

# How to get listed with a Speaker Bureau



SPEAKING   
BUSINESS

## **How to get Listed with a Speaker Bureau**

When you run a Speaker Bureau you are approached daily by great numbers of speakers wanting to join your roster but only a few of them get through the door. Here's your guide on how to get a Speaker Bureau's attention and get listed on their books.

But before we start let's be clear what a Speaker Bureau is and is not. This is based on my experience over the last 20 years working in the industry and having run my own bureau. A Speaker Bureau is not your manager or agent, unless that is the arrangement you have made. A Speaker Bureau is a resource used by corporate clients looking to find a speaker to either educate, inspire or entertain their audience. A bureau's role is to advise that client on which speaker is the best fit for them and their requirement. That means that a bureau really needs to know and understand the speakers they work with in order to recommend them. This leads us nicely on to how you would choose which bureau to approach.

## **Where can I find a list of Speaker Bureaus?**

When I started in the business there were few bureaus and in fact very few speakers, that has changed dramatically and now there are bureaus everywhere, because there is no barrier to market entry. Anyone with a computer and access to the internet can set themselves up as a Speaker Bureau, so where do you look? I think that the two best resources are the [IASB](#) – International Association of Speakers Bureaus and the [EASB](#) – European Association of Speakers Bureaux. These associations have some requirements for their members and any bureau that is a member will fulfil those minimum requirements.

## **How do I Choose who to Approach?**

Now you need to do some research. You need to select a few bureaus because you do not want to approach every single bureau. Your shortlist could be based on geography so that you can visit any you are able to open a dialogue with, or you may be choosing bureaus outside of your geography specifically to get you work in other locations. It could be based on specialisation, there are bureaus that specialise in women speakers, motivators, sports and adventure, military, all sorts, so that might be your choice. Whatever method you use narrow the choice down to 2 or 3 that you like the look of and then delve more deeply.

Now you are looking to find out a bit more about the sort of speakers the bureau represents. Is there a gap where you might fit? Are there already a couple of people with similar profiles showing that there is a market for you? Can you find out from their site who their clients are? What sort of industries they work with? Who is on the team? etc. You are really researching a bureau in the same way you would research a potential employer or client, you want a good fit and a long-term relationship. You also want to find out if there is a process for applying and a particular person you should contact. You would be amazed how many people used to email me as "hi there", when clearly, they have my name as it was on my site. Hi there, tells me that this a mass email and that the enquirer knows nothing about me or my business. Your approach needs to be directed to someone and needs to be tailored, show the recipient that you have done your research and you are approaching them for good reason.

Before contacting anyone do think about your timing.

## **Is Your Timing Right?**

There are two things to consider when talking about timing. One is the timing for the bureau. If for instance you are in the UK or in Europe, there are certain times of the year that are really busy with events taking place and an enquiry from a speaker in that period isn't going to get the time of day. I would avoid the busier conference months which are October, November, May and June. These months may not be the same for other bureaus but certainly for me and my team this was our silly season when we had our bureau. The other thing to consider is your personal timing in your Speaking Business. Bureaus are only really interested in speakers who tick one or all of the following boxes:

- Your topic is a current hot topic that is relevant to their clients
- Your profile is currently high or on the up
- You are already getting fee paying speaking enquiries and already getting booked

If you don't tick at least one of the above boxes you aren't likely to be of interest to a Speaker Bureau.

## **What does a Bureau need from a Speaker?**

Many speakers approach bureaus sending long winded emails with lots of content but not the content needed to consider them. It's very easy to work out what an individual bureau needs because it is the information they have about the speakers they already represent and it's on their website. This is what most bureaus want from a speaker and if they don't have it, it makes it much harder for to assess if a speaker is bookable and to take them on:

- A well written one page profile (not a CV with dates). A good narrative, starting with the most current roles/work
- A clear, short list of topics with descriptions. Short because if you list 20 different topics bureaus won't know where you fit. If you give 3 to 6 topics with descriptions of how you tackle that content, they'll get it.
- Video. This is vital. It's almost impossible to get out to see every speaker speak in person to decide who to take on, in the first instance a video will fill that gap. And choose your video wisely, don't send a video that has really poor sound or that is a speech in front of a group of school children unless the bureau sells to schools.
- Testimonials – until you have appropriate great testimonials don't approach a bureau, and when you do, choose carefully. Most bureaus are selling to corporate audiences mainly, so a testimonial from your speaker friends, the local Toastmasters, or the WI Isn't going to cut it.
- Great high resolution photos. If you don't have any get some done, I'm amazed how many speakers don't have good photos.
- The final thing you need to provide is so important I'm going to give it its own section below.

### **The Really Important thing a Bureau needs from a Speaker and doesn't always get.**

This will make or break your relationship and may even cause the relationship not to begin at all. You need to be very clear what you want out of your collaboration with the bureau and how you will work together to get it. By this I mean - what your expectations are. If you are honest at this stage, then you'll know where you stand and whether one bureau is sufficient to support you or whether you need to be represented by more than one. This is about the quantity of bookings you are looking to achieve and the time frame. A bureau will know if this is realistic for them from their client base or not, but most speakers haven't thought this through before having that discussion. You should also be prepared for a bureau to ask you to pass them your incoming enquiries in exchange for promoting you, another reason to choose carefully.

### **You've done all the above and you still aren't getting anywhere? Here is the sure-fire way to get a bureau's attention**

A speaker who ticks all of the above and goes to a bureau with an enquiry to close the deal for them gets attention. Bureaus will also do their best to then return that generosity by getting that speaker more work. There are a couple of savvy speakers we worked with who started out just this way and we have a brilliant thriving bureau relationships.

*NB. The above is based on my personal experience and is my opinion, other bureaus may have other experience and opinions, but I hope that it is of help. And if it is of help and you would like more of this kind of information you might want to join my free group:*

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/SpeakingBusiness/>

*If you are already listed with a bureau and still aren't getting booked you may also want to checkout our video course: <https://speakingbusinessacademy.thinkific.com/courses/why-your-speaker-bureau-isn-t-booking-you>*

Don't forget to sign up to our Newsletter if you haven't already!

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