

# The Business of Training and Speaking



A Short Guide for People Who Want to Get Paid to Talk

By: Kate Zabriskie  
© 2007 Business Training Works, Inc.

## **The Business of Training and Speaking What You Must Have**

Before you approach clients or other hiring organizations, you must have the following items available for them to review. If you want to look professional and be treated as such, there are few exceptions to this rule.

### **1. A Statement of Your Expertise and/or Programs You Deliver**

When approaching potential buyers, don't say "I can speak on anything." That's one of the telltale signs of an amateur. People want experts. Even if you are a genius and can speak on almost anything, narrow your topics.

### **2. Demo DVD or Tape**

You must have footage of yourself in action. Few people will hire you if they can't see you doing what you do. Although good tape is important, a great trainer or speaker is still a great trainer or speaker even on a bad video. At first, worry less about the production value and more about the content. Just get your video done.

### **3. A Biography**

Your bio should be no more than one page. It should highlight your expertise. You may want to have several versions if you speak on multiple topics that are unrelated (e.g. skiing and customer service).

### **4. References and Testimonials**

A list of references is essential. Testimonials are great addition too. The most powerful reference directory I ever saw was from one of my clients. This company sends its potential customers a list of *all* of its customers (past and present). It then invites them to call any of them. That's "100% referenceability." And there is no denying, that's impressive.

### **5. Photos**

Do you have a current photo, or is your picture twenty years old? Is it professionally shot? Your photo is the first impression others will have of you. The more professional it is, the better. Boudoir shots from a mall photographer (heavy makeup and model-like poses) are not appropriate for corporate work. Leave the boas and feathered hats alone, and get a professional business picture.

### **6. Publicity and Press Clippings**

You are supposed to be an expert. If you've been quoted in a trade magazine, written a book, etc., include copies.

## **7. Business Cards**

Have your cards professionally printed. You can order 1000 for less than \$50 through various vendors online. Do not use the cards you can make on your computer. Why? They look like the cards you can make on your computer.

## **8. A Professionally Answered Telephone**

If you don't live alone, you are going to need a separate phone line to take business calls. Your cell phone may do the trick. Home offices are more common these days, but nobody wants to spend several thousand dollars on a speaker or trainer who has a six year old answering the phone.

Don't expect to get your materials back. Don't ask for them. Don't ask for potential clients to pay for postage. Producing and sending materials out is one of the costs of doing business.

## **The Business of Training and Speaking What Not to Do**

Our office receives several calls each week from people wanting to work for us. Some are very pleasant, and it's been our delight to speak with them. Others have been downright rude and demanding. The following list highlights some of the "what not to do" experiences we have had.

1. Don't demand to be hired. One woman called our office and said that she was as qualified or more qualified than the people we currently had working for us. She had read the biographies of our instructors online and therefore knew all about us. When we told her we weren't in need of her services at the moment, she became irate. Needless to say, she wasn't a good fit. If she acted like that with us, just imagine how she could treat our clients.
2. Don't talk about yourself as if you are your own biggest fan. A lot of the people who call us spend three or four minutes of our time telling us how great they are. These are unsolicited calls and in essence commercials we didn't sign up for. The best kind of all is someone who is to the point, clear, and listens to what we have to tell them. For example, "Hi, my name is Chuck Davis, I do sales training and have for several years. I was hoping you could tell me about your hiring process and possibly recommend some other organizations who might be hiring." That's our idea of the perfect call.
3. Don't make excuses for why you don't have video or other essential items. We always ask people to send us a tape of themselves training or speaking – even if they shoot it in their living room. This is when the excuses surface. "I don't have a tape, but I have great references." Great, then call us back when you have a tape.

### **CAUTION . WARNING . DANGER**

Most of the people in the training and speaking industry are honest and ethical. A few are not. Question anyone who tells you that they will make you an instant superstar, speaking guru, etc. Paying for professional coaching is fine, if you pick the right coach. If you don't, you can find yourself out thousands of dollars with very little to show for it. Getting well known in this business usually comes from hard work, weeks of working for public seminar companies, and practice. You can't pay someone for that experience.

## The Business of Training and Speaking Leading Industry Organizations and Resources

### Organizations

The American Society for Training and Development  
[www.astd.org](http://www.astd.org)

The National Speakers Association  
[www.nsaspeaker.org](http://www.nsaspeaker.org)

Toastmasters  
[www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org)

### Online Resources

Training Magazine – Popular industry magazine  
[www.trainingmag.com](http://www.trainingmag.com)

Professional Speaker.Com – Tips for improving your craft  
<http://www.professionalspeaker.com/articles.htm>

Fusion – Information about running a seminar business  
<http://www.sellmoretraining.com/evisory.html>

### Books

*Getting Started in Speaking, Training, or Seminar Consulting*  
By Robert W. Bly | ISBN: 0471388823

*How to Run Seminars and Workshops: Presentation Skills for Consultants, Trainers and Teachers*  
By Robert L. Jolles | ISBN: 0471715875

*Money Talks*  
By Alan Weiss | ISBN: 0070696152

*Speak and Grow Rich*  
By Dottie Walters and Lily Walters | ISBN: 0735203512

## Breaking into Training and Speaking Finding Places to Work

The demand for training and speaking ebbs and flows. You may find yourself at times with too much work and at other times with too little. When the latter occurs, you might want to consider trying to work for someone else. Most places, Business Training Works, Inc. included, hire trainers and speakers on a contract basis. Translation – if you are looking for a steady paycheck and benefits, this may not be the way for you to be in the business. You may want to try to join a large corporation's in-house training department. If you can handle independent contractor status, a great way to fill your calendar and sharpen your skills is working for large public seminar companies. More than likely, they will have more work available than the smaller firms.

### Links to Companies Offering Public Seminars

<http://www.trainingregistry.com>

<http://www.findaseminar.com>

Speakers bureaus are another option if you are looking for work. Unlike training companies, speakers bureaus will typically ask you how much you charge. Training companies, on the other hand, will tell you how much they pay. The bureau then functions like a clearinghouse. For example, clients call looking for a motivational speaker in a certain price range, the bureau then gives them speaker packages to review. If you are hired through a bureau, a percentage of your fee will go to it for finding you the work. For more information on specific speakers bureaus, search online through any major search engine.

### Books

*Working with Speakers Bureaus*  
By Brian Townsend

### CAUTION . WARNING . DANGER

The fastest way to never get hired again is to steal clients. If you are hired through someone else, that client belongs to the contracting organization, not to you. Resist the temptation to get greedy. Even if the client asks you if you will work with them directly, the answer is no – unless you talk with the contracting organization and work something out. Stealing clients is unethical and will cost you in the long run.

## Breaking into Training and Speaking Additional Information

If you have additional questions about the business, we are happy to try to answer them. Email us at, [info@businessstrainingworks.com](mailto:info@businessstrainingworks.com). If you come across any tips that we haven't listed, please forward them as well.

Kate Zabriskie is the founder of Business Training Works, Inc., a company that specializes in down-to-earth, soft skills training in the workplace. She and her team help people develop the skills they need to be successful at work: business etiquette, interpersonal communication skills, business writing, presentation skills, customer service, negotiation, time management, and other essentials. The company's clients include Microsoft, Georgetown University, Schering Plough, the USDA, the United States Coast Guard, and Bank One.

For more information, visit: [www.businessstrainingworks.com](http://www.businessstrainingworks.com) or call: 301-934-3250.