

An abstract graphic on the left side of the page. It features three large, white, upward-pointing arrows of varying sizes, stacked vertically. Overlaid on these arrows is a network of thin white lines and small circles, resembling a data flow or a circuit. Several of these circles are labeled with numerical values: 0.1, 0.2, 0.3, 0.4, 0.5, and 0.6. The background of this graphic is a dark blue gradient with some light blue and green highlights.

SULLIVAN SPECIAL REPORT:

TEN QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU DECIDE TO SPEAK PROFESSIONALLY



SULLIVAN
SPEAKER
SERVICES

TEN QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU DECIDE TO SPEAK PROFESSIONALLY

By Vickie K. Sullivan, President, Sullivan Speaker Services Inc.

Professional speaking looks glamorous and it is – for the hour or so that you’re in the spotlight. What you have to do before and after those magical times in front of the audience might be a rude awakening. Like show business, professional speaking is a volatile industry that chews up and spits out talented experts on a regular basis.

So you *really* want to be a professional speaker? Here are ten questions to ask yourself before entering into the fray.

1. AM I WILLING TO SELL MORE THAN SPEAK?

In this crowded marketplace, you have to go out and GET the speaking engagements...and between celebrities and free experts, that’s easier said than done. Be ready to spend more time getting the invitations than you spend getting the applause.

2. CAN I/HAVE I RUN A BUSINESS?

If the answer is no, you could learn about critical concepts such as “cash flow” the hard way. The boring stuff – like financial statements, profit and loss reports, take on new importance. Many speaking businesses experience peaks and valleys, so don’t count on constant revenue. Only the savvy survive.

3. AM I OK WITH INVESTING AT LEAST \$50,000 UP FRONT?

The bootstrapping days in the speaking profession are over. Successful speakers know that it takes money to make money, just like in any other business. In addition to a business’s usual start-up expenses, be prepared to spend money up front for the tools you’ll need for marketing: positioning and strategy, brochures, demonstration video, websites, etc. Everything adds up – in a hurry.

4. CAN I WORK WELL ALONE?

Speaking can be an isolating career. Very few speakers have large offices and even fewer have water coolers. Creating a network of peers is one of the best reasons to join the National Speakers Association (NSA) (www.nsaspeaker.org) so you won’t feel “all alone out there.”

5. HOW WILL HEAVY TRAVEL AFFECT MY PERSONAL LIFE?

When your speaking business takes off, it’s easy to let travel take over your schedule and, therefore, your personal life. Unless your spouse wants to be a single parent, make sure your speaking schedule doesn’t interfere with your marriage, your parenting responsibilities, and your social life.

6. WHAT OTHER KINDS OF SKILLS DO I NEED TO HAVE?

The days of running a “pure” speaking business are also gone. You will need multiple sources of income such as coaching, consulting, book sales, etc., to make a profit. Speaking fees alone won’t cut it, nor will speakers who can’t write, coach, or consult.

7. HOW MUCH AM I WILLING TO DO PRO BONO?

Many speakers do lots of things to promote their speaking business, including free speeches, free articles, free...anything. Part of your marketing mix involves doing pro bono work to get your program visible and talked about. Unless you are a well-known celebrity, be prepared to give before you get.

8. CAN MY NETWORK GET ME SPEAKING OPPORTUNITIES?

Selecting speakers is a risky decision so many buyers play it safe by sticking with pros they already know. If your colleagues have seen you speak and like what you do, ask if they will refer you to buyers when appropriate. These referrals might lead to breaks that can build your business fast.

9. AM I WILLING TO INVEST IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

Remember that old saying “Lawyers who represent themselves have fools for clients?” The same concept applies to speakers who consult and coach themselves. The best speakers know they must continually work on their style, their stories and their business strategy. And they don’t even try to do it alone. Be ready to pay for expert help – acting classes, performance coaching, business strategizing – on an ongoing basis. Remember, you get what you pay for.

10. THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION OF ALL: AM I REALLY THAT GOOD?

Buyers who hire professional speakers have very high expectations. There’s no such thing as having an “off day.” They expect professional speakers to have an effortless presence, plus funny stories and provocative messages that don’t come from best-selling books. If you don’t cut it, the market will let you know in a hurry. (But not before you’ve spent all that money on videos, websites, etc.)

