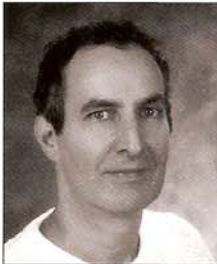


Leading up to Showtime: Your Responsibilities Prior to Making a Speech

By Jeff Davidson



the truth. There are many steps that speakers

Aspiring speakers often have the misconception that once a presentation is booked, they have few responsibilities until the meeting date approaches.

Nothing could

be further from should take well in advance of a presentation to ensure that the show will be a success.

Keeping in Touch

Between the time you convince the meeting planner and/or speaker selection committee to book you as a presenter and the time at which you deliver your presentation, there may be a gap of a few weeks or months, or even a year. Don't delay before establishing a relationship and exchanging crucial information.

As soon as you have been officially booked, find on the web or request a copy of any of the following items that may be readily available,

through which you can tailor your presentation to suit the audience's needs.

1. Any mission, vision, or values statement
2. The group's latest annual or quarterly report
3. An organizational chart
4. Strategic plans or objectives, new initiatives, or interim goals
5. Member or staff orientation booklet or guide
6. Training programs, past, current, future (table of contents will do)
7. A copy of previous convention or meeting brochures or flyers
8. Any memos, publicity flyers, or announcements related to this meeting

9. Special promotions, campaigns, themes, drives
10. The group's product or service catalog
11. Samples sales tracking reports, logs, forms
12. Job descriptions
13. Membership/staff application form
14. Member/staff roster or directory
15. Organization magazine, newsletter, monographs
16. Articles written about the organization; the organization in the media
17. Any other relevant material
18. A copy of the evaluation form used to rate presenters

It is be helpful to state: "Please do not make an extensive effort to round up these materials. Your time is valuable! I would appreciate receiving whatever is readily available." Thus, the meeting planner won't feel as if you're being demanding.

Meeting Specifications

Soon after you confirm a booking, send the meeting planner a list of technical specifications. Such a list helps eliminate unnecessary questions and confusion, and can help ensure that the room is set -up, as you prefer. If the meeting planners can't meet some of your specifications, it is better to know earlier in the game so that you can plan accordingly. Here is a copy of my "spec" sheet:

Presentation Checklist for Jeff Davidson
 Congratulations! You have booked one of Jeff Davidson's presentations on *Breathing Space: Living and Working at a Comfortable Pace in a Sped-Up Society*. This checklist can serve as a planning guide and last-minute reminder of how to help Jeff be at his best for your group. We appreciate your attention to detail! Please call toll-free anytime.

Room Arrangement - The diagram indicates Jeff's preferred room arrangement based on attendance. Jeff needs access to the room the night before and/or 45 minutes prior to his start:

Staging - Jeff is 6'3", easily seen at distances, and, for 120 people or fewer, prefers to work without a podium (a platform) or a lectern (a reader stand).

Microphone - Jeff needs to speak with his hands free and thus has to have a wireless lavaliere microphone.

Visual Aids - For keynotes, Jeff uses PowerPoint slides in conjunction with the house system. For breakouts, Jeff uses slides as well and requests a table at least 3' by 6' up front.

Autograph Table (Your option) - Prior to Jeff's presentation, please arrange with the meeting facility to provide a draped table and chairs inside the room by the exit.

Introduction - Jeff will bring an extra copy of

his introduction. Please select an introducer who will rehearse it and read it verbatim, and not ad-lib! A good intro can arouse the audience, help the speaker, and add to a great meeting! Please send the name, address, and phone number of Jeff's introducer.

Balance of Fee - Please remember that the balance of his fee is due on-site, immediately following the presentation. Jeff will submit all travel expenses, which are due on receipt, directly after the meeting.

Thank you for engaging Jeff Davidson for the people in your organization.

Along with the requested materials and the checklist for my presentation, I send a quick questionnaire, like the one below, or a longer one with a note saying that we can go over the information by phone if it's easier. Note: All of these exhibits are also available for meeting planners on my web site.

Short Pre-program Questionnaire For Jeff Davidson's Presentation
 Please fill out completely to help ensure that Jeff Davidson's presentation meets your needs. Or, give Jeff a call and he'll be happy to walk through it with you.

YOUR GOALS FOR THIS PRESENTATION
 What is your organization's mission or philosophy?

What is the purpose and/or theme of this meeting?

What are the two biggest challenges facing your industry?
 1. _____
 2. _____

What are the two biggest challenges facing your organization?
 1. _____
 2. _____

What are the two biggest challenges facing your attendees?
 1. _____
 2. _____

What are you particularly proud of as an organization or industry?

What will be happening before and after Jeff speaks? Can Jeff get notes/remarks of preceding speaker(s)?

- Will there be:
 A trade show?
 A directory of trade Show exhibitors?
 Executive or director sessions?
 A partners/spouses sessions?
 A conference guide?
 An attendance roster?

Are there any buzzwords or technical terms of which Jeff should be aware?

Are there any taboo topics/issues/terms of which Jeff should be aware?

If there are any issues that represent a sore spot to the organization or topics you need to stay clear of, you want to learn about them far in advance. Paradoxically, these issues are often kept hidden from you, or may be one of the reasons the group opted to bring in an outside speaker. I use a longer questionnaire when one or more of the following factors are present:
 1) There is ample time to gather the information
 2) The gathering is large and complex
 3) The engagement is the first of its kind for me
 4) The meeting planner is a novice
 5) I anticipate challenges beyond the norm

Hereafter, whenever you book a speech, recognize that between now and then, you have lot of work to do!

*Jeff Davidson MBA, CMC, based in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and at www.BreathingSpace.com, is a popular conference speaker and the author of more than two dozen books including *The Complete Guide to Public Speaking* (Wiley, \$14.95) from which this article is excerpted.*