

What's to be expected from Speaker Bureaus?

- 1) Make a booking, keep in touch to confirm or *most importantly*, cancel that booking. This is the single biggest failure and diary-disrupter in my experience, when dealing with bureaus.
- 2) Stop being paranoid about speakers stealing 'your' clients. If they do so, ***have the balls to fire them*** and then spread the word about why you've done so. Unless of course, you're so mercenary that you don't want to kill the goose that lays the golden egg. In which case, live with their lack of professionalism.
- 3) Have the courtesy to know a little about the client when you call the speaker. I've been given really dreadfully poor information from time to time.
- 4) If you have a cash-flow problem, tell the speaker. Don't pretend the client hasn't paid when we happen to know they have. That's just tacky.
- 5) You simply have to go for totally transparent invoicing. i.e. The final invoice to the client is copied to the speaker – as in the cc shown on the page, so the client knows the speaker has seen it. Why should the speaker *not* be able to discuss fees if you're actually being up-front and consistent with your commission mark-up? Non-disclosure proves you're *not* being straightforward. Think about it. Get rid of this issue, you'll be rid of 80% of all the issues.
- 6) In some cases you really don't know what a speaker can do. You've fallen into a comfort zone of stereotypes, where it's easiest to punt the effortless sell. So you reduce the diversity in your own market.
- 7) Do more to grow embryonic speakers. I know of several who do really superb work, but you're simply too up your own bums to give them exposure. Remember: You don't have a business future without speakers, if that's your core offering.
- 8) Give up on the idea that you're doing speakers a favour or that they owe or 'need' you. They don't. And if your industry sector doesn't clean up its act, there may, at some point, be a concerted push-back from the most influential speakers and you could find yourself without a market.
- 9) Don't sabre-rattle about what will happen to people who 'cross' you. Just exactly who the hell do you think you are? The mafia? The erstwhile KGB? Grow up for God's sake.
- 10) Give the speaker any feedback received from the client, good or bad. I've found that in some instances the good is withheld. Why? Bizarre. Are you afraid the speaker will want to charge more? That they'll develop the same ego that afflicts you?
- 11) Don't give us the rubbish that you 'only pay twice monthly'. Today with EFT, you're stealing the speaker's money when you're earning interest on it because you don't pay as soon as it's in your account, or due to the speaker. Now *that's* unethical behaviour.
- 12) Don't hold off on paying speakers when you're busy funding events that demand up-front payment and your cash-flow goes pear-shaped. That's your business decision. Don't involve the speaker in your money problems.
- 13) Stop being the vindictive shrews that some of you are. Quit the vendettas. Quit the behind-the-hand 'skindering' about the speakers you hate but are too terrified to ditch. Develop some scruples, some emotional intelligence and work at developing a hint of social sophistication.
- 14) If your business model isn't financially viable at 20% commission on the speaker's fee, then renegotiate it, but let's see what added value you deliver for the extra money.
- 15) The way some of you behave, it's as though you resent the very people who are your revenue generators. There's a simple solution - get out of the business you're in.
- 16) Finally, if you don't like the truths being written about some in your industry, clean it up, self-regulate, do something. But do have the spine to confront the writers themselves. Don't just decimate a 'virtual' forest with self-pitying e-mails.