

Finding, Interviewing, Selecting, and Coordinating with a Professional Speaker for your Event

By Milo Shapiro, CEO of IMPROVentures.com

Part 3 of 3: Coordinating with your Professional Speakers

In our last two issues, we looked at how one might (a) find good speakers for an event on the topic of your interest (speakers bureaus, www.NSAspeaker.org, internet searches) and then (b) interview for selection of the one you feel most comfortable with. Now we're ready to master coordinating the event with your speaker of choice.

c) COORDINATING WITH A SPEAKER



Once you've found the speaker you want, there are a lot of questions left to ask to make sure there are no unpleasant surprises.

Some speakers are great about this and others are not. I recommend that you keep your own check list, using the ideas below as a guide, so you can check off agreements as the speaker asks you questions about the event.

It's wise to say something like, "Go ahead and ask me everything you want to know about the event. I'll get back to you with any answers I don't have right now. When you're done, I may have a few more questions for you." This is wise in two ways. First, it allows him to take his notes in the order he is used to, but you still get to see if any points were left undiscussed by the end of your exchange. Second, you get to hear if he asks you any questions you'd like to add to your checklist for the future (and if you do, write me at improv@IMPROVentures.com so I can add them to mine!)

The following is my checklist and I feel pretty confident that, by the time all of these are answered, I'll know what I'm walking into – ready to do a great job focusing on your audience and not an unexpected dilemma. I've flipped the questions around to be the statement of facts rather than questions. After all, at this point in the planning, you have or will have to get the answers and success depends upon the speaker having these answers (even if he didn't ask!)

- The (company / organization) is called _____ and their website is _____ so you can learn more about them before the event.
- The date of the meeting is _____. The city of the meeting is _____ which is ____ number of hours ahead/behind you [Yes, the speaker may know this, but don't risk it – especially when dealing with Arizona!]
- The meeting starts at _____ (am / pm). Your speech will start at _____ (am / pm). The expected length of the program is _____ minutes. Although exact timing is wonderful, know that (it's fine if you go over a bit / it's better to finish a bit early than to run over at all).
- The fee we've agreed upon is _____. Transportation, lodging, travel expenses, and copying fees will (also / not) be paid by the client.
- Regarding a meal at this event, (you are invited / you are not invited / there is no meal involved). (Note: it's a shame when I show up fed because I don't want to impose and then they say, "Oh, of *course* you're staying for dinner!" but I never expect it unless asked).
- Seating arrangements will be (tables / rows / U-shape). There (will / will-not) be an aisle up the middle.

- The approximate audience size will be _____ people. The ratio of men to women will probably be something like ____ to _____. [Yes, this does sometimes affect how we present things]
- There (will / won't) be a lectern for the speakers notes and to stand behind. [Note: this may or may not be important to the speaker. Also note: Lectern is the right name, not podium. A podium is something you stand upon]
- The speaker will be (at floor level / on a raised platform / higher up on a stage area) .
- Regarding amplification, the speaker will be provided (no amplification / a mike built into a lectern / a wired mike / a wireless mike / a lavalier that he can clip on for maximum freedom).
- The speaker (needs / doesn't need) for the client to provide (a laptop / screen / projector) for a Powerpoint presentation. The laptop will be advanced by (a remote the client will provide / the speaker manually pressing a key on the laptop, which will have to be on the stage)
- Regarding handouts, they will be (copied by the client / copied by the speaker / unnecessary).
- When the speaker arrives, he should ask to meet _____ from the group.
- In terms of set-up, the speaker (will / won't) have access to the room before going on because the general session (will / won't) have already started. [This can be critical in terms of set-up! It can be a nightmare to set up equipment or pass out handouts while the previous speaker is still on. Knowing this may motivate the speaker to come earlier or have certain aspects set up by whomever from the group will prepare the room for the day]
- The speaker's introduction will be given by _____ and he will be made aware of the proper pronunciation of the speaker's name (it's always such a thrill to be introduced as Mee-lo Shay-pyro.)
- It would be (okay / unacceptable) for the speaker to camcorder the event .
- It would be (okay / unacceptable) for the speaker to bring up to _____ number of guests to hear the speech. [While this may seem odd, you might really win over a speaker's loyalty if he knew he could have three or four colleagues, staff members, or potential clients see him in action.
- For more information about the event , you may contact _____ and _____ from the group. Here are their phone numbers, email addresses, and job titles: _____

OR Please refer all questions to me and I will see that you get your answers (note: when possible, it's very nice for the speaker to be able to hear facts and bounce ideas *directly* off the person who cares most about the meeting, but we know it's not always possible)

While there will always be some needs that are specific to a given speaker, this checklist should give you a solid start on knowing that the speaker portion of your event is well in hand. Feel free to email me any comments, ideas, and horror stories from the past!

Milo Shapiro is a San Diego based motivational and entertainment speaker who uses improvisation to make his keynotes fun. He can be reached for comment via www.IMPROVentures.com or improv@IMPROVentures.com .