

Speaking as a Marketing Tool to Grow Your Business and Reputation



Speak Up. Speak Freely. Speak Often. Speaking can be an excellent marketing tool to grow your business, brand and reputation. It can help position you as an expert in your field and help you gain valuable new leads and referrals. It can even land you new business. Find out how public speaking can advance your professional reputation and business opportunities by tapping into the experience of executive presentation coach, Kathy McAfee.

Bolster your visibility and value.

Speaking in public and giving presentations can be a worthwhile strategy for increasing your visibility and demonstrating your value and expertise to the marketplace.

You don't have to be a motivational speaker to do this; however, you do need to commit to the work of developing your presentation skills, confidence and thought-leadership.

What works?

Here are a few of the strategies and tactics that have worked for me over the past four years of speaking as a marketing tool to drive my business in coaching, training and consulting.

In this issue:

- Overcoming Reluctance
- Choosing a Hot Topic
- Positioning Yourself as Interesting
- Becoming a High Engagement Speaker
- The Value of Speaking for Free
- Negotiating a Fair Exchange of Value
- Landing and Leveraging Speaking Gigs
- Co-marketing Your Talks
- What to Hand Out and What Not to
- Getting Feedback that You Can Use
- Building Your List
- Whet their appetite then offer more
- To Sell or Not to Sell from the Podium
- Other Tips for Your Success

□ **Overcoming reluctance.** It's time to get over any fear, hesitation or anxiety about public speaking. There are coaching techniques that you can easily access to help you resolve this problem and prevent it from getting in your way. Confidence and verve are a must-have if you want to leverage your knowledge and expertise and put yourself out there as a public speaker.

□ **Choosing the ultimate topic for you and your audience.** To develop a list of potential topics that you could speak about, consider these factors:

Internal factors: What unique experiences have you had? What are you knowledgeable about? What message would you love to share with people? What do you want to learn more about?

External factors: What topics are in high demand? For example: health, wealth, success, technology, beauty, relationships, sex, spirituality, personal growth. Who do you seek to serve (target audience)? What are their wants? Their needs? What *pain* or problem do they have that you could relieve with your insight and inspiration?

Test your topic: Write up a brief description of your talk, give it a compelling title and share it with a few people whose opinions you value. Do you have the right "spin" on it? Will a different title make it fly?

Write an article to discover a potential speaking topic. I have created a number of great talks (such as *Perfect Your Pitch*) which were born out of a writing assignment for someone else's newsletter. Volunteering as an editorial contributor to others in your network can be a surprising way to develop your future speaking topics.

□ **Positioning you as credible and interesting.** Write your speaker bio in a way that projects you as both professional and different in an intriguing way. Showcase the personal aspects of you that make you remarkably human. Make sure you have developed a ready-to-go Speaker's Bio and make a version of it as a Speaker's Intro. Hand this to the event organizer to help introduce you to the group. Make sure they know how to pronounce your name. Do you have a professional photograph? If not, get one. Invest the time and money to get it done professionally.

□ **Becoming a high engagement speaker and presenter** starts with the courage to free yourself from technical crutches, such as PowerPoint, and shed bad habits such as distracting non verbal body language. It is imperative that you not bore your audience when you speak. You must find new and innovative ways to engage your audience and move them to action. (check out www.MotivatedPresenter.com)

□ **The value of speaking for free.** Don't let your pride of not being paid for speaking get in the way of sharing your message with as many people as possible. You can create much greater value on the back end than any front end honorarium that a chamber of commerce or networking group could pay you. Think big picture. Think long term.

□ **Negotiate an exchange of value** even if you are speaking for free. It is important to realize that you are creating value for the group. You're investing your time, energy, gas and material cost. Things you can ask for include promotional links to your web site, listing on brochures, tickets to the event, access to the email list, raise money for your favorite charity or permission to sell product at the event, etc. Ask for things that are "low cost" to them but "high value" to you.

- **Landing and leveraging speaking gigs.** Package yourself up with simple but effective tools, such as a one page pitch sheet that outlines in compelling language the purpose and benefits of your talk.

If you have a web site or a linkedin.com profile, add your public speaking offering and specifics of your talk in the web content. The internet is your 24/7 sales team.

Connect with presidents of chamber of commerce groups, Rotary Clubs, local libraries, professional associations, etc. These groups are always looking for good speakers (especially when they are free).

Then let everyone in your network know you that are available as a speaker. Inform them when and where you'll be speaking and invite them to come and to tell/bring others. Let your friends help you become more successful with your public speaking.

- **Co-marketing your talk.** Help the event organizer market your talk by providing a digital photo, description, bio and link to your web site. Post the event on your web site calendar. If they have postcards or brochures, ask for additional copies that you can send out to your network via snail mail and/or electronic distribution. Include a personal note for that extra marketing touch. Include mention of your upcoming talk on your recorded voice mail greeting.

- **What to hand out and what not to.** There are different schools of thought on this, but I strongly advocate that you do not give handouts before or during the talk, unless it is a worksheet that you plan to use during the talk. You don't want people reading your stuff, you want them watching and listening to you as the speaker.

Why not use your handouts as a follow-up tool to engage them after the event?

Articles, handouts, electronic copies of your presentation or a tip sheets make excellent enticements to capture their email address. You also save trees by not making copies. And you'll hold their attention during the talk.

Consider bringing enough business cards to hand out to everyone. Wow – what a statement that would make!

