

How to Speak and Sell Your Book

Unit 1: Why Speak? The Benefits of Public Speaking for those who Write

'I'm a writer; an author! Why should I need to speak? Can't my words be enough?'

It would be wonderful if the written word was enough. However, in this endlessly information hungry world, an author who wants to get the best leverage from their written words, may also want to develop the skill of being able to speak about their topic or passion, in order to attract more readers.

Helen Macdonald

President of the National Speakers Association of Australia, Helen has been named 'Speaker of the Year' and 'Mentor of the Year' in her state.



*She has delivered thousands of presentations to audiences from 8 people to 800. She's the author of SMILE your Way to Success, and The Optimism Factor.
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The benefits

So, what are the benefits of being able to present yourself and our area of expertise to a live audience? Here are a few thought starters:

- Media outlets prefer 'talent' who can articulately present their information.
- People who hear us speak are highly likely to tell others about us and our work, leading to increased sales.
- The process of constructing and delivering a presentation forces us to think about our topic in a different way, which can generate new ideas and thought-strings for future work.
- Speaking is an additional way of spreading our message to different audiences.

There are many other benefits, and you need to think through the reasons and the outcomes you desire for your own speaking journey.

Audiences

There are also many potential audiences, with different needs and priorities, which you may consider for your message. For example:

- Media outlets, including radio, television, magazines and newspapers
- Service clubs, including Rotary, Lions and Kiwanis are always looking for competent speakers with an interesting message

- Business networking groups
- Professional associations
- Conferences and events
- Schools
- Educational and literary conferences.

Thinking about your particular message and clarifying which types of people would be interested in hearing about it, will help you shortlist the groups for you to approach.

Networks

Another way to find places to speak and audiences who want to hear your message (and buy your books!) is to use your own personal network. Although you could simply beg all your friends to book you as a speaker, part of the plan would be to still have some friends left at the end of this project, so that might not be the best approach.

What you might find more successful is to have a general conversation with many of the people you know, which covers these points:

- Explain what you are planning to do (i.e. find audiences to speak to about your book) and ask for their help.
- Find out whether they belong to any clubs or associations that have guest speakers.
- Ask for the contact details for the 'speaker seeker'. (Note – these people are often very glad to be approached, as they have a difficult job in finding a speaker for every meeting.)
- If not, can they think of anyone else they know, who may be in such a club or organisation? Ask for their permission to contact that person.
- When you call, make reference to the person who provided the name. (i.e. 'Hi, You don't know me, but XXX suggested that I give you a call.')
- You may like to create a little script for the first few calls, to clearly communicate your goal of offering to present your message to their audience.

Some groups become a little sensitive about speakers 'hard-selling' their product during their presentations, so emphasise the benefit of your message to their attendees.

The purpose of these first steps is to become clear about why you want to speak, as well as who you want to speak to, and then set out to locate those groups.

ACTION ACTIVITY

- Create a list of possible audiences – identify which groups of people might be interested in your message or content.
- Identify people in your current network who may have useful connections.
- Make a plan for contacting these groups - set a goal for the number of contacts you will make in a week.
- Develop a follow-up system for your contacts - follow-up phone calls with a letter thanking them for their time and either confirming the date, or summarising the conversation and the future follow-up arrangements.