

EXPOSED: 7 Myths of Speaking Success

A Special Report by Shawn Ellis

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Congratulations!

You're on your way toward becoming a professional speaker and building a thriving speaking business.

The life of a speaker is one of the most rewarding there is — you get to help people and organizations reach their fullest potential, and you can get paid handsomely while you're doing it!

Regardless of why you're on this journey — whether you have expertise to share, you want to empower others with your story, you need extra income, you want to be in business for yourself, or something else — there are some things you need to know *now* to keep from derailing yourself *later*.

You see, starting out as a speaker, it appears to be pretty simple:

Create presentation.

Deliver presentation.

Get paid.

Good.

But if you're really in this for the long haul and you want to join the ranks of the most successful speakers, you're going to want to pay attention to what I'm about to tell you.

While everyone thinks speakers get paid big bucks (\$5,000+ per hour), drive nice cars, live on the beach, fly private jets, etc., the truth is that most people who set out to become professional speakers never crack \$100K per year.

Am I telling you that to discourage you?

No, I'm just telling you that to — hopefully — show you how important the lessons within this report are.

While reading this report doesn't *guarantee* your success any more than brushing your teeth guarantees you won't get cavities, it is undeniably good for your health. (Your business health, anyway, in this case.)

The market for professional speakers is not the same today as it was 20 years ago, or even 10 years ago... or even 5 years ago. Believe me: I became an agent for speakers in 1999 and there's not too much from 1999 that carries over to 2010.

That's why I get so frustrated and even angry when I see a number of "become a speaker"-type courses that are almost completely irrelevant for today. If you ever see someone who wants to show you the "magic formula" that made them millions... *in 1982*... turn and run!

Today's marketplace is made up of more savvy buyers. It's crowded with competition. It's more demanding than ever. You need to know what works TODAY if you want to succeed.

And it's not rocket science. It's actually pretty simple.

All it takes is you reading a report like this and being intentional about the way you go about building your business.

Don't make the mistake of thinking "go speak, get paid" is the business model that's going to allow you to accomplish all of your goals. (That's not one of the 7 myths advertised in this report, but there's an important bonus lesson for you.)

In the last 18-24 months, when the economy tanked and the meetings industry went into crisis mode with everyone talking about "Are meetings valuable?" and then the natural follow-up, "Is it worth it to pay speakers?", I saw countless speakers I know and respect go belly-up with their businesses... because "go speak, get paid" was their business model... and for a long time, it worked really, really well.

In the pages ahead, I'm going to tell you why that *doesn't* work today, and I'll tell you the straight (and simple) truth about what you need to do to get your speaking business off on the right foot... so you can succeed today and thrive for years to come.

But first, you may be wondering...

Who is this guy and how do I know he knows what he's talking about?

If so, let me "introduce" myself... (Or if not, skip to page 5!)

Since 1999, I've been a booking agent, manager and marketing consultant to some of the world's best speakers — people like Magic Johnson, Mark Victor Hansen, Naomi Judd, Deepak Chopra, Marcus Buckingham, and Wayne Dyer to name a few. I've been up-close with a variety of speaking business models (the motivational speaker model, the guru model, the author model, and more) and I've also worked closely with the clients who book speakers, gaining a solid understanding of what's important to them.

In addition, while I'm not a "professional speaker" myself, I *have* spent some time on the other side of the desk, graduating from a national speaker training program and speaking at enough churches, schools and conventions to understand what it feels like to be in your shoes! As a result, I know that (a) earning \$5,000+ an hour as a speaker isn't as easy as it sounds, *but also*, (b) if I can get on stage, so can anyone else!

Let me be clear, though:

I'm not here to tell you how to be a great speaker, or a great lecturer or a great orator.

Presentation skills are important, but the truth is, Toastmasters and the National Speakers Association are full of "great speakers" — "great speakers" who are also *poor... striving... struggling*.

That's not to say it's not important to hone your craft, but that's not what I'm here for.

I'm here to tell you about what it takes to build a great speaking business.

That's my passion, and hundreds of leading speakers — an executive from the NBA, one of the best-selling authors of all-time, one of the top CEOs from the tech industry, three past presidents of the National Speakers Association, and more — trust me for business advice on a weekly basis when they read my Succeed Speaking newsletter.

If I can help them, might I be able to help you, too?

Why not just dive in for the next few minutes and decide for yourself?

