

25 WAYS
You Can Get
PAID TO
SPEAK!

Hugh Culver

25 Ways You can get Paid to Speak

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25 Ways You can get Paid to Speak

Getting paid to speak is an exciting way to share your ideas and inspiration and get paid. When most people think of “speaking” they think of main stage keynote speaking. While keynote speaking typically commands the highest fees, there are more opportunities than you might think.

In this article I’ve listed 25 ways to get in front of an audience. Some are easy (like speaking to your local community organization), some require more planning. Some of these opportunities are paid and with others you earn your money in other ways or use one engagement to build referrals. Before we get to that, let’s talk about the speaking industry.

Chasing Keynotes

Keynote bookings are the most competitive segment of the speaking industry - you typically get paid the most for the least amount of time and get access to the biggest audiences. Most speaker bureaus focus exclusively on keynote bookings (see #12 - Speaker Bureaus).

One challenge with only chasing keynote opportunities is there are fewer of them - a typical two to three day conference may only have three to six keynote speakers. Meanwhile there could be a dozen or more breakout (or “concurrent”) speakers.

A breakout speaker may be speaking for free or earning a reduced fee, but they are getting what all speakers should be seeking: access to an audience, experience, revenues and referrals.

Chasing keynotes can lead to a business model based largely on getting the next booking (to be fair most keynote speakers also sell books, and make money from consulting and coaching) - nothing wrong with that if you like to constantly market yourself, travel half the year, and live with the uncertainty of an unpredictable market.

That is why after 10 years of only keynotes and workshops I added on-line courses, coaching, events, and membership program to my business model. You should as well.

More Income Streams is Better

Eventually, most speakers write a book. This is smart. Most authors (the average book sells less than 500 copies) don’t get rich from traditional book seller channels (book stores, Amazon, Barnes and Noble, etc.) but can do very well selling their book at the back of the room after their speech. Now they have two income streams.

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Adding income streams can leverage your expertise into multiple channels (the same lessons can be sold on stage, in a book, through a portal like www.udemy.com, and in an audio program) and create more predictable income that requires less travel.

This article gives you many potential income stream that you can start adding to your business now and in the future.

And everyone starts by speaking for free.

Why Speaking for Free is a Smart Strategy

If you are new to speaking or want to grow your business with new topics or into new markets it's wise to start with free presentations. With every presentation (even to a room of 10 local business people at a Chamber of Commerce breakfast meeting) you build your list of references, get testimonials (video and written), and get referrals for more speaking opportunities.

You also build your experience and refine your message. In a rush to earn income new speakers often dismiss unpaid speaking opportunities. This is a mistake.

Savvy professional speakers continually seek out challenging opportunities to practice new material or get access to new markets, even though it maybe an unpaid speech.

You also need to understand who hires you.

Who Hires You?

Large conventions, conferences, and corporate events hire professional event planners to handle planning, logistics, and coordinating of speakers. Event planners are not always involved in speaker selection - that might be done by the hosting association or company that hired the event planner.

Smaller events use internal staff to plan the event, including selecting speakers. This could be an ad hoc committee formed just for the event or someone who has event planning as a part of their job description.

A speaker bureau (see #12 Speaker Bureaus) represents speakers and markets them to in return for a percentage of the speaker's fee. The client pays the same amount as if they booked you directly, but the bureau does all the work to find, secure, and book the client on your behalf.

And now here's the classic speaker's dilemma.

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People planning events do not want cold calls from speakers on the other hand, they all need to hire speakers. Of course, given the right approach, you can call or write to an event planner, make a great connection and get hired.

And there are better ways to get hired and grow a business.

How to Get Hired

Entire books have been written on how to get hired as a speaker - I can't do it justice in a short ebook. But this will be a good start on a subject that can take years to understand.

The basic premise of paid speaking is you are an authority who can help an audience reach some goal faster and easier than they can on their own. You could even argue that a "non-content" presenter, like an entertainer still helps people achieve some kind of goal.

As an authority, the best way to build a speaking business and get hired more often is to *expose clients to your authority* before they hire you. It's like test driving a car - the potential customer gets to experience the product before they go the next step and negotiate the purchase.

