



Businesswomen Are Encouraged to Become Professional Speakers

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Building a career as a paid, professional speaker isn't easy. Although most women in business are qualified to pull off lucrative speaking engagements, it takes the right tools to maintain long-term success in the field.

Personal-branding expert Maggie Jessup, author of *Fame 101*, says that businesswomen must first pick the right audience and venue to create the groundwork for a successful, professional speaking event.

Most businesswomen recognize they have the potential to reach new customers or clients at speaking engagements, but the problem, Jessup says, is that they often pick the wrong place to deliver their message.

"In my experience, women in business believe that sharing their expertise with others in their own industry will generate opportunities," says the author and former investigative reporter. "While true to a modest extent, they will pick up the occasional referral, the big play is elsewhere."

An event attended by prospective clients is more likely to garner more substantial leads. For example, a financial consultant will attract many more clients speaking at the Illinois Republican Women's Annual Conference than at the Chicago Financial Planners 2010 Gathering.

In her book *Fame 101*, Jessup says that professional women and business owners who do manage to get in front of an audience filled with prospective clients too often waste the opportunity with the wrong message.

Sharing everything you know on a topic, simply because you have specialized knowledge in that area, is a

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sure way to get your audience to tune out the message you are trying to deliver.

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Just as the old saying "Practice makes perfect" applies to those hoping to master writing, sports and cooking skills, the same adage holds true for professional speakers. Getting up in front of an audience and delivering an off-the-cuff speech is not likely what

you were hired to do, and doing so does the audience a disservice.

"Speakers will attract new business opportunities in direct proportion to their proficiency as a professional speaker," says Jessup, who enlists the assistance of speechwriters and trainers in her publicity and personal-branding firm. "And to achieve that status requires a minimum of one hour of practice for every minute on stage." Once that big speech is developed, Jessup says it can be used as the base material for another 20 speaking engagements.

The fourth and final step in being a successful, professionally paid speaker is to offer the perfect pitch.

Jessup says the "gatekeepers" to the 50,000-plus paid speaking engagements annually in the U.S. are meeting planners. These planners have money in their budgets to pay keynote speakers for their events, Jessup says, but too many people are missing the opportunity.

"The engagements go to speakers who develop compelling audience-specific content and package the offering in a way that captures the meeting planner's attention; their qualifications, other than completed successful presentations, should be a simple addendum," the author says.

Maggie Jessup is co-founder of Platform Strategy, a publicity and branding boutique with industry-diverse clients across the U.S. In *Fame 101*, Jessup reveals the promotion, business and branding models of some of the nation's most successful entrepreneurs. ■