Ready? Let's start shattering some myths!

Myth #1: Professional Speakers Make Big Money!

What?! How can “professional speakers make big money” be a myth? This is a report about succeeding as a speaker, after all... isn't it?

You're telling me speakers don't make big money?

For starters, let's acknowledge what a professional speaker is, by definition:

Professional Speaker: a person who speaks formally before an audience (a lecturer; orator) as an occupation as a means of livelihood or for gain¹

Two things I want you to see in this definition:

1) *The emphasis is on speaking (or talking, or being an orator) — there is no mention of expertise or what you speak about; there's no specialty.*

2) *It's an occupation.*

I could be wrong, but I don't *think* you're looking for a job as a speaker, are you? (If so, then you don't need to be reading this report.)

What you want — again, I *think* — is a business.

So here's the perspective you need to have a successful business:

See yourself as a content creator. An expert. A guru. A thought leader. A solution provider.

Notice how we just took the emphasis off the *act* of speaking?

If you only see yourself as a speaker, then you have a very one-dimensional view of what you're capable of. When you see yourself as a content creator, though, things get a lot more exciting. Then you realize that speaking just happens to be one way you deliver the content you create.

I would challenge you to look at your core content and think about all the

¹ Combining definition of “professional” and “speaker.” Dictionary.com Unabridged. Random House, Inc.

people you can help with it. Who needs to hear what you have to say? Who can benefit from your expertise? Who would be inspired by your story?

Now, how many ways can you deliver your content to those people? Books? CDs? DVDs? A membership site? An ezine? A blog? A home study course? A virtual coaching program? Through licensed coaches?

Use as many channels as necessary to deliver your content to every “type” of person who needs to receive it.

Then you have the mindset for building a high-profit, “big money” speaking business. (And, as long as you have at least one product to sell, you’ll never speak for free again, because every *speaking* opportunity is a *selling* opportunity!)

If you’re just a professional speaker, then you only get paid for delivering live speaking engagements. Your income is limited by time and space — you can only be in one place at one time, and you only have so much time each year.

Again, it’s just a job.

The only way you can make more money is by either (a) increasing your fee or (b) speaking more often (or a combination of the two).

And if you’re okay with that, then think about this:

If you’re not speaking, you’re not making money.

What happens when you want to retire? Or, what if you had to shut down your calendar for an extended period — due to illness or other circumstances?

You can’t sell a job! When you’re done, you’re done. End of story.

If you build a business, though — with your content as the foundation — then you have options. When you’re ready to get off the road, you can sell your business, you can live off the passive income your business is generating from your products and services that don’t directly require your time... you can pass your business on to your children... you have options!

So, don’t set out to become a professional speaker.

Set out to build a *speaking business*.

Myth #2: You're the Star!

Let's be honest: We all have an ego. We all feel like we've got something special to offer or we wouldn't be doing this.

I wouldn't write this report if I didn't think I could teach you something.

You wouldn't want to become a speaker if you didn't know you have something valuable that can help others.

You need a bit of an ego — a healthy ego.

But there's a slippery slope here for speakers, and I want to alert you to it.

When you become a speaker, what do you get?

A microphone and a spotlight.

Two things that say: this is all about me! I'm the star!

I hate to break the bad news to you, but... nothing could be further from the truth.

The real star of the show is always your client, and if you remember that, you'll go far. People will talk about you (positively). People will be lining up to pay you money.

Just think about it: Who do you enjoy being around the most — that friend who is a bit self-absorbed and always finds a way to turn the story back to him- or herself? Or that friend who always asks about you and cares about how you're doing today?

It's the same with speakers.

Meeting planners — those who organize the events where you speak — will be thrilled to know that you understand their needs and concerns, and that your #1 priority is making sure their event runs smoothly.

Event attendees — those in the audience listening to you — will gladly applaud you when they see that you really care about their success and making sure you connect with them where they are.

The same goes for those who read your books... who read your blog... who listen to your audio programs... who attend your workshops... everyone.

So, I challenge you to shift from “It’s all about me!” — or it may not be necessary to shift from it; better advice might be to defend against that mentality that will try to snare you time and time again — and remember that it’s not about you... and then just see what happens!

This applies to your marketing endeavors, too, by the way.

As a speaker booking agent for years, I can’t count the number of “look at me!” materials I’ve seen come across my desk from speakers hoping I would book them... and most of them have a one-way ticket to my “special filing system.”

