

A SPEAKER-TURNED-  
CONFERENCE PRODUCER  
KNOWS WHAT IT TAKES TO  
GET (AND STAY) BOOKED.



# I WOULDN'T HIRE ME!

BY DAVID  
NEWMAN

I've been a full-time professional speaker, trainer and consultant since 1992. I accepted a one-year interim position in March 2007 as a conference producer at Business 21 Publishing in Springfield, Pa. I ran the \$2 million audio conference and live conference division, booking over 160 events a year. This experience allowed me to view the speaking business—and a whole lot of professional speakers—from the customer's perspective. Knowing what I know now, *I wouldn't hire me.*

I'm going to share with you everything I did wrong, so you can get it right—and this will help you get hired more easily, more often, and at your full fee. These strategies have worked wonders for me since I returned to full-time professional speaking and consulting in February 2008.

**Strategy 1 Decide who you are.** Are you a negotiations speaker, a customer service speaker, a sales speaker? Focus your business on mastering one and only one topic. Specialize and stick with it. Don't be afraid of labels. Labels are good! Meeting planners buy labels. Label yourself early on, and focus on getting expertise that is deep rather than broad in one area. Wannabes know 10 topics, one foot deep. Experts know one topic, 10 feet deep – and beyond!

**Strategy 2 Write a book (or several books).** I made the mistake of writing eight books on eight different topics. If you're going to write eight books, you should write eight books on one topic. Decision makers like to see at least one professionally published book. Self-publishing is great, but having one or more "real" books helps your buyers sleep at night after they hire you.

**Strategy 3 Write articles with substance.** Meeting planners need to see a speaker's thinking. Top professional speakers write articles conversationally. Write the way you speak—it connects more deeply with your readers. Make your articles actionable. Show your buyers good, meaty articles with lots

of specifics and do-it-now tactics. Don't be stingy in sharing the ideas that you'll share with their audiences if they hire you. In your articles, don't just tell people what to think about your topic; show them what to do and how to do it.

Here's a one-word shortcut to great articles: repurpose. Keynotes become articles; articles become special reports; and special reports can become audio programs. Transcribe your audio programs so they become the rough draft for your book. Once you've got a solid platform of ideas, the different ways to package and profit from them are limited only by your imagination.

## Strategy 4

**Create a niche on several levels:**

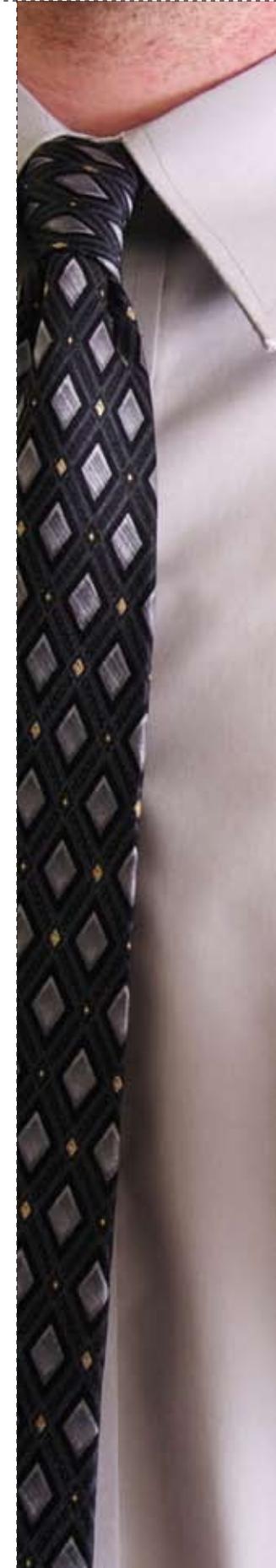
- *By topic* (for example, leadership)
- *By audience* (for example, HR people, finance people, IT people)
- *By industry* (for example, banking, HVAC, healthcare)
- *By level* (senior execs, first-time supervisors, high school students)
- *By method* (three-day boot camp, 12-week program)
- *By media* (perhaps you're known for *the book, the video, the ezine, or the blog* in your particular arena of expertise).

**Strategy 5 Learn to say "no" when it's not your topic, your area of expertise, or when you know in your heart someone else does it better than you.** The more you say "no" to meeting planners, the more you're on their radar for what you do best. It's always a credibility boost to a planner when a speaker responds to an invitation with the words, "You know, that's really not my topic. I'm probably not the best guy or gal to do that program for you." When someone asks you as a professional speaker "What else do you speak on?" it's acceptable to respond, "Nothing – this is what I know best and this is all I do." You win. The planner wins. Your audience wins.

