



## How to Avoid the Biggest Mistakes Meeting Planners Make When Booking a Speaker

by Ruben Gonzalez - Olympian, Speaker, Author

You're suddenly in charge of finding a speaker for an upcoming meeting or event and you don't know where to start. You google "motivational speakers" and are instantly overwhelmed.

Your meeting is just a few months away. Where do you start? What do you do first? Where do you go for help?

Before starting your search and before contacting any speakers, think about your goals and your audience's needs.

What are your goals and objectives for your meeting? Why are you bringing in a speaker? To draw more people to your meeting? To inspire your people to sell more? To teach your audience about a certain subject? To start or finish your convention with a bang?

How's your audience made up? Age, sex, interests, needs...

What's your budget?

When's your meeting taking place? Where?

What's the theme of your meeting?

What challenges are your people experiencing?

What's keeping them from reaching their goals?

Only when you know your objectives and you have the date, time and location of your event locked in should you start calling speakers.

Look for speakers within your budget that are experts in your topic and that are willing to customize their message for your audience's specific needs.

Watch their videos. Make sure they have stage presence. Make sure they can deliver information in an entertaining way. Not just entertainment and not just information.

Check out their client lists and testimonials. Then and only then should you call them to check availability, their fees, and to get a feel if they would be a good match for you.

Ask good questions. Who are some of your past clients? What were the biggest and smallest sized groups you've presented to? What are your AV requirements? What are your travel needs? Etc.

A few weeks before your meeting you'll want to schedule a conference call with them to go over your needs and expectations. It's a great idea to have the executive in charge of your group on the call.

## **More Tips to Help You Shine**

- Don't wait till the last minute to book your speaker. If you book 3-6 months out you'll have more time to promote your event.
- Let your speaker know who else will be speaking at your event and on which topics. That will help them prepare.
- Provide your speaker with pertinent information about your company and industry - anything that will help them better tailor their presentation.
- Choose a reputable Audio Visual company. Bad sound and bad lighting can ruin even the best presentation.

- Invite your speaker to attend some of the sessions before they'll be speaking. Many times they can play off of the information they hear.
- Schedule your high-energy, dynamic, and entertaining speakers at your opening and closing sessions. Have them speak after lunch or dinner when your audience tends to be more tired.
- Schedule your technical and industry speakers in the morning when audiences still have a lot of energy, are rested and alert.
- Your technical and industry speakers need to know how to entertain an audience. No matter how knowledgeable, if they aren't entertaining and if their powerpoint slides look like the fine print in a contract, they'll go over like a boring college professor. As soon as they lose the audience no one will learn anything and you'll look bad.
- Powerpoint slides should have an image and a short caption. They should not be the speaker's script and notes.
- Your dynamic entertaining speakers need to have a message. They need to inspire and equip your audience to overcome their challenges. If they don't leave the audience with some new insights and take-aways, you'll also look bad.
- Before booking your meeting room make sure what'll be going on in the meeting room next to yours. If they're having a rock concert or a pep-rally your meeting will be ruined.
- Use your speaker beyond the presentation. Magic happens AFTER the presentation. Invite your speaker to your VIP cocktail party and to dinner after their presentation so they can further engage with the attendees. Schedule a book signing or an opportunity for pictures with your attendees after their presentation.

- Find a sponsor to buy the speaker's books as a gift for your attendees. Your audience will love getting a book from your speaker and it will help the speaker's message to last longer. It protects your investment.
- Don't serve a lot of liquor right before your speaker's presentation.
- Don't introduce your speaker while dinner is being served.
- Remind the audience to turn off their cell phones.
- Set the room temperature below 70 degrees Fahrenheit. Remember, every person in your audience is like a miniature stove. Warm rooms make for drowsy people.
- Full house lights make for better audiences because laughter spreads faster in bright rooms.
- Make sure the stage is brightly lit.
- Have your AV people test the microphones at every section of the stage and even in the aisles of your meeting room. Some speakers like to get down in the audience to better connect.
- There's always more energy in a room with theatre-style seating than in a room with large round tables. High content speakers prefer classroom style so the audience can take notes.
- Set classroom tables in a chevron and curve theatre-style seating so that everyone has a better view of the speaker. They will also be able to see each other better, which increases laughter and room's energy.
- Make sure the front row is not too far from the stage. Otherwise your speaker will have trouble connecting with the audience.

- If your meeting room has more seats than the attendees you're expecting, rope off the back rows to force everyone to sit up front.
- Have a backup microphone available. Have fresh batteries in every microphone and bring backup batteries.
- Different speakers prefer different types of microphones - handheld, lavalier, over the ear mikes, etc. Make sure you have the right kind of microphone available so your speaker will be able to give you their best performance.
- Most speakers don't like a podium up on stage. It just gets in their way and it obstructs some of the audience's view. If you must have a podium, put it to the side of the stage.
- Make sure there's water available up on stage.
- Put steps on both sides and in front of your stage in case your speaker wants to step off the stage and be close to your group to make a bigger impact.
- If you have a long narrow meeting room with more than 150 guests or more than 300 guests in a square meeting room you'll want to use IMAG scenes so everyone can see.
- The middle seats are the best seats. Don't put an aisle in the middle. It's better to have seats in the middle and two aisles. Aisles don't have to be very wide if you have more than one.
- This is your show. Your reputation as a meeting planner is riding on it. So run a tight ship. Don't allow any of your speakers to go long. Make sure your time is scheduled to the minute. Limit the time of the person addressing your group before your main speaker. Make sure everyone finishes on time.

- Have a large countdown clock in front of the stage so your speakers know exactly how much time they have left.
- Remember, like with everything else, you get what you pay for. Top speakers command high speaking fees because they are worth it and because they consistently deliver. They have a proven track record. They are true professionals. If you have a tight budget and hire a low fee speaker, the chances of having a bad experience will be higher. And that will only make you look bad.
- It's better to save on food and drinks so you can afford a higher fee speaker. **After all, after your meeting your audience will remember the speaker much longer than what they ate.**

**Follow these simple tips and you'll look like a hero!**

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## **Quick Facts About Olympian Ruben Gonzalez**

- ★ A common guy who achieves uncommon things and shows others how they can achieve great things too.
- ★ First person to ever compete in 4 Winter Olympics in 4 different decades
- ★ Spoken for over 100 of the Fortune 500 companies since 2002
- ★ Appeared on ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, CNN, the New York Times, Time, Forbes, Success Magazine, BusinessWeek, and The Dave Ramsey TV Show
- ★ Featured in 3 chapters of Jack Canfield's book, "The Success Principles"
- ★ He ran with the bulls in Pamplona, climbed Kilimanjaro, and he's training to do the Alcatraz swim, but he still hasn't figured out how to make a dent in his wife's honey-do list.

## Topics

Sales (Ruben sold copiers in Houston)  
Embracing Change  
Leadership & Teamwork  
Motivation & Inspiration  
Safety & Managing Risk



## Rave Reviews

"Phenomenal" - New York Life

"Superb" - ConocoPhillips

"Inspiring" - Comcast

"Amazing" - Bacardi

"Outstanding" - Microsoft

"Captivating" - Xerox

"A Home Run" - Kaiser Permanente



## Call Ruben!

Give Ruben a call at 832-689-8282 so you can discuss how you can make something special happen at your next meeting.

Make it an Olympic day!