There are 3,000-5,000 members of the National Speakers Association alone, and easily another 3,000-10,000 more speakers who don’t belong to the association. In other words, you have a lot of competition... or at least you do if you play the “look at me!” game.

If, on the other hand, you remember that it’s not all about you and your marketing materials are designed to educate your prospective clients about the valuable solutions you can offer — *how you can make their lives better* — then you’ve jumped ahead of thousands of other speakers.

When you send postcards, brochures, e-newsletters — any marketing materials — always ask yourself, “What’s in it for them?” They’re probably not just sitting there waiting and hoping another speaker’s advertisement will land in their inbox. But you can bet that they *ARE* thinking about some particular challenge or struggle.

If you can help them overcome that challenge, now you’re not just a promoter, but a **trusted advisor**... and as a trusted advisor, you have an opportunity to build a long-term (profitable) relationship — not just land a single speaking engagement.

Myth #3:

All You Need to Sell Yourself... Is to Know Yourself!

Pop Quiz:

When you call a prospective client, you should lead the conversation with:

- a. A statement of who you are and why you are a perfect fit for the prospect's next event
- b. A question about when the prospect will be looking at speaker candidates for their event
- c. A question about where to mail your promotional materials
- d. A question about the challenges your prospect's attendees are facing, or the issues that are on their mind
- e. All of the above are equally acceptable

What's your answer? Write it down and don't change it — no cheating!

Having been on the receiving end of more than a thousand calls and emails from speakers asking me to book them (as an agent) through the years, I can tell you that most speakers lead with (a), with (c) coming in as a distant second.

That in itself should tell you why option (a) is ill-advised.

If you join the crowd with most speakers who are saying, "I'm perfect for your event," then guess what? You're in the crowd with most speakers! Your objective should be to stand *out* from the crowd. You'll never stand out from the crowd if you say what everyone else is saying.

Option (c) is ill-advised for another reason, and you can throw option (b) in with it. Neither of these approaches will help you stand out from other speakers, but in addition, what you're saying to prospective clients is, "I'd like to create some work for you!" — because "I'm going to send you some homework... whether it's now or later" (materials to review).

So that brings us to option (d) — the correct answer in most circumstances.

For one thing, if you lead by showing concern for what is really on the mind of your prospective client, you'll stand out from the majority of your competitors.

Beyond that, when you ask the right questions and listen to your prospects' answers, then, at the right time, you can offer precisely the solutions they're looking for (or bow out gracefully if you discover that you don't have the right solutions).

Remember this:

Successful selling is not about talking... It's about listening.

Of course it will be easy for you to talk about yourself — you know yourself better than anyone else, and you are a speaker, after all.

Don't fall into the trap of thinking that's good selling, though.

There are two books I strongly endorse if you want to boost your sales success: ***SPIN Selling*** by Neil Rackham and ***Selling to Big Companies*** by Jill Konrath (even if you don't sell/speak to big companies, Jill's teaching is very helpful).

Myth #4: The List Can Wait

What is the most important asset of any business?

Good products and services are important, sure.

“Real estate” (your place of business) matters — whether your business is online or brick and mortar.

But the money is in the **list**... of customers, clients, prospects.

You can re-create products.

You can build a new website.

You can build a new building.

As a speaker, you can write a new presentation. You can write a new book.

All of that is replaceable.

Your customers (and potential customers) are the lifeblood of your business, though. **That’s why you need to start building and cultivating that list from day one.**

Doing so is one of the most critical keys to your long-term success.

Because if you lose that list, sure, you can start over again, but you don’t just lose names and numbers, you lose relationships... and those grow exponentially over time.

Have you seen the charts that demonstrate the power of compound interest? How, if you invest just \$20 a month in a good mutual fund starting at age 20, you’ll be a millionaire by age 65? But, wait until age 40 to start investing and you’ll need to invest almost \$500 a month!

Building a list works much the same, if you ask me.

BUT...

I can't tell you how many speakers I've talked to — including veteran speakers who are 20+ years into their careers — who have ignored the value of building their list. Then what do they do when they need to ramp up bookings? Or what if they have a new product to launch?

Remember when I said the old model for speakers was “Go speak, get paid”? Well, with that model, you don't care about your list. You get paid “big bucks” for an event, and then you move on to the next one. No time to worry about adding people to a list. You just do the equivalent of going door-to-door and asking people to hire you. If they say no, you move on.

