THE TOP 9 WAYS MEETING PLANNERS FIND SPEAKERS

THEY’RE NOT AS DIGITAL AS YOU MIGHT THINK
Meeting planners take great pride in the quality and selection of the speakers they hire for their events. It’s a mark of professionalism. A coup d’état over industry rivals. The pièce de résistance to set the tone and kick things off on the right note.

Every planner has their own system; their preferred way of scouting and sourcing the best talent for the audience they are dazzling.

Locating the best talent for the job is mission critical to a successful event. Connecting with their ideal speaker is a priority for meeting planners, and we wanted to understand how they do it.

“What Are All The Ways You Find Speakers?”

1. Saw Elsewhere 67%
2. Word of Mouth (Meeting Pros) 65%
3. Word of Mouth (Non-Meeting Pros) 55%
4. Google 42%
5. Recommendations From Other Speakers 39%
6. YouTube/Speaker Video 33%
7. Social Media 31%
8. Podcasts 21%
9. Speakers Bureau 13%

EMPHASIS ON WORD OF MOUTH AND SEEING SPEAKERS LIVE

Perhaps somewhat astonishing is the emphasis on traditional methodologies versus digital and search options in sourcing speakers. According to the data, well more than half of meeting planners use word of mouth recommendations from meeting professionals, non-professionals, or other speakers or bureaus, or saw speakers elsewhere themselves.
THE MORE YOU SPEAK, THE MORE YOU SPEAK

The adage that “the more you speak, the more you speak” is proven true here, as the most often-cited way planners identify keynote speakers is by seeing them speak elsewhere.

Word of mouth recommendations from other meetings professionals is a close second, and suggestions from other team members in the company or organization is also a key source to identify speakers.

The tremendous amount of time and effort many speakers put into content creation may not be fully paying off, as fewer than one in three meeting planners say they ever rely upon YouTube, social media, or podcasts to find speakers. Of course, that doesn’t mean that content doesn’t play a role in deciding between speakers, but its role in speaker identification is somewhat limited.

An assumption might be made that less experienced – and presumably younger – planners would rely on Google more than their more experienced peers. However, that’s not the case, as 44% of those with zero to 10 years of experience say they use Google vs. 42% of planners with 11+ years of experience.

On the other hand, one area where planners with less experience do differ from those with more time in the saddle is in reliance on word of mouth recommendations. 58% of planners with zero to 10 years of experience rely on word of mouth from other meetings professionals, compared to 70% with 21+ years of experience, possibly because they richer contact networks in the business.

Similarly, more experienced planners presumably have more speaker contacts as well, and they mine them more often. 42% of planners with 21+ years of experience sometimes rely on speaker recommendations, compared to 31% for planners with zero to 10 years of experience.

One surprising finding was the power of YouTube and speaker demo videos among planners with tremendous experience. 42% of planners with 21+ years of experience say they sometimes rely on those videos to find speakers, compared to 23% of planners with 11-20 years of experience and 28% of planners with zero to 10 years of experience.
To put the picture of speaker identification into laser focus, we asked a similar question a different way; this time, allowing meeting planners to give only their top answer. The findings become even more pronounced.

“What Is The Number One Way You Find Speakers?”

1. Word Of Mouth (Non-Professionals) 21%
2. Word Of Mouth (Pros) 19%
3. Saw Elsewhere 17%
4. Speakers Bureau 13%
5. Google 12%
6. Recommendations From Other Speakers 8%
7. YouTube 5%
8. Social Media 3%
9. Other 2%

78% USE PERSONAL VIEWING AND RECOMMENDATIONS AS THEIR GO-TO METHOD

When we asked the question this way, requiring planners to choose the number one way they locate speakers, the results shift. The power of recommendations and world of mouth becomes even more apparent – at 40% combined. If we include all forms of word of mouth, i.e., from professionals, non-pros, bureaus, other speakers and speakers that the planner saw elsewhere, that number jumps up to a whopping 78%.

Also, the importance of speakers bureaus like Speak Inc., for those who use a bureau to find speakers, becomes readily apparent, as 13% of meeting planners cite bureaus as their number one way to source speakers.

22% USE DIGITAL AND OTHER CHANNELS

On the flip side, the impact of digital channels and content – even Google – shrinks in comparison to referrals and a meeting planner seeing the speaker perform on stage. Combined, these methods come in at 22%. This includes the 12% of meeting planners that cited Google as their top method of finding speakers, trailed by YouTube (5%), social media (3%), and other (2%).
SUMMARY

The key theme of the data underscores that despite the fact that we are in 2020 with numerous channels of online resources, less than half of meeting planners said they used Google, videos, podcasts and social channels to find speakers. Non-digital methods, such as seeing the speaker in person, or getting a recommendation from bureaus, other speakers or others, is the #1 way meeting planners find speakers in 2020.

This report reflects the results and analysis of 150 professional meeting planners surveyed to determine how they are sourcing keynote speakers in 2020.

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SpeakInc is the largest non-exclusive speakers bureau in the United States, and connects event professionals with keynote speakers and entertainers aligned with their individual event objectives.

Michelle Joyce Speakers is a speaker management agency that supports leading keynote speakers in the areas of marketing, customer experience, leadership, personal development, and business growth.