

5 Places To Find Speakers For Your Association Chapter Event



Your event committee needs to line up speakers for your association chapter's next few meetings. Or maybe the need is much bigger, like the perfect keynote speaker, master of ceremonies or someone who can do both, for your annual conference. They know what they want the person to talk about, and they know how much they have to spend.



So, they start looking.

Pretty quickly, your chapter volunteers realize they're not having any luck finding credible, reliable, engaging speakers where they've looked in the past. They've tried asking members and friends for recommendations, put a call out for experts from within the chapter, etc., but they're coming up empty.

Finding the right speaker takes time, effort and planning. It's not an impossible task, if you know where and how to look. Here are five places you may not have thought to look for association chapter speakers and help ensure they're exactly who you need.

5 Places to Look for a Speaker for your Association Chapter

1. **Speaker websites.** Organizations like the National Speakers Association maintain lists of

available, professional speakers. These speaker directories are a great resource. You can search by topic, location or keywords, like handling adversity to communication and project management, and get a list of speakers with their recent speaking engagements. Some website directories even highlight whether a potential speaker is comfortable speaking virtually or would prefer to present in person. You can also visit the TED talks website to see speaker clips while also finding new people with who could be a great fit to speak at your chapter.

2. **Social media.** When used correctly, social media can be much more than a place to scroll endlessly through cat videos and friends' vacation photos. LinkedIn is a great place to look for speakers, ask for chapter speaker recommendations and learn more about speakers you're considering. What's their background and expertise? Who have they presented to? How well do they know the subject in question? How do they react to a crowd and answering questions off the cuff? Can they handle extraneous situations and background noise?

3. **Chamber of Commerce.** Business owners who join their local Chambers do so because they're looking for more visibility for their brand or business. They would relish the opportunity to speak to local organizations like yours. Plus, when you visit a Chamber of Commerce you might hear a speaker who you wouldn't have known about and discover they could be a great fit for your chapter.

4. **Networking and referrals.** Networking can be a highly effective referral source for speakers, if you make the right ask. Be prepared with details like the topic, type of event, goals for the speaker and the event, budget, etc. Do this, and you'll have much better luck than if you just ask someone you just met if they know anyone who can speak about the impact of the recession on marketing departments or how to craft compelling content for a chapter website.

5. **Hear a speaker at a meeting.** At a non-chapter event and hear a speaker who could work? Hearing someone speak live before you hire them is a good way to see if their style will fit your chapter and the goals of your meeting. Don't miss out on an opportunity — introduce yourself after they've spoken and exchange contact information.

Know Before you Look

It's much easier to find who you want when you know exactly who you're looking for in a chapter speaker. Before you start looking, determine things like:



- Topic
- Time, location, speaker time slot
- Goals
- Return on investment
- Audience expectations
- Speaker's comfort with Q&A
- Budget

What do members want to learn about?

Your committee may have decided what they want the speaker to cover. However, we've heard plenty of examples of committees not considering their audience and what they will want to learn. As a result, committees spend a lot of time and money to bring in a speaker only to end up with someone who isn't the right fit.

Rather than taking that risk, consider asking your members what they want in their upcoming speakers. Getting audience input first can save you a lot of aggravation – think of the feedback you get if a speaker isn't what members were hoping for. This input will also allow you to better mine the different source ideas we've given you, for a better chance of finding exactly the right chapter speaker.