In case it's not obvious, that's a tough way to build a business and you'll find yourself working a lot harder than you need to.

So what do you do?

Go sign up with a service like **Aweber**, **MailChimp**, **GetResponse**, or **InfusionSoft** today and follow their tutorials... don't miss one lead!

Oh, and one more thing...

Don't just build a list of prospective speaking clients. Get as many of your event attendees, book buyers, blog readers, etc. on your list as possible. Booking speeches isn't the only way you can make money (more on that later)... but if you're going to sell anything else, you need a list of prospective customers, right?

Everyone you contact is a prospective customer. Get them on your list!

Myth #5: All You Need Is A Book

If you think publishing your book is going to be your breakthrough moment, you're not alone.

Many speakers work for years putting their first book together, and then when it's finally time for its release, they think, "This is it... things are really going to explode for me now!" And then the book comes out and... not much else happens.

Did you know that between 300-800 new books are published every day — in the United States alone?!

Yeah. "Wow!" is what I said, too.

And you thought the field of speakers was crowded!

With numbers like that, (1) publishing your book alone does not guarantee it will be noticed, and (2) you can't expect your publisher to put heavy promotion behind your release. Only a few titles each year are considered "major releases" by publishers, meaning they get the full marketing treatment — book tour, media tour, advertising, etc. That's okay... You just need to realize this *now* rather than after your book comes out and it's too late.

Don't misunderstand me here: Publishing a book is a *very good thing* for your speaking business. But you must understand what a book is:

A book is a tool. It's a vehicle.

What you *do* with it is primarily up to you.

Naturally your credibility increases when you can say to prospective clients, "Jill is the author of XYZ book."

And a book gives you a great anchor for marketing campaigns: "You should consider Bob as a speaker for your next event... he's an authority on small business success... he wrote the book on it as a matter of fact!"

But what if my book is a bestseller?

So, what if you're able to break through the crowd and land on a bestseller list? It could happen — especially if you take it upon yourself to hire a PR team and a book marketing specialist who understands how the bestseller “engine” works — and if it does...

Your book is still a tool... but now, an enhanced tool!

A best-selling book does not automatically drive speaking engagements, but it does put a lot more “oomph!” behind everything you do. **It's up to you to leverage that “oomph!” though.**

That's the bottom-line when it comes to your book(s):

You're still the one who's going to have to do the work to build your business... the book is just an extra tool in your toolbox.

Myth #6: All You Need Is An Agent

Just like many speakers think publishing their book is going to be “it” for them, others think that landing a booking agent from a top speakers bureau or lecture agency will be their big breakthrough.

Having been a speakers bureau agent and executive for over a decade, I’ve been in the unfortunate position of letting aspiring and emerging speakers down time and time again when I tell them, “I can’t create something from nothing.” (As a mentor/manager/marketing consultant, on the other hand, I *can* help speakers create something from nothing.)

There are plenty of valid reasons to have an exclusive agent... but thinking “s/he can transform my career” is usually not one of them.

Like everything, there are exceptions, but for the most part, I always tell speakers that a booking agent can *multiply* what you already have, but he or she can’t manufacture a successful speaking business for you. (Multiply 100 by zero and you still have zero.)

Building a successful speaking business is a methodical, strategic process that takes time. **There is no magic bean!**

Rather than going out and looking for an agent who can create a miracle for you, focus on managing that methodical, strategic process on your own. **Take responsibility for your own business growth**, do the right things, and then, you know what will happen?

Agents will naturally be drawn to you over time, as you and your speaking business start generating more and more buzz in the industry... And then agents will be *asking* to book you — instead of you trying to convince them to book you (which feels like banging your head against a brick wall).

When you have a network of agents who are enthusiastic about who you are and what you offer — because they discovered you on their own — trust me, it’s much more fun that way!

Myth #7: You Can Do It All By Yourself

This is the myth that lures almost every entrepreneur at one point or another.

“I can do it myself.”

“I know everything I need to know.”

“I can figure out everything I need to know.”

“No one else can do it as well as me.”

“I can’t afford any help.”

Sound familiar? Don’t fall for any of these traps!

They will slow you down at best, or lead you far away from success at worst.

I’ve been observing extraordinarily successful people for years, trying to pinpoint why or how they’ve achieved what they have, while others haven’t.

