

THE EIGHT PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES OF PROFESSIONAL SPEAKING

Professional Awareness

This is the "explanation" Competency. It provides an overview of the speaking industry. Mastering this Competency provides an in-depth understanding of the National Speakers Association, related professional associations and sources of information, and support for maintaining a high level of mastery in the dynamic world of a professional speaker.

National Speakers Association

To take advantage of the greatest benefits of NSA membership, members need to educate themselves about the organization and how it can enhance their careers.

Other Associations in the Meetings and Conventions Industry

NSA is only one of several professional associations sharing interest and concerns with professional speakers.

Agents and Bureaus

Professional speakers, and clients wishing to hire them, often work through agents and bureaus. As intermediaries, agents and bureaus perform important functions for speakers and clients.

The Speakers' World

Domestic and international affairs dynamically influence speakers' opportunities and topics. Professional speakers must keep their work with clients current.

State-of-the-Art in Professional Speaking

The state-of-the-art in professional speaking is constantly evolving. Speakers must know the latest developments, trends and future projections for their profession and industry.

Standards of Behaviour

Professional speakers must work within acceptable standards of behavior. The standards involve ethics, legislation, values and liabilities.

Professional Relationships

This is the "how to get along professionally" Competency. It relates to the knowledge and skills needed to communicate with individuals and groups with whom speakers often interact. This Competency helps speakers and their staffs deal professionally with several types of industry associates-other speakers, those who hire speakers and those who support speakers with products and services.

Networking with Other Speakers

Having a relationship with other professional speakers can result in:

- Learning the speaking profession from multiple points of view;
- Learning how to network and how to form different working relationships with other speakers that could include partnerships, joint ventures, project collaboration, joint authorships, licensing agreements, lead sharing, joint marketing and advertising, subcontracting presentations, faculty groups and master-mind groups;
- Learning the professional, ethical and legal basis for interacting with other professional speakers; and
- Learning more about their areas of interest by meeting speakers who speak on the same subjects or serve the same industries.

Program Planners

There are various types of program planners with different needs.

Agents and Bureaus

Want to get more speaking engagements? Is using a speakers' agent or bureau the "right" approach?

Speaking Internationally

The expanding global community is increasing the opportunities for speakers to travel and speak internationally. This part of a speaker's business can be both successful and enjoyable.

Professionals Serving Speakers

Speakers depend on several related professionals and industries to master their profession. Vendors and other service providers support professional speakers by helping them improve their presentations/performances, marketing, promotion and product development/sales.

The Media

Establishing successful contacts with the media can make the difference in reaching regional, national and international prominence for speakers.

Topic Development

This is the "creation" Competency. It entails knowing the best topics for you, as well as researching and developing the content of your presentations/performances and the skills needed to develop them. This knowledge area also includes techniques for staying on the cutting-edge of topic selection and development skills.

Topic Selection

Selecting the right topic is critical for all speakers. Careers can begin or end with topic selection.

Topic Expertise

The growing global supply of professional speakers makes it imperative that speakers master their topics.

Topic Tailoring

Each audience is different, and those speakers who choose to tailor their presentation/performance topics to accommodate its uniqueness are the true professionals.

Customizing Topics and Presentation/Performance Content

Acquiring knowledge and developing a topic is one challenge; developing a presentation/performance, with all of its content, is another. Knowledge and mastery of body and voice, choreography and theatrics, helps put the speaker's "act" together. Here, customizing is putting the "show" together.

"Cutting-Edge" of Topic Development

To be competitive in today's environment, professional speakers must stay on the cutting-edge of topic selection and development and presentation/performance design, content, technique and technology. Research cannot be an occasional activity; it must be a continuous practice.

Platform Mechanics

This is the "setup/staging" Competency. It involves the elements that can make or break a presentation/performance. It deals with the room, stage, props, equipment and set-up people. Knowing and mastering set-up/stage skills helps speakers create the setting for a successful presentation/performance.

Room Setup

Professional speakers can walk into a room where they are to present/perform and know instantly whether they are looking at a masterful arrangement, a disaster waiting to happen or something in between.

Stage Setup

Proper staging is critical to connecting with audiences and participants.

Equipment Setup

Most professional speakers use some type of audio or visual support equipment in their presentations/performances. Speakers must know about the types of equipment available, and be able to correctly select and use them.

Introductions

Speakers' introductions are an important part of "setting the stage" for their presentations/performances.

Presenting and Performing

This is the "communication" Competency. It encompasses the theatrical and stage talents of speakers. It embodies the knowledge and skills of presenting/performing to communicate with the audience. Personal talents, working with audiences and presenting/performing in one or more roles are the key components of this Competency.

Mechanics and Styles

The mechanics of a presentation/ performance go beyond the room, stage and equipment. By mastering the craft of presenting/performing, speakers can find and develop their own unique communication styles through stage presence and showmanship.

Working with Audiences

Audiences want to be part of what speakers create for them. They will open themselves up and lay their hearts, minds and bodies at the speaker's footlights.

Special Audiences

For speakers to master their profession, they must recognize that audiences are not identical. Audiences are likely to have different values, attitudes and interests.

