

# How to take an Enquiry



Taking an enquiry well is an important part of your sales process. It allows you to show a potential client that you are genuinely interested in their business, beyond your intervention. It allows you to create great rapport and also gives you information to help you build on more just one transaction – more than just a speech.

There's certain information it's really important to get right when you are approached to speak, and then there is additional information that is nice to know. The essential, and hopefully common sense items are:

### **The Event Date**

Sometimes you will be approached before an event is confirmed and so there may not be a date, so you can't hold the date in your diary. If there is a date it's more likely that the event is going to go ahead, though not necessarily with you as the speaker of course.

Once you have the date, always confirm back the day of the week. It's an important double check. You would be amazed how many people get dates wrong and by double checking the day of the week; you can avoid all sorts of problems going forward. I would also ask if the event is over more than one day. Many times a prospect will give you just one date, the date they need you for, but the event may run for more. Why is this useful to know? It's useful, once you know more, if your session makes more sense on one of the other days, as part of a different section of the programme. Also, if you end up with more than one request for that date you may still be able to speak at both if one event has other slots that you could fill. So, it's useful information to have. Plus of course you could offer to do more than one session. This leads us to:

### **The Programme**

It's a great idea to understand where you fit in the programme, who is speaking before you, what about and who is coming after you. Understanding the flow will help you to prepare your content so that it complements the rest of the event. You want to build on what else is being covered rather than contradicting it or repeating the same messaging (unless of course that's what the client wants you to do).

### **The Venue**

The venue will have an impact on logistics for you, and possibly your pricing if it's abroad. Many clients begin their research early and may not have set a venue, but they will have narrowed down which country and possibly which city. Don't assume that the event is going to take place in your home country even if the client is based there, many conferences take place abroad – so always check the venue. The event may not be in person at all, it may be virtual or hybrid, and again this will have implications for you in terms of your preparation and costs.

### **The Audience**

The obvious questions to ask here are of course, numbers, demographics, seniority, nationality. The question of nationality may then lead you to ask about level of English, will there be interpreters? Do you need to slow your pace (if the audience is international I suggest you do slow your pace, or insert plenty of pauses for the audience to catch up, and keep your language international, no slang or jargon). The not so obvious questions will be – how well do they know each other? how often do they meet as a group? Are they attending voluntarily or is this a compulsory event? What will they be hoping for from your session?

## **The Brief**

This is important, what does the client want you to do? Very specifically.

Here you really want to know everything upfront so that if the client is looking for more than a standard speech you can charge accordingly. It's also important to know exactly what's required; it could affect your preparation and the time you will be needed to block out at the event. Questions you want to ask include:

- What time do you require me to arrive? There may be a tech check or rehearsal requirement, sometimes these are the day before, so you need to know, especially if you aren't available and need to ask for a different time.
- What time will I be on stage/speaking from?
- How long for? Is this with or without Q&A and is Q&A in addition or included?

Do you want me to do anything else? Now this is a vital question. The client may not have thought of anything else but in asking this they may decide to invite you to host a VIP session or maybe sit in a panel discussion, or have lunch with the CEO etc. This is all additional time and potentially a higher fee for you. Alternatively, this question could open up a shopping list of things the client needs you to do, for example – a promotional video, sharing the event on your social media, staying for photos, etc etc. You need to know all of this upfront. So not only do you want to ask the question, you probably want to be reassured and ask at the end, is this everything you need from me for this event? What time would you like me to leave? Now this might seem an odd question, but clients are all different, some are happy to have the speaker stay and mingle, participate in lunches, drinks, dinners, etc. Others want them gone because they are dealing with sensitive information that they don't want any outsiders listening to, or they simply don't want to have to baby sit the speaker. So, it's worth asking.

## **The Budget**

It's a good idea to talk about fees and budgets as early as possible to ensure that you are on the same page. Be brave and ask the question, what if your budget for the speaker? Some clients will tell you straight and you will know if this is a conversation you want to continue, while others will be vague or may even say "We haven't set the budget" or "I don't have a budget what is your rate?" and you'll often get the ball thrown back into your court.

At this point your best bet is to give a fee range so that you have some wiggle room. You could say something like my fee varies from X to Y (I encourage you to actually have a fee range so that you are never discounting your value). Or you can simply ask a question such as my fee is X is that the sort of figure you had in mind?

You may be nervous about tackling the money question but it's an important one and it needs to be tackled in the first discussion or you could be wasting your time.

## **The Topic/Theme**

This would seem a fairly obvious question but it's good not to make any assumptions, you'd be surprised how when you do assume you get into a mess. You don't want to find yourself in a situation that a speaker I know found himself in, he was asked to speak about how he broke the world land-speed record, unfortunately the client had the wrong Andy Green – this Andy Green was an expert in creativity and sharing great ideas, he wasn't world record holder and Wing Commander Andy Green. So, the question here is “what would you like me to talk about?” The client may not have the specific topic but will have an event theme.

## **The Outcome**

Probably one of the most important questions to ask your potential client is, “what does success look like?” or “what do you want your audience thinking, feeling or doing differently as a result of my session?” Now we all know that you cannot make substantial change in a 45 minute speech but it is good to understand the client's expectations. This will also give you an idea of what they want to achieve longer term in the organisation and open up opportunities to do more with them. A good follow on question would be “how will you measure that?”

## **Very Insightful Additional Questions**

Here are a few additional questions you might like to ask that will be really helpful to you.

“How often do you run this event?” This is super useful to know, if it's a quarterly event for this audience and you have more than one session you can run, you can offer a follow up session for the group in time for their next event. You'll also have an idea of when they will be planning that.

“Who spoke at this event last year/last time or in previous years and how were they received by the audience?”. This is a great question because it will give you so many insights. It can give you an indication of what's been paid before, what content has been heard and also what kind of speech will work well as you can research the past speakers.

“Who else are you considering?” You might not get an answer to this one, but if you do it's great, you then know who you are up against. It's great information to have whether you get the gig or not because it gives you an indication of who clients are putting you against, who they consider to be your competition.

“What other information do you need from me to help you make a decision?” This is a great closing question as the client is telling you whether they have enough to go on or not. If they ask you to, or you offer to summarise your discussion (which you should do anyway so there is a trail and a record for them so that they don't have to rely on memory) make sure to ask what format they would like the information in. Make it as easy as possible for them to use what you send them.

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