

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:

# WHEN APPLAUSE JUST ISN'T ENOUGH: HOW TO GET MORE CLIENTS FROM GIVING SPEECHES



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# WHEN APPLAUSE JUST ISN'T ENOUGH: HOW TO GET MORE CLIENTS FROM GIVING SPEECHES

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

By now, it's old news. Experts know that speaking at conferences and conventions builds a platform of credibility, visibility and "brandability." The assumption: that giving a great speech to the right audience will automatically ensure a steady stream of clients. The reality: getting applause and getting clients are very different things. Getting applause doesn't mean that you'll get clients. There's a difference between an attendee thinking "Oh, what a nice speech" and "We have to GOT to bring them into our organization!"

The above distinction begs a few key questions: Why do so many great speeches don't generate more clients? Is speaking just for "brand-building? Is it impossible to get clients without "pitching from the podium"?

Many experts have given up on speaking as a lead-generating tool. They either resign themselves to speak only to develop credibility or use the "speaking can't generate clients" argument to demand speaking fees (which they can't get for the reasons listed below).

The issue isn't about realistic expectations – speaking will give you whatever you want. It's very possible (and lucrative) to get clients without pitching. The problem is focus. We pay so much attention to giving a great speech that we don't see the speech for what it really is: a focal point for other outcomes. Below are three of the most common ways experts shoot themselves in the foot every time they open their mouths.

## MISTAKE #1: OVERSTATED CONTENT

Why is speaking such an effective lead-generating

tool? Because it allows experts the **opportunity to differentiate their work** from their colleagues and competitors. Even better: This differentiation occurs in **a high trust environment**. The audience assumes the expert is a credible source of information even before a word is ever spoken. That assumption makes audiences more receptive to the idea that this credible person can help them individually. (Unlike the typical sales situation, where credibility is not assumed and the "audience" can be more skeptical.)

So what do many experts do? They blow this great opportunity by providing content that is a mile wide and an inch deep. They provide a large laundry list of ideas that don't question current thinking, that don't give the audience a fresh perspective...complete with quotes from other authors of best-selling books. Result: the audience is not attracted to "think" with you. There is no reason to remember you after the applause dies down. It's off to the next concurrent session...or lunch.



### **Narrow your focus, broaden your appeal.**

Experts who try to be everything to everybody will attract no one. Instead of cramming three days of content into one hour, create immediate attraction with an overall "manifesto" that sets up a specific point of view. Then follow up with specific insights that can be applied in many situations. Example: instead of listing 25 solutions on stress management, create a "grace under pressure" manifesto with specific insights on reframing situations. (Want to create a manifesto? Check out Your Position of Power for the complete system.)

## MISTAKE #2: LACKLUSTER PERFORMANCE

Especially in the conference and convention market, good speaking skills are expected. Even “free” speakers are expected to be entertaining (or at least not boring)! What separates experts now: the signature style™, a way of communicating that sets you apart from other speakers. Again, potential clients are looking for the “fit.” Speaking allows attendees to not only check out your point of view, it also helps potential clients make decisions about the experience of working with you. Your style conveys what kind of experience they could have.

How you illustrate your points is the best venue to show your style. Do you use stories? Metaphors? Examples? Does your humor let the audience know that you take your work, but not yourself, seriously? A pro uses all of the tools in the toolbox. Tell-tale signs of an amateur communicator: your stories ramble and are “slow.” Your explanations go from explaining to “preaching and teaching.” Your choice of stories focuses on you, crossing the line between confidence and arrogance. And humor is no where to be found.



**Stories are strategic.** Avoid the “how great I am” angle; make the client or other party the “star.” Better yet, make yourself the butt of the joke. Cut the details down to only what’s relevant; this will make room for your natural humor to shine through. Use a metaphor instead of a story if you have to explain the point after making it. Metaphors create instant word pictures and don’t take up as much time as stories. (Want to create your Signature Style™? Check out Springboard Marketing.)