- **Getting feedback that you can use.** Forget the 1-10 rating scale. This data won't help you. Instead, develop your own one-page feedback form that asks your audience to comment on the following:
 1. What **value** they received from your talk;
 2. What they liked **best**;
 3. What ideas they'll **use first**; and
 4. How you could **improve** this talk.
 5. Include space where they can write down their name and email addresses (opt-in permission),
 6. Include a section for a testimonials quote or referrals.

Don't leave without it. I have found that if they leave the presentation without getting the feedback, you won't get it. Make the feedback section a priority in all of your talks. Feedback is a gift.

- **Build your list with every talk.** If you want to build a following or community of like-minded people, it is vital that you prioritize the task of getting email addresses to add to your database. During your talk, you must deliberate and proactively invite them to stay in touch with you by joining your list. Ask for the opt-in permission. Get their email address.

(Build your list *continued*)

You want to be sure to comply with CAN-SPAM Act guidelines and never “harvest” or “buy” emails. Personal invitation by you and opt-in choice by them is the best way to build trust and a lasting relationship.

By building an organic list of opt-in emails from people who have heard you speak, your future marketing efforts will be more far-reaching and cost effective.

These emails will allow you to continue the conversation and build a relationship with the people you have spoken to. Sometimes it takes a year or more to become “relevant now” and to be called upon for paid work. Make it easy for them to find you. Stay in virtual touch through the wonders of electronic marketing. It all starts with a clean opt-in email database.

- **Whet their appetite.** Give them just enough to satisfy, but leave them “wanting more.” Do not attempt to tell them everything you know about a certain subject. Go narrow and deep and give them just enough to demonstrate your expertise and the topic that you are speaking about. The best feedback is “I wish we had more time.”
- **Then offer more.** Decide ahead of time on the one offer you want to make. This can come in the form of a special product or service that they can buy, an invitation to a future event, or even a freebie you are giving away. Don’t make more than one offer or you risk ending up with no response at all. Don’t be afraid to go for the gusto and offer something of high value. Create a sense of urgency, scarcity and high value that will make it easier for them to say “Yes – *I need that now! Do you take credit cards?*”

- **To sell or not to sell from the podium.** This may be the most difficult internal challenge you’ll have to overcome, but it is an important skill to master. You have a walk the line between being overtly commercial and ignoring your own business needs. The best way I’ve seen this handled is for the speaker to ask the audience for their permission to talk about what they have going on. After building rapport with the audience, you might ask something like “*Would it be alright with you if I shared some of the things that I have going on in my business?*” Once you have their permission, you can make the offer and feel good.

Some meeting organizers are very clear about “No sales pitches” and you must respect that. However, you do have the right the “seed” other offerings throughout your talk. This indirect approach may actually produce more powerful results for you.

If you are unclear about what is acceptable, ask the meeting organizer. Ask if you can have a stack of your books, CD’s and/or collateral at the back of the room for people to purchase or take away if they want to.

Remember, you’re not selling to them; rather, you are inviting them to buy what they need and want. The ultimate decision to purchase is theirs. Your job is to deliver valuable content and to build trust and rapport with the audience.

□ Other tips for your success

Audio record your talk. This is an excellent way to practice and rehearse your talks before you give them. You can download free audio recording software off the Internet (www.Audacity.com) and purchase an inexpensive headset to plug right into your computer. The benefit of audio recording is that you get to talk through the entire presentation, time it, and play it back to hear what worked and what didn't work.

With a few editing skills, you might even be able to save your rehearsal recording and burn it to a CD. I use these CD's to better familiarize myself with my talk and content while driving to the event. I have also given out "Unedited Rehearsal Recordings" as door prizes at many of my talks. The "limited edition – not available for purchase" aspect of them make them more desirable.

Video record your talk. After you've given your talk to live audiences a few times and you are ready, hire an audio/visual professional to come and digitally record your talk. You are advised to secure permission ahead of time from the people hosting the event. In some cases, you might need a video release form signed by the participants if they are going to be filmed.

Use this footage to create a demo DVD sampler of your talk. Add music and slides to add pizzazz and be sure to include your contact details. Post your short video sampler on www.YouTube.com and other video sites as well as your own web site.

Introduce your contacts to other good speakers that you know. Once you've spoken to a group, you can thank the organizer by offering them connections to other good speakers that you know and respect. It's another way that you can add value to the organizer's life and become a connector. Also, spend time networking with other speakers. You can learn from them too.

Other resources to help you become a stronger speaker include the National Speakers Association. Many states and regions have strong local chapters. The speakers and learning content that they provide are very useful in continuing to develop your skill set as a speaker. You will also garner great ideas on how to better market yourself. It's a good place to network and make valuable connections.

Toastmasters is another excellent resource to help you develop your speaking skills and confidence. They meet regularly and provide regular practice opportunities. Check out your local Toastmasters club. You can even arrange to have a group formed at your workplace.

If you are really serious about leveraging speaking or becoming a professional speaker, you might consider investing in an executive presentation coach, Media or PR consultant who can help you put everything together and market you more assertively.

For more tips and resources on leveraging public speaking and developing presentation skills, go to www.MotivatedPresenter.com



About the Writer: [Kathy McAfee](http://www.KathyMcAfee.com) is America's Marketing Motivator and president of Kmc Brand Innovation, LLC, an executive presentation coaching and consulting company specializing in driving growth through innovation and motivation. Her company helps motivated business leaders and ambitious entrepreneurs become the recognized leaders in their field by mastering the art of high engagement presentations and more effective networking. To learn more, call (860) 408-0033 or visit www.MarketingMotivator.net or link in with her at <http://www.linkedin.com/in/kathymcafee>