



nerej

Public Relations 101: Speaking opportunities - by Susan Shelby

November 04, 2016 - Owners Developers & Managers



Susan Shelby, RhinoPR

You know that presenting at conferences will position you as an expert in your industry, build your company's brand, and gain visibility from your target audience, but do you feel overwhelmed with how to find these speaking opportunities? Do you need tips and tricks for completing a winning call

for papers submittal? If so, you are not alone.

Participating in conferences takes time, planning, and effort, but doing so can yield tangible results. Earning credibility as an expert in today's competitive market can help you reach potential clients and potentially lead to new business opportunities. When clients identify you as a thought leader in your field, they are more likely to hire you and your firm.

Research Speaking Opportunities

Before investigating speaking opportunities, decide on a geographical reach. There are countless opportunities with local, regional, and national audiences. Determine how far you are willing to travel. Consider starting small to build a speaking portfolio. Local events offer invaluable experience that will help you gain speaking skills and confidence. Keep in mind that most national organizations set a rotating schedule throughout the country, only appearing in your area every three to four years.

Next, research upcoming seminars, symposiums, conferences and tradeshow for potential opportunities to present. Take a look at where your competitors have spoken. Define your target audience and research what events they attend. Ask your clients what professional associations they belong to and which conferences provide the most value to them. Many events publish an attendee and vendor list, and the larger conferences keep past years' session descriptions online. Take the time to investigate conference audiences and session topics to hone in on your best opportunities.

Networking is an excellent way to discover speaking opportunities. Seek relationships with other speakers who can mentor you and introduce you to event sponsors.

Craft Your Abstract

All that research should provide you with a list of conferences that are held within your geographical range and reach your target audience. Now it is time to craft a compelling abstract that will appeal to the selection committee. Remember, first impressions make a great impact, so provide an engaging, concise, and grammatically correct submission.

Visit event websites to download their call for papers. Proposals are typically due six to nine months before a conference, and often require considerable time to complete. Today, nearly all speaking submissions require an online form, so create your submission offline first. Create a graphic organizer in a Word document, listing each section of the call for papers and noting any special requirements such as a word count limit or a video requirement. Crafting your submission offline allows you to complete the submission step by step as time allows, and makes it easier to monitor word counts and spelling errors.

Conferences select sessions that will provide a tangible benefit to event attendees. Include a creative session title designed to show that your topic will add value to the event and attract attendees. Accomplish this is by implying what privileged information, such as new research results, will be gained by attending your session.

When describing your topic, remember that attendees want to hear an educational – not promotional – presentation. This is a chance to share knowledge and industry trends, not sell services. Think about your audience and what types of questions they may have. If you position yourself as an approachable expert, you will attract clients. Keep your subject matter timely and relevant.

Consider inviting a client to co-present. This approach allows an end user to share their viewpoint, shows potential clients you value the opinions of your clients, and has an added benefit of building a stronger relationship with your co-presenting client. If moderating a panel, carefully select different

types of panel speakers to allow multiple perspectives on your topic.

Clearly identify what your audience will learn when listing the learning objectives. Most call for papers require three to five learning objectives. Use specific action verbs such as explore, report, compare, demonstrate, and analyze, to define the intended learning outcome.

Submit

Submit your proposal by the published deadline. This seems obvious, but with call for paper deadlines due so far before the event, deadlines can easily slip your mind. Complete your online submission ahead of schedule to avoid technical difficulties from delaying you.

Now comes perhaps the hardest part – waiting until speakers are selected. Most calls for papers include a speaker notification date. There are often dozens of potential candidates vying for the same opportunity, so be patient if you are not chosen this time.

In a survey by Visible Experts, speaking engagements were the second most impactful marketing tool. While the process of finding and obtaining a speaking opportunity might seem daunting, taking advantage of this powerful marketing strategy is a sure-fire way to achieve your marketing goals.

Susan Shelby, FSMPS, CPSM, is the president and CEO of Rhino Public Relations, Boston, Mass.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540