



Touch 'em, then touch 'em again! Get real results from your speaking engagements.

By Anne Scarlett, first printed in *CE News*

I couldn't believe my ears when my client recently declared: "I never get leads – much less projects - from my speaking engagements." What?!? It seemed impossible. How could any speaker, carefully selected from a pool of formidable competitors, not glean quality new business opportunities as a result of his/her presentation at a conference or seminar?

Take note, this person offers technical content to intrigue an audience. She has an acceptable delivery style - nothing that should detract from lead generation. So what's the problem? It's simple: the presentation itself was a single touch. And one touch is often not enough.

Great speakers are like superstars. Attendees line up to speak with them personally – to sing praises, to describe their company's issues, or to acknowledge take-away. At a minimum, they all want to trade business cards and stay in touch. This appreciation is gratifying, but gratification won't affect your bottom line. There are steps to earning high returns from your speaking engagements. Make sure to act upon opportunities in the moment, ensuring the fruits of your labor will be primed for growth:

Pre-presentation:

1. Ask for – and review – the attendee list in advance. You deserve to know who will be in your audience; perhaps there will be prospects or existing clients. This knowledge gives you a chance to further focus your content.
2. Send attendees an email or snail mail in advance to describe the learning points from your presentation. Invite them to submit advance questions for Q&A.
3. If you have in-person access to attendees before your session (i.e. you are just one speaker during a multi-day conference) then drum up interest while networking. Get folks excited about your presentation topic; take informal polls to get their feedback on what they'd most like to learn. Not only will you get them psyched to see you (they'll spread the word!), but you'll also be able to reference those dialogues during your presentation – positioning yourself as 'in tune'.
4. Look at the speaker roster; make direct contact with other speakers who may want to attend your session. This is a great chance to build a new network - potentially abundant with referral sources, prospective clients, and peer-to-peer support.
5. Get fully acquainted with event/conference hosts. They are excellent references for future speaking opportunities; incidentally, they also select keynote speakers! So be accommodating, and submit your presentation elements on time: description, picture, handout materials, travel preferences. Make it easy for them to work with you, then 'wow' them with your popular presentation and positive attitude. You will surely be invited back again, and/or recommended for speaking engagements with fellow chapters or other organizations.

At presentation:

1. Offer to send presentation (in PDF format) via email upon request. I once saw a speaker actually build part of her presentation on-site by facilitating a brainstorming session with the audience. Instead of handouts, she made a trade: business cards in exchange for a PDF copy of the 'final' collaborative presentation.
2. Facilitate moments when the audience can learn from one another during Q&A. Rather than just firing questions at you, encourage attendees to share their own insights. This will ensure a multi-faceted experience, and it will also enable attendees to further become acquainted with one another's talents. It's warm, it's fuzzy, and it strengthens their memory of your session.
3. If Q&A is going strong (why wouldn't it, with you as an engaging presenter?), then offer an open invitation to meet nearby (lobby, business center, coffee shop) to continue the conversation during the next scheduled conference break. Set yourself up in that area, and see who shows! It's a great chance to offer more value and to serve as a source of connectivity.
4. Remain visible during the event to allow shyer folks to approach you with their comments.
5. If your presentation is out-of-town, suggest to attendees that if they have a pressing matter requiring your expertise, you'd be glad to hold a one-on-one meeting with their firm prior to your departure. They may take you up on your offer to talk while you're still in town.

Post-presentation:

The last thing I want to do at the end of a long conference day is to spend hours following up on leads and contacts. But I discovered if I don't do it within a 48-hour period, the 'high' dissipates. My energies get refocused on other things, and poof! The hot leads and new contacts get downgraded to warm at best. Dedicating time to follow-up now will save you time later; it cuts my follow-up time in half. Essential steps:

1. Send personalized emails and/or handwritten notes as appropriate to the hottest contacts.
2. Categorize contacts – short-term opportunity; long term opportunity; networking resource.
3. Record those categorized contacts in your database.
4. Insert next step/due date into your calendar.

Many of these tips require flexibility in terms of: A. your presentation content, and B. how – and with whom - you specifically spend your 'free' time at the conference. Remember, you were selected as a speaker because you have something worthy to share. You are an expert, and you know your material. Remaining flexible will help exceed audience expectations, and it will strengthen your long-term impact when you touch 'em, and then touch 'em yet again.