaking engagements set you up as an expert in your field. An expert your prospects can reach out to and interact with and feel they know personally. You have a chance to share something of value with the audience, an idea or technique they can implement right away. I generally use warm email prospecting when I do speaking engagements. I share a method known as *The Nine Word Email*. At the end of the session, I offer them my speaker transcript notes. All the audience needs to do is send me an email or fill out my postcard, requesting it. You should make a similar offer. Many in the audience will use the opt-in to receive your offer. This allows you to exchange contact information with a broader audience. You are gaining a platform from which to build a relationship with your prospects and helping you to convert them into customers.

Speaking engagements are the only prospecting method that will do the heavy work of building the required know, like and trust of client relationship building; and do it more quickly than any other prospecting method.

Speaking allows you to interact face to face with your audience and engage them with useful content, help them address a problem or situation they are facing and convince them that you are the person that they need to move them forward.

Looking at all the benefits speaking offers, it only makes sense to explore this method of prospecting and what it can do to help you build a strong, long-lasting, and a committed relationship with your clients. Start with small engagements of 10 to 15 people and work your way up to larger and different types of speaking engagements.