

# 20 proven ways to get paid more as a speaker

by Hugh Culver

1. **Do your research.** Cookie cutters are for cookies - you need to customize every speech. Research the organization, learn what worked/didn't last time, interview delegates. Audiences want to know you understand them - prove it.
2. **Show up early.** Prima donnas wear slippers. Working speakers should be a part of the event. I get invaluable insights when I network just before I get on stage.
3. **Remember names.** That catering manager, A/V guy, or VP of Finance will stretch to help you if you make them feel important. Ask for their name, write it down, and use it often. You might even get you a copy of that video they just shot of you.
4. **Start with a problem.** Skip the airport, taxi, hotel, or take-out coffee story and get to the problem you know they have (see #1). The faster you prove you know their pain, the sooner they will listen to your solutions.

Pictures improve memory. Do your stories create a lasting picture in the audience's mind?
5. **Tell your story.** Audiences want to know you - your successes, failures, quirks, and insights. Share insights from your journey, not what some DWG (dead-white-guy) did 80 years ago.
6. **Involve them.** I've yet to meet someone that doesn't like to talk about themselves. Learn to orchestrate short dyads, but don't call people out, or ask for show of hands. They love it and you look like a rock star.
7. **Relive your stories (don't recite them).** Script them, perfect the delivery, and then let it go and relive your story on stage. Take us with you and your story will make lessons sticky and keep your audience leaning in.
8. **Reward them.** Acknowledge their successes, recognize their efforts, and treat your audience with respect. Everybody needs a pat on the back from someone - like you.
9. **Keep your promises.** A speech is a series of contracts: arrive on time, deliver what you promised, end on time (see #20), and don't hard sell back-of-room. Build a reputation for being excellent and reliable and event planners will want you back.
10. **Limit props and stunts.** PowerPoint and video clips, in moderation are great, but you are the show. Rely too heavily on props and that's what people remember (instead of you). Plus, one day your slide show will crash and you will thank me.
11. **Drop 20% and be there.** Avoid the temptation to cram in more content, you will be rushed and the audience won't benefit. Instead, drop 20% and allow time to go deeper, add a story, or share a new insight. Be present and you will receive the gift of more business.

When in doubt, or running late, don't apologize, just move on (learn how to skip slides with one click). They won't miss what isn't there and you will look like a pro.

12. **Make it about them.** Everybody wants to know: where they are stuck, tips they can use, and how to overcome resistance. Address them all, one person at a time.
13. **Start fast, end slow.** Three, two, one...GO! You have max. three minutes to earn their trust. Skip the Thank You's and how happy you are to be there. Prove you have what they are hungry for and watch them eat from your hand.
14. **Script your first 3 minutes.** You're nervous, the audience is unsure, and you are making your first impression. Script the first 3 minutes of your talk, practice it and memorize it - always better than foot-in-my-mouth disease.
15. **Walk your talk.** Talk about stress, work/life balance, relationships, leadership, success? The role of expert is to be on the journey (not perfect) of practicing what you preach. Wax on, wax off.
16. **Don't memorize.** Memorization is for your first 3 minutes (see #14), TED talks, and Toastmasters. The pros follow an outline, and draw from their research, stories, and experience. Make your presentation come to life and you will resuscitate any conference.
17. **Be appropriate.** Bar and bathroom humor belongs there. When in doubt about a story, joke, or celebrity gossip, drop it. A few nervous chuckles from the A/V guys isn't worth offending people.
18. **Get to the point.** Audience's like lessons to be obvious and delivered well: tell a good story, pull out the lesson, and help them apply it. Wash, rinse, repeat.
19. **Over deliver.** Make a 48 hour check-in call, help another speaker, eat with delegates (not at the VIP table), bring your client a signed copy of your book. Be generous and others will be generous with you.
20. **End on time.** Going even two minutes overtime insults your event planner, frustrates your audience, and screws up months of planning. A professional (see #11) quietly skips over content (don't ever apologize) and nails their end time.

Event planners' biggest complaints about speakers:

- 1) not finishing on time
- 2) boring delivery
- 3) content not relevant to audience

**Bonus tip: Ask what they will use.** After your talk, Thank You's don't tell you anything. Instead, ask each person what they learned they will use. Learn what worked, do more of it next time, change the rest, get booked more often. Sweet.



Hugh Culver loves standing ovations (and gets them often). He has delivered over 1,500 customized presentations to major organizations like: Shoppers Drug Mart, Sysco, and Telus. Hugh co-created the world's most expensive tours (to the South Pole), started five companies, and is the author of *Give Me a Break - the art of making time work for you*.

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