## BUILD A FOUR-LEVEL NICHE

**When you have a four-level niche people can easily repeat exactly what you do and refer that value proposition to others. The result: more bookings!**

- GOOD:** *Sales speaker*  
(good start, good label!)
- BETTER:** *Sales prospecting speaker*
- BEST:** *Sales prospecting speaker using the phone*
- WOW!** *Sales prospecting speaker using the phone in the financial services industry*





**Strategy 6** **Specific topics beat general topics.** “Sales Success Secrets” isn’t nearly as good as “Overcoming the Stall: How to Shift Your Prospect Out of Neutral.” “How to Become a More Effective CFO” isn’t as good as “Seven CFO Negotiating Strategies for Vendor Contracts.” **Tip:** Use the word “for” to target a specific audience, such as “Presentation Skills for HR,” “Upselling for Customer Service Reps” and “Internet Marketing for Stay-at-Home Moms.” This does two things for you: It makes your title more specific and it identifies your target audience. What’s more, the more specific your topic, the less you can be compared with the sea of generalist jack-of-all-trades speakers who are perceived—accurately—as a commodity.

**Strategy 7** **Offer depth with variety.** If you’re a project management expert, meeting planners love to see “Project Management for CFOs,” “Project Management for Frontline Supervisors,” “Project Management for Residential Builders,” “Project Management Basics,” “Advanced Project Management,” “Project Management Tricks to Save Time and Money,” and so on. Once meeting planners find someone who delivers great content and is easy to work with, they want to be able to plug that speaker into all their different audiences at different levels, in different industries, and for different durations. You might be invited to present a one-hour Webinar, or a 90-minute general session, or a half-day post-conference workshop. Material that fits a variety of formats and audiences makes you more flexible.

**Strategy 8** **Know the competition, love the competition, refer the competition.** Become an expert on the experts. Your buyers might have questions for you such as, “Who do you know that does a top-notch program on cold calling?” or “Do you know a great safety trainer who can tackle the latest twists in OSHA compliance?” Buyers love to make one phone call to you and get leads on three or four other great speakers on three or four other topics—one of them could be you, and it will be if you can point them to other excellent people. As an added bonus, the best way for you to get

incoming referrals is to start by actively referring others. They will almost always return the favor—and sometimes in very surprising, generous and profitable ways. How do you get started? Visit [www.nsaspeaker.org](http://www.nsaspeaker.org) and use the “Find a Speaker” feature. Better yet, “Google” other experts and speakers in topic areas related to your own.

**Strategy 9 Aim for high visibility.** Most decision makers and smart meeting planners find HR speakers from the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM), safety speakers from the American Society of Safety Engineers, finance speakers from the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. Early on, make it a top priority to target “the” association in your field and work like crazy to get on its roster. Go up the logical progression of local chapters, then state-level chapters and, finally, the big national or international conventions. The sooner you do this, the sooner you’ll be on everyone’s radar as a credible speaker and expert. The secret is that some buyers use the association’s annual conference program as their “catalog” of speakers, consultants and experts when a need arises for hiring outside expertise. As a speaker, presenting at the national conference of your target market will increase your visibility.

**Strategy 10 Packaging counts.** Your package starts with your brand. Don’t be clever—be smart. Identify your expertise to meeting planners quickly and clearly. This starts with your company name and brand. Don’t make me guess. Don’t use “Your Name & Associates,” or “Your Initials Consulting.” Don’t be cute or clever. Overly clever names are a solution in search of a problem. Here are some good brands for speakers and experts because they clearly communicate your expertise: LegalWatch, Safety Priority, Your Part-Time Controller, DoItMarketing.com.

**Bonus Strategy Be coachable.** Buyers live with their audiences. They know what their audiences like, respond to, and value. Work with your buyer to customize, tailor and tweak. Even a small miscalculation on your part makes you look out of touch with the audience’s reality. Let buyers and meeting planners help you make the connection between your expertise and their audience’s needs. It will help you generate more leads, stronger audience feedback and land more spin-off business. If the event producer



or meeting planner offers you specific advice, listen because it will only make you better. Don’t let arrogance or complacency sabotage your success.

### Make it Stick

Put yourself in the buyer’s shoes. Would you hire you? Think like a corporate executive or conference programs chair, and then do everything you can to become the speaker you would be thrilled to hire! Get known, become an expert, get published, get on the Internet, get focused, get branded, get specific, get deep and, most important, get going on this stuff now.



David Newman is a small-business marketing speaker ([www.DavidNewman.com](http://www.DavidNewman.com)). Visit David’s Small-Business Marketing Center for dozens of zero-cost business growth resources, articles, ebooks, and podcasts at [www.Small-Business-Marketing-Center.com](http://www.Small-Business-Marketing-Center.com).