Would you like to know what I’ve discovered?

Here’s my first conclusion:

The only difference between those who achieve extraordinary success and those who don’t is that the achievers do something.

We all have brilliant, million-dollar ideas. We are all capable of amazing things. Action is the key, though.

(And that’s why I opened this report by saying “congratulations,” because you have a dream or a vision or a goal to build a speaking business, and you’ve taken *action*... you’re reading this!)

Now, here’s my second conclusion:

The only difference between those who do something and those who don’t is that those who do have help.

No one does anything great alone.

With that in mind, there are two kinds of help you need to achieve your full potential in your speaking business (or in any business, for that matter):

1. **You need a support team that allows you to spend your valuable time working *on* your business and not *in* it.**

I'm speaking from experience here. I can tell you how trying to do everything myself hurt me and my business, and I can tell you how hiring help or teaming with a mentor or coach catapulted me forward.

When it comes to hiring a support staff, just remember this golden rule: You need to spend most of your time doing what you do best, and let others do the rest.

You'll find yourself happier — we all enjoy life and work the most when we can spend our time doing what truly lights our fire — and you'll see your business grow. Your weakness is someone else's strength, and I actually find that one of the most rewarding parts of being a business owner is creating opportunities for others to engage in their strengths.

TIP: Check out websites like elance.com, freelancer.com, and odesk.com. Through these sites, you can connect with freelancers around the world to outsource single projects (no task is too small!), or even find long-term associates — often for much less than you would pay someone in your own town.

2. **You need mentors or coaches to push you and streamline your path to success.**

If you could “borrow” someone else's time-tested wisdom and experience to fast forward your own success, why wouldn't you? That's one of the biggest benefits to working with a mentor.

Why spend five years of your own time to learn a lesson when you can learn it from someone else in just a few minutes or hours?

Why sweat and toil to clear the brush and pave a road on your own when you can roll smoothly on the path cleared by someone else?

In addition to “borrowing” the wisdom and experience of a mentor, though, a good mentor will also push you beyond what you can do on your own.

Life always has a way of interrupting us if we’re not careful and committed to staying on course. That’s the other big benefit of working with a mentor.

A mentor will keep you accountable and help you navigate through the obstacles life throws at you.

I know this for a fact because every time there’s been a significant breakthrough in my business life, it’s when I’ve worked with a mentor or coach. EVERY TIME.

Just to make sure there’s no misunderstanding here...

I told you that you can’t expect a book or a booking agent to magically transform your business, but instead, you have to take responsibility for your own success.

Now I’m telling you that you need help — but the ultimate responsibility for your success still falls on you. **Getting this kind of support, though, brings out the best in you and will allow you to do the great things you dream of!**

Wrapping Up

Now you know the top seven myths that have cost many veteran speakers thousands (or millions) of dollars.

Have any or all of these myths been undermining your own success? Or *would* they have undermined your success if we didn't crush them right now?

What was the biggest “ah ha” moment for you?

Which shattered myth(s) really jumped out at you?

Send me an email at shawn@succeedspeaking.com and let me know — and let me know if you have any questions.

Now, where do we go from here?

I want to highlight Myth #7 again and encourage you: **You don't have to tackle building your speaking business on your own, and you shouldn't.**

What's holding you back from getting to where you want to be *right now*?

If you could wave a magic wand and get whatever you need to bring your speaking business to life, what would it be?

Is it knowledge that you need the most?

Is it a helping hand for the labor involved?

I mentioned some websites for labor support earlier, and one mentoring resource I highly recommend — it's free! — is [SCORE](#), “America's premier source of free and confidential small business advice for entrepreneurs.”

You may or may not find a mentor who has experience in the speaking industry (it's rather unlikely, actually), but you can get some great advice from experienced entrepreneurs on the essentials of starting and running your own business. And again, it's free!

If you are looking for some guidance that *is* specific to the speaking industry, though, I might have just what you're looking for...

Be on the lookout for some exciting news about a business mentoring program I'm preparing to launch which will equip speakers for success like no other training that is currently available. (If you found this myth-shattering report to be helpful, you'll love what's coming!)

In any case, thank you for reading this report, and here's to your successful speaking adventures ahead!

My best,

Shawn Ellis

P.S. If you'd didn't receive this report directly from me, make sure you sign up at www.SucceedSpeaking.com so I can send you more free resources to help you build your speaking business.