

Speaker selection is one of the most important elements of a successful meeting; however, this can be a daunting task, as speakers are available in every fee range and specialty topic. The Canadian Association of Professional Speakers, comprised of more than 500 professional speakers, has compiled these tips to help you find the right match for your group.

1. Determine the needs of your audience

What would you like your audience to gain or receive as a result of the speaking, training or facilitation event? What issues or concerns do they want to address? What problems do they want solved? Survey a cross section of your group to make sure you understand their needs.

2. Establish your date, time and budget

Start looking for a speaker as soon as the date for your meeting is set, as many speakers book engagements a year or more in advance. There are times when you might choose a speaker first and then set a date based on their availability. If you know who you want, you need to make sure that your schedules match.

Consider how much time you have to fill and where that time falls in your overall program. If your time slot is flexible, a professional speaker can often tell you the right amount of time for the job. If you have several presentations, your professional speaker may be able to help you determine the best flow or sequence of topics/speakers. Remember, speakers have a lot of experience with meetings and conventions. They can deliver extra value.

Factor expenses into the fee you are willing or able to pay for a speaker. (See Item 7 below for a list of possible expenses.)

3. Identify the type of speaker who will best match the needs of your audience

Do you want an inspirational message, a training session, or a facilitator to help you reach consensus? Know what you want and then find the right speaker to meet your needs. Every group has a "personality". So matching the right person to your group is as important and getting the right message.

4. Finding a speaker

Start with the CAPS Talent Search Tool at www.CanadianSpeakers.org. This is a great way to quickly search, select, and send off a request (each speaker gets a separate message from you) to your top picks!

Referrals are a great way to narrow your search—ask colleagues for recommendations. Check speaker references and past client comments to ensure you have the right speaker for your event.

5. Review your options and interview your speaker candidates

A professional speaker will be a real partner in making your meeting a success. Help them understand the needs of your audience and ask them what they will do to help you meet those needs. Ask your potential speakers for references and, if they are speaking in your area, ask if you can attend the program and observe them in action.

Find out if the potential speaker has spoken to groups similar to yours. Talk with them about their experience. Ask for a biography, testimonials and audios/videos of their presentations.

Find a speaker who will tailor his or her presentation to your group.

Ask the speaker about their credentials, membership in their professional association and professional speaking designations. Also ask what awards or certifications they have earned.

CAPS Professional designation means that your speaker is making most or all of their income from speaking.

The Canadian Speaking Professional (**CSP**) is the highest earned speaking designation in the world and is earned for extended speaking experience and client satisfaction. This prestigious designation is held by less than 7% of speakers in the Global Federation of Professional Speakers (over 40 Canadians hold the CSP designation).

Other designations to look for are **CPAE** (Council of Peers Award for Excellence - Speaker Hall of Fame awarded to a maximum of five members annually for demonstrated platform excellence and professionalism) and **HoF** (Hall of Fame speakers are selected by an independent group for their long-term contribution to the industry and excellence on stage)

6. Select your speaker

Hire a professional and you'll hire an ally. Professional speakers understand that your reputation is riding on their performance. Their experience with hundreds of audiences can add to your peace of mind and to the success of the event.

When selecting your speaker, consider that you are not only paying for the time the speaker is on the platform but also for the hours spent researching, preparing and customizing the presentation.

7. Get it in writing

You should have a letter of agreement or contract that clearly outlines the expectations for you and your speaker. Consider:

- travel arrangements and transportation (usually in addition to the speaking fee);
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- fees: reimbursements and payment terms;
- whether you want the speaker to attend social events;
- if the speaker may sell products and if so, how this will be handled;
- an agreement on any audio- or videotaping of the presentation;
- cancellation policies;
- audio/visual requirements;
- legal implications, if any, that your contract may contain.

8. Work with your speaker

Share information about your group or company. This will help the speaker become familiar with your organization, while delivering a customized presentation.

- Send your newsletter or anything that would include key people, buzz words or insider news and views.
- Give the speaker a clear outline of what you expect.
- Be specific about the size and demographics of your audience.
- Let the speaker know in advance about other speakers on the program. This gives the speaker the opportunity to build on (and not duplicate) what the other speakers say.

9. Set the stage

Ask the speaker if there is a room set up that will allow them to have optimum impact. Consider the number of chairs and how they are arranged. Also consider room temperature and lighting.

Stay on schedule. Although a professional speaker will often be able to "make up" time or slow things down if needed, keeping your program on schedule will allow your audience to get the full impact of the program you have created for them.

Your speaker will provide you with an introduction. The introduction should be short, energizing and create positive expectations.

10. Evaluate the results

Have your audience complete evaluations on the speaker and the results of the session. This will allow you to plan for future programs. Send copies of the evaluations to your speaker. CAPS stands ready to help you with the most important element of a successful meeting-finding the right speaker.