BOTTOM LINE:

The professional speaking business is volatile, risky and oh so much fun. So fasten your seat belt and get ready for a ride.

ABOUT VICKIE SULLIVAN

President Sullivan Speaker Services Inc.

Vickie Sullivan is known worldwide as being the foremost expert on generating revenue for high-end experts. Since 1987 she has worked with thousands of experts in a wide variety of industries to launch their big-fee speaking, professional service and book/product empires in highly lucrative markets. How does she do it? Through customized solutions created with market analysis and research. Vickie's clients report that her market assessments and intelligence gives them a two-year heads-up on the marketplace.

She has been quoted in national publications such as The New York Times, Investor's Business Daily, and Fortune.com...Her articles have been published in Professional Speaker Magazine, Lawyers Weekly, Presentations Magazine and others.

Vickie helps experts find outlets where their messages will sell for the highest fees and get speaking engagements, book deals and professional services assignments that extend their brand and increase revenue and market share in a wide variety of markets and industries.

Vickie speaks internationally on marketing trends and strategies and is the author of *Springboard Marketing™*, *Talking to Strangers™*, *Speak to Sell™*, *Speaking in the Strike Zone™*, and *Your Position of Power™*. Her online newsletter The Sullivan Report and bi-weekly market intelligence updates Tips and Trends are considered a top resource for experts and are distributed throughout the U.S. and in 12 countries.

Vickie graduated from the University of Oklahoma with a BA in Journalism/PR and a minor in Marketing. She and husband Larry Miller reside in Tempe, Arizona, along with two "children" (the kind that meow) Tigger and Jaz.



OTHER RESOURCES

VICKIE SULLIVAN'S SPEAKER SUCCESS KIT: AN EXCLUSIVE THREE CD SET

Your ultimate, need-to-know source to start playing the speaker's game. In these three CDs – jam-packed with winning content and offered together for the first time – you'll get the pre-eminent scoop from Vickie on the common mistakes and pricey pitfalls you can avoid in starting your speaking career. The CDs include *Get Those Bookings: Marketing Strategies for Professional Speakers*, *Speaking in the Strike Zone: How to Get in Front of a Buying Audience*, and *Speak to Sell: Using Public Speaking as a Marketing Tool*.

YOUR POSITION OF POWER: PACKAGING YOUR EXPERTISE FOR HIGH-FEE MARKETS

Ready to make yourself P.O.P. in the marketplace? You can with Vickie's four CD set that shows you how to flex your own unique Position of Power. Here, she provides a strategic, step-by-step approach to positioning – and communicating – your expertise in ways that will make you a must-have speaker...and draw in your most profitable customers.

TALKING TO STRANGERS: EFFECTIVE SALES CONVERSATIONS FOR EXPERTS WHO SPEAK

In this amazingly comprehensive 7-CD set Vickie downloads the info to make every conversation count so you can turbo-charge your success...right now. She breaks down – CD by CD – how to make every phone call more effective, how to communicate how valuable you are, how to respond to budget-blues excuses, and how to implement top-tier closing strategies. Vickie's masterful approach will have you summoning your innate courage to speak to strangers...and command the highest fees possible.

SPRINGBOARD MARKETING

Looking to create currency with a business that prominently plays up your intellectual capital? In this CD set, Vickie enthusiastically unspools a winning consultant program previously revealed only in pricey one-on-one sessions. It plots out the plan to build an infrastructure – driven by speaking – that sets your expertise apart, fine-tunes message development and turns a single speech into a powerful, revenue-generating machine.

GET THOSE BOOKINGS: MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR PROFESSIONAL SPEAKERS

In this CD, you'll find out what to know before you market yourself, how associations and corporations select speakers they pay for, and how you can influence the committees that decide which speakers get hired.

SPEAKING IN THE STRIKE ZONE: HOW TO GET IN FRONT OF A BUYING AUDIENCE

This fast-paced CD features Vickie giving the very latest on market expectations and how you can tailor your format for the highest return.

SPEAK TO SELL: USING PUBLIC SPEAKING AS A MARKETING TOOL

Specifically targeted to those who want to give presentations to sell products, procure clients or promote their ideas, this CD offers a tested, systematic approach to create captivating topics that sell.

All of these products are available for purchase through the Sullivan Speaker Services online store. Visit <http://www.sullivanspeaker.com/products.htm> today!