Speakers' Role

Speakers are often asked to appear before audiences in various roles. All in one day they may be asked to make a keynote speech, conduct a workshop and serve as a panelist. Each requires different skills.

Staying Abreast

Expanding knowledge and new technologies make it challenging to stay on the right side of the professional "obsolescent curve."

Authorship and Product Development

This is the "extension" Competency. Speakers can extend themselves beyond the stage/platform through authorship and product development. Mastering the knowledge and skills of this Competency helps speakers successfully convert the messages of their speaking topics into marketable products.

Making the "Rollout" Decision

Turning the messages of speakers' topics into successful products is not a simple challenge. Before speakers commit to turning speaking topics into products, they should do a "rollout" analysis.

Writing Manuscripts and Scripts

Writing an article, book, script for an audio- or videotape or an issue of a newsletter can be challenging. In addition to the techniques for writing them, there are other considerations.

Writing Techniques

There are bad ways, good ways and better ways to write different documents.

Publishing Industry Professionals

Speakers do not have to become professional authors without help.

Negotiating Royalties and Fees

Speakers may need assistance negotiating the financial arrangements with literary professionals.

Copyrights and Registrations

Speakers should protect what is legally theirs. Written materials and trademarks may have significant market value for speakers.

Sales and Marketing

This is the "developing business" Competency. It involves sales and marketing knowledge, skills and techniques to generate speaking engagements and expand the impact of speakers' messages through product sales. If mastery involves wisdom, and wisdom involves the capacity to make finer and finer distinctions to discover uniqueness, that's what mastering sales and marketing strategies is about. Mastering this Competency results in comprehensive sales and marketing strategies for speaking engagements and products.

Techniques for Sales and Marketing Contacts

An important part of a sales and marketing strategy is the process used to initiate and maintain contact with clients. Contacts may be for qualifying/ prospecting, selling, arranging a presentation/performance and follow-up or service. Mastering techniques of sales and marketing contacts will include traditional approaches (telephone, mail, person-to-person) and approaches evolving with new communication technologies.

Sales Strategies

A sales strategy depends on what is being sold, to whom and how the sale is accomplished. Developing sales strategies for speakers requires making distinctions between several strategic components to build on the uniqueness of a sales opportunity. Mastering this Competency begins with a speaker's knowledge of five strategic components of a sales strategy, their numerous elements, and the skills needed to work with them.

Marketing Strategies

A marketing strategy depends on what is to be marketed, to whom it is marketed and the marketing techniques employed. Developing marketing strategies for speakers requires making distinctions among several strategic components to build on the uniqueness of a marketing opportunity. Mastering this Competency begins with a speaker's knowledge of five strategic components of a marketing strategy, their numerous elements, and the skills needed to work with them.

Designing Brochures and Promotional Materials

The design of promotional materials of all types is the first step to successful direct-mail marketing and advertising.

Market Penetration

Many speakers fall into the trap of seeking their "riches" in far-flung places when "diamonds-a-plenty" are within reach. They are missing the opportunities of market penetration, developing what they have already "staked out."

Developing a Celebrity Image

Being a national or international celebrity elevates the image of the speaker to a plateau above former peers. Personal qualities are important, but proper positioning is essential to acquiring national or international acclaim.

Selling and Marketing Product

Product sales have become an important part of many speakers' businesses. For some speakers, products sales are restricted to seminar manuals and other program support materials. Other speakers have developed extensive product lines with books, audio- and videotapes and other ancillary items that result in major sources of income.

Client and Customer Service

Customer service, customer loyalty and partnering with customers are frequently heard terms in all industries. What do these mean in the speaking industry for speakers' relationships with clients who hire them to present/perform and customers who purchase their products?

Managing the Business

This is the "administrative" Competency. The business of professional speakers requires continuous attention to many details. Mastering this Competency will help speakers manage the business side of their speaking activities professionally.

Organizing the Speaker's Business

Speakers find themselves involved in more than developing topics, programs and products. There's staff to hire and train, files to create and maintain, equipment to purchase and operate, bills to pay, invoices to prepare and finances to track.

Selecting and Working with Staff

A qualified and committed staff is essential if a speaker chooses to have one and delegate non-speaking activities. A good staff functions best with a speaker who also is qualified-has good employee selection, motivation and leadership skills.

Scheduling Programs and Record Maintenance

Tracking scheduled programs without error requires a good scheduling system and support records.

Contracting and Arranging for Services

There is no one best contract for all speakers and their clients, and there is no one best way to negotiate fees.

Managing Money

Money management can make or break a speaker's business.

Office Equipment and Technology

New equipment and advancing technology are influencing the operations and document processing in speakers' offices. Staying on the cutting-edge is increasingly difficult.

Dealing with Suppliers

Cost control is important to the financial success of a speaking business. For some, purchases of product, equipment, supplies and services can be high.

Inventory Management

Speakers can invest heavily in product inventory. Those investments should be made wisely.

Business Travel

Professional speakers are often many miles and many nights away from office and home. Being away from normal support information, facilities, equipment and people makes their personal resourcefulness vital to their accomplishments. That resourcefulness must affect three phases of business travel-before, during and after.