It wasn't always this way. When I got into the speaking business, it was common practice to cold call companies and ask for work. In many ways the Internet changed everything about the industry.

Today event planners can easily do their research on-line and select from hundreds of potential speakers. They can see references, watch sample videos, and quickly send requests for more information. They can also quickly click and move onto the next speaker.

You need to become the authority they are looking for.

Become an Authority

To become a sought-after authority start by choosing a niche industry or niche topic. As a general rule (there are many successful speakers who are generalists, like entertainers and motivational speakers), you will have more success establishing your authority if you focus on either a narrow industry (like carpet cleaning) or a narrow topic (like selling) or both (like sales for carpet cleaners).

Here is a short list of how to build your authority:

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- write a printed book or book for Kindle
- get mentioned in a reputable newspaper or magazine
- get interviewed on radio or TV
- build a large on-line following to your blog
- build a large following on social media (especially LinkedIn and Twitter)
- build a large email list (with a high average click-through rate to your content)
- work with other authorities (like other authors and bloggers) who write about your work or promote your products
- build a large following to your podcast

And the best way to build authority is to be a great speaker!

A great speaker is extraordinary on stage, over-delivers for the event planner and consistently receives the highest rating at the event. They also generate referrals for more work every time they speak on stage.

The following list will help you get started.



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1. Industry associations

All large member-based associations (like realtors, dentists, engineers, etc.) hold annual events for their members, some also have regional events. There are usually openings for outside speakers both on the main stage and for breakout sessions.

Get started: Most associations list their events and event agendas on-line for their members. Search for “association [name of industry you want] events”. You can narrow the search by geographical location. You can also pay for directories like:

AllConferences.com, Lanyrd, Plancast, Conferensum and Conferize, EventsinAmerica.com

2. Corporate event

Many companies hold regional and national events for staff. Opportunities like this can turn into longer-term projects for staff training and even coaching. For many years corporate training (either in-house training (#3) or at their events) was the mainstay of my business and I was able to develop strong relationships that continued to fill my calendar year after year.

Get started: Make a list of all the mid to large size companies you have any contact with and call them with a simple survey. Once you have interviewed 10 companies you should have enough information to review

3. In-house training

The largest speaking opportunities are training for an intact teams (teams that works together) or for all staff in an organization. Companies bring in speakers for annual staff meetings, manager meetings, strategic planning (#14), or for client showcases (#19). As an outside speaker you need to offer relevant and specific deliverables (topic, pre-work, follow-up, workbook, etc.) to your client.

Get started: Identify training (staff and/or management) as an opportunity on your website and in any promotional materials. Get video and written testimonials from clients as well as three references. Be prepared to quickly create detailed proposals for enquiries.

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4. Conference workshop

Every conference has more workshop (“breakout” or “concurrent”) opportunities than main stage keynote slots. This is a great opportunity to practice your presentation, learn how to work with audiences and under pressure and get testimonials. And, in many cases, you get paid as well.

Get started: In addition to searching for conferences in your industry or topic area, also search for “Call for presentations”

5. Emcee at conferences

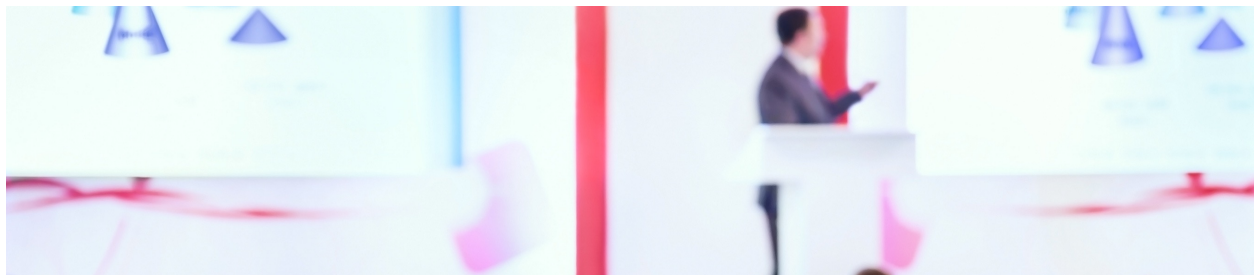
Large conferences will often hire an emcee to introduce speakers and ensure the event runs on time. In some cases the emcee will also fill some of keynote slots. I have been hired for a combination emcee/speaker role a number of times and it’s a way to have more exposure to the audience, sell more back of room, and work more directly with other speakers.