### MISTAKE #3: NOT ENOUGH LEVERAGE

Speaking is like any other tool — its effectiveness depends on how you use it. Many experts use speaking in a vacuum, thinking that every speech will create clients. The reality: not all audiences are created equal. Program planners are depending more and more on experts who are willing to waive any speaking fees. Therefore, the case for “good exposure” is being bandied about in every

conversation. It is up to the expert to decide when to accept and when to decline a speaking opportunity. (Tangent alert: Different rules apply to getting paid vs non-paid speaking engagements. Want a quick reality check? Go to addendum #1 at the end of this report. Consider it a bonus gift. 😊)

Another reality check: a qualified audience doesn’t guarantee sales. Experts who have a systematic approach to interact with that audience before and after the speech have a better chance of getting clients. Why? Because attendees are not focused on “shopping” for additional help during the speech. They are focused on getting take-away value. Give the insights and show your credibility during the speech, and the attendee will give you permission to continue the conversation. Or better yet, permission to take a “baby step,” a low risk service or product that will show direct application of your work to the client’s problem.



**Don’t assume that every speaking opportunity is a good one.** Make sure that the demographics are in your favor and that you have access to the group before and after the speech. (Want a leveragability index? Check out Springboard Marketing for this and Vickie’s complete leverage system.) Springboard beyond this one-time exposure by offering something **customized to the audience** in exchange for business cards/email addresses. For the more serious “but not yet ready” folks: create a low-risk “trial” that will allow the prospect to see a direct application of your work. Make sure you don’t pitch your services during this session! Example: a low fee, one-time only coaching or consulting session.

### A CLIENT-GENERATING TOOLBOX

Given the above obstacles, is there light at the end of the tunnel? Good news: there are many tools at our disposal that will attract and convert clients from every speech. Below are three outcomes you need to attract clients and the tools you have to overcome the odds.

The first outcome is to generate initial interest. You

want to attract by curiosity. Your intelligent distinctions and rhetorical questions alert the audience to the value of thinking with you. The tools at your disposal: an introduction that lists **specific** outcomes from your work; an opening story or statement that reflects your manifesto; and the nuggets of wisdom in the body of your speech.

The second outcome is to answer the internal questions. There are two questions every audience member has about the speaker. First, the audience wants to know if you work with people like them. Examples and stories about your clients will show attendees that you can work with them, too. Second, participants want to know if you are as good as you appear. Focused content with great distinctions will prove your competence.

The third outcome is the direct application of your expertise. This outcome is the “closer” to many sales. Potential clients must know that your expertise will provide specific solutions to fit their specific need. They may like your stories; they may think you are smart; but without knowing how to use your expertise, many attendees will put off buying from you. Best tools to avoid this pitfall: any interactive exercise or rhetorical questions. And of course, your baby steps provide individual attention to those who are serious.

Public speaking is a very powerful tool. Too many experts sell it short. They blame the “audience” for not buying, or blame the tool itself. The bottom line: the podium is a platform. What happens on that platform drives the outcomes. What happens before and after appearing on that platform drives the outcomes.

## **BOTTOM LINE:**

The outcome is up to the expert, not the audience.

## ADDENDUM #1

### Clearing up confusion about getting speaking engagements

Why is getting speaking engagements so confusing? Because there are different rules for selecting speakers who want to get paid and for experts who want to get business. Knowing your primary benefit for speaking will dictate which procedure to follow.

#### **SPEAKER SELECTION FOR PAID PROFESSIONAL SPEAKERS**

- In the conference and convention markets, these slots consist of keynote, general session and wind down speakers.
- Messages in these slots are more strategic. Focus on “factors” for strategic thinking rather than a step-by-step process for execution.
- There are much higher expectations for presentation skills and humor.
- Speakers Bureaus play a significant role in selecting speakers over \$5,000.
- Must have professionally produced material and demonstration video for fees over \$2,000.
- According to a recent study by National Speakers Association and American Society of Association Executives, 93% of speaker selections are from previews and personal recommendations.

#### **SPEAKER SELECTION FOR EXPERT PUBLIC SPEAKERS**

- In conferences and conventions, concurrent sessions are the best place for these speakers.
- Messages in these slots are more “how to” and help the attendees execute on recommendations.
- Experiential exercises and facilitated discussions are a given.
- After qualifying the association, call their office to request to be included in an RFP list. Many of those forms are also online at the association’s website.

Make sure you customize your programs for that specific audience — do a little research first.

## **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 bi-weekly market intelligence updates *Tips, Trends & Tirades®* are considered a top resource for experts and are distributed throughout the U.S. and in 17 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 their four-legged "child" (the kind that meows) Tigger.

## OTHER RESOURCES

### **VICKIE SULLIVANS 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 down-loads 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!