Get started: In addition to searching for events (see #1), include the word “emcee” in your search field.

6. Service clubs

Your local service clubs (Kiwanis, Lions Club, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary) have monthly meeting and often are looking for professional development speakers to add value for members. Don’t dismiss these groups - they may not have a speaker budget, but you get access to potential clients who can refer you.

Get started: This is an easy one: make a list of the clubs, call the volunteer in charge of events, make your pitch. Remember, they need you - you re doing them a favour.



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7. Lunch and learn

Busy professional offices, like lawyers, nurses, counsellors, and job placement agencies look for relevant professional development topics that can be conveniently brought to their staff. I have had successful, paid engagements with physiotherapists, lawyers, and nurses.

Get started: Referrals are going to be important. Mine your data base for likely contacts and offer to present for free in return for a video and written testimonial.

8. Business networking groups

Popular groups are Le Tip and Business Networking International (BNI). In return for a quick presentation and Q&A you get access to professionals who have already proven they like to network.

Get started: Do a quick search of your local region for groups and make the invitation. It could be worth it to also join your local group and gain long-term benefits.

9. Special interest groups

Photography, working mothers, entrepreneurs, speakers, and part-time athletes have local groups. They may need a speaker for their annual event or someone to facilitate their next planning meeting.

Get started: These opportunities will likely happen over time as more people become aware that you are available to speak at their events. Remember most people do not understand the speaking industry (nor do they need to) - when asked, keep your “elevator speech” short, simple and memorable. You need people you meet to promote you and that means they need to understand what you do.

10. Webinar for client

A live on-line seminar is a cost effective way for a client (corporate team leader, association education committee, or not-for-profit Executive Director) to provide either follow-up training after a conference or training program or as a stand-alone event.

Get started: Your existing clients may not know that this is an option. Start there. For future speaking opportunities offer a 30 day follow up seminar option.

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11. On-line course

On-line courses are widely accepted as valuable, convenient, even inexpensive ways to get educated about a specific topic. Host your course on your web site or rent space on sites like [kajabi](#), [digitalchalk](#), and [fedora](#). An “evergreen” course is available immediately a campaign launch builds demand by “opening the doors” for sales once or twice a year.

Get started: Buy courses in comparable niches (industry and/or topic) and study the marketing and course design. Warning: do not start building a course until you really understand your market and have a large email list.

12. Speaker bureaus

Getting listed with a speaker bureau gets you just that: a listing. You need to be constantly improving your presentations, marketing, and building your niche authority.

Get started: Most bureaus have a minimum fee (that you charge), require an up-to-date promotional video, your bio (in three lengths), and speech outline. Bureaus are generally less interested in marketing seminars.

13. Education institutions

University, college, state school, technical school, or private schools all use external speakers for staff development and to inspire students. You won’t get back of room sales, but you get credibility and can leverage off one booking with other similar institutions.

Get started: personal referrals are always best and it helps to know what they have done in the past. Research past events with “[name institution] events and workshops faculty and staff”



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14. Facilitation

Facilitation requires a unique set of skills and ability to manage team topics and conversations towards consensus. Not everyone is a good facilitator and a facilitator who understands a niche industry can establish a unique market strength.

Get started: Start with IAF (International Association of Facilitators) and learn how this profession works and where to get training.

15. Platform speech

A “platform speech” is an unpaid presentation to a large audience in return for back of room sales. The event organizer charges a fee for the event, is often one of the main presenters and invites other experts to present to fill out the agenda.

Get started: this is all about connections and unique expertise. Start developing connections through master mind groups and on-line groups (Facebook, LinkedIn).

16. Toastmasters International

Toastmasters is the world’s most recognized club dedicated to helping members develop presentation skills. They also have a speakers bureau.

Get started: Join your local Toastmaster club and start attending meetings.

17. Seminar companies

Seminar companies are in the business of hosting one and two day professional development seminars in major cities. Many professional speakers started as paid seminar leaders for companies like: Career Track, SkillPath Seminars and Fred Pryor Seminars

Get started: All of these companies make it easy for you to apply, look for “Trainer Opportunities”



18. Live on-line seminar

One of the most exciting ways to reach your followers, attract new followers, and earn revenues is through live on-line seminars that you host (also called “webinars” and “teleseminars”). These can be one to two hours, include Q&A and handouts, and fees can range from as low as \$19 to \$497.

Get started: Attend at least three seminars on similar topics to yours. Pay close attention their marketing, the timing of the launch sequence (when did emails arrive to you, etc.), and the design of the seminar.

19. Showcase event

Distribution companies for hospitals, restaurants, hotels, and senior’s residences hold showcase events for their clients. While the main objective is for clients to visit the suppliers’ booths, there are often professional development sessions that require outside speakers.

Get started: Make a list of all the local supplier companies and phone for a simple market demand survey.

20. Public seminars

A public seminar involves you renting a venue, advertising and selling tickets to your event. Just like a conference (see #1), you take all the risk, you also get all the project and access to the client base.

Get started: 1) attend at least three events that serve the same niche audience as you. 2) create a very conservative (include every possible cost and take worst-case scenario) budget and break-even calculation.

21. Host your own conference

Undoubtably hosting your own conference can be one of the most difficult ventures for a speaker and also one of the most rewarding. Typically, the host acts as the emcee and you invite guest speakers who are rewarded with back-of-room sales to fill the agenda.

Get started: same strategy as #20 Public Seminars.

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22. Membership program

If you have a large client base (email contacts), strong reputation in your niche industry, and are willing to commit to creating new content every month, a membership program might work for you.

Start here: Join at least three membership programs that serve the same niche market as you and take lots of notes!

23. Video on demand

An interesting option, especially if you have a large, loyal following, is to sell what you speak about through video on demand. Apple (30% commission) was the fore runner in this space and have now been joined by [vimeo](#), [gumroad](#), and [cleeng](#).

Get started: Like every other option listed here, start by watching other products in your niche. Reverse engineer what the more successful products have done.

24. On-line course

You can also host your on-line course on large course aggregators like [udemy](#), [lynda](#), [pluralsight](#), or [opensesame](#). The advantage is you get exposure on high traffic sites with a professional presentation. In most cases, you can drive your own traffic to that course listing while paying reduced commissions (as opposed to traffic they create).

Get started: Do your research. It's tempting to create the course before you fully know market demand and how these sites work. More research and preparation will pay off later.

25. Cruise ships

Cruise ships need entertainment - that's where you come in. You don't get paid (in most cases you have to cover your own travel to the ship), but you get to speak, travel, and get exposure. This opportunity is more attractive for the upcoming speaker wanting to get experience and the more senior speaker who might be less concerned about getting paid.

Get started: The articles by [Dan Benedict at Cruise Critic](#) and [Roy Provost](#) provide excellent overview as well as links to agencies who can book you on cruises.

Getting Started

Getting started in the speaking business can seem overwhelming. On any one day you could be working on: web sites, social media, promotional video, speaker bureaus, writing a book, and let's not forget the speech! The trick is to work from a plan and avoid temptations.

Just like any business, there are always temptations to upgrade, get new software, follow another guru, or take a course to upgrade your skills. All of that may help, but if doesn't produce positive results quickly it can also be a big distraction. And many of the options (including the ones I've listed in this article) have a natural order to them.

For example, you need to be an experienced speaker before you consider hosting your own seminars (#20) or conference (#21) or working with bureaus (#12). Whereas you don't need to be as experienced on stage to market your own webinars (#18), be an emcee (#5), or speak at a networking group (#8).

Start by choosing one to two options you can research and invest time in for each year of your business. For example, you might start this year with industry associations (#1) and service clubs (#6). Work on consistently developing those opportunities every week. Even one hour a week of dedicated focus can move you forward enough to research, make connections, and build business opportunities.

Choose one or two opportunities from this article, become proficient at them, and then add another.

You are reading this because you have a message audiences need to hear. Don't let the business of speaking get in the way of the gift of speaking.

Now, it's time to get started.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Hugh Culver". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "H" and a cursive "Culver".

Hugh Culver

I teach experts the business of speaking

Get [great information](http://www.hughculver.com) to grow your speaking business sent to you.