

A SELF-ASSESSMENT FROM DAN IRVIN

The SPEAK Framework

A 4-minute diagnostic to show you exactly where your speaking business is leaking revenue — and where to focus next.

17,000+ speakers have built paid speaking careers using the SPEAK framework. This short self-assessment is the fastest way to see which of its five pillars is strongest in your business — and which one is holding the rest back.

How to use this:

For each question, circle the number that best describes where you are today. Be honest — this is for you, not for anyone else. Total each pillar. The lowest-scoring letter is the one to focus on first.

"Your story told honestly is your edge."

— Dan Irvin, The Speaker Lab Podcast

HOW THIS WORKS

The 5 pillars of a real speaking business

Every speaker who's built a consistent, paid career runs all five of these pillars. Most speakers who are stuck are strong on two or three and weak on one or two — and that weakest letter is what's capping their income.

S

Select the right problem

Your lived experience — the thing you think disqualifies you — is actually your advantage. Picking the wrong problem is why most speakers can't get traction.

P

Prepare a signature talk

Event planners don't book 5-in-1 speakers. They book specialists. One clear, outcome-framed talk beats a buffet every time.

E

Establish expertise

Establishing expertise isn't about convincing yourself. It's about translating your credibility to event planners and corporate buyers in a language they understand.

A

Acquire paid gigs

Post-and-pray doesn't book gigs. Direct, intentional, human outreach does. AI and automation help — but they don't replace the person reaching out.

K

Know when and how to scale

Keynotes are the start, not the end. Workshops, books, consulting, and cohorts compound into a real business. Scale the wrong way and you burn out; scale the right way and you build an enterprise.

Scoring scale 1 = not at all · 2 = barely · 3 = somewhat · 4 = mostly yes · 5 = absolutely



Select the right problem

Pick the problem only you can solve.

The speakers who get booked aren't the most polished. They're the ones clear about who they help and which specific problem they solve. Your unique combination of experience, scars, and point of view *is* your edge.

1. I can state the specific problem I solve — in one sentence — without hedging.
2. The problem I solve connects directly to a lived experience of mine, not just research.
3. When I describe my problem to event planners, they say some version of "our people need that."
4. I can name at least three specific audiences or industries where my problem matters most.

1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5

add up your circled answers

/ 20



Prepare a signature talk

One talk, built for the audience, not your ego.

A signature talk is the asset event planners buy. Not "I can speak on leadership, sales, teamwork, and culture." One talk. Named for the outcome. Built so specifically that the right buyer says yes before you finish pitching it.

1. I have ONE signature talk I could deliver tomorrow — not five loose topics.
2. My talk's title telegraphs the outcome the audience walks away with, not just the topic.
3. When I pitch the talk, I lead with what the audience will *do* differently after hearing it.
4. I have a tight 90-second description of the talk ready to send the moment someone asks.

1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5

add up your circled answers

/ 20



Establish expertise

Translate credibility into the language buyers use.

You don't have to convince yourself you're expert. You have to translate your credibility so the person hiring you — who has 15 other decisions to make this week — understands it in 30 seconds.

1. My bio is written for event planners who are about to hire me — not for me or my résumé.
2. I have at least three specific, falsifiable proof points on my speaker page (real outcomes, named clients, actual numbers).
3. My demo video is under three minutes, shows me on a real stage, and doesn't require a setup explanation.
4. I can explain in 30 seconds why I'm worth my fee to someone who books speakers for a living.

1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5

add up your circled answers

/ 20



Acquire paid gigs

Direct, human, intentional outreach — not automation alone.

Post-and-pray is not a strategy. Booked speakers reach out directly, specifically, and consistently to the people who sign the checks. The tools help. The human effort is the thing.

1. I know the exact job title and type of person who signs off on booking me at a typical event.
2. I can name 20+ specific organizations or events that would hire a speaker solving my problem.
3. I'm reaching out directly to booking decision-makers every week — not posting and waiting.
4. My outreach references the event or organization specifically. It's never a copy-paste template.

1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5

add up your circled answers

/ 20



Know when and how to scale

Beyond the keynote: the real business.

Keynotes are the start. Workshops, books, consulting, courses, cohorts, and long-term client relationships are what turn speaking into a seven-figure business. Scale the wrong way and you burn out. Scale the right way and every booking compounds into three more.

1. My speaking income is becoming predictable month over month — not whiplash.

1	2	3	4	5
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2. I have 2+ ways to monetize each engagement beyond the speaking fee (workshop, consulting, book, cohort, membership).

1	2	3	4	5
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3. My top-of-funnel produces enough leads that I can turn down gigs that don't fit.

1	2	3	4	5
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4. I have a clear picture of what I'm building toward — not just chasing the next gig.

1	2	3	4	5
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add up your circled answers

/ 20

SCORE YOUR ASSESSMENT

Add your totals. Identify your weakest letter.

Pillar	Your score	Max
S — Select the right problem	_____	20
P — Prepare a signature talk	_____	20
E — Establish expertise	_____	20
A — Acquire paid gigs	_____	20
K — Know when and how to scale	_____	20
TOTAL	_____	100

What your total means

- 80 – 100** Running. Your business has all five pillars in place. Your next move is optimization — where's the highest-ROI fix this quarter?
- 60 – 79** Competent but gapped. Two or three pillars are strong; one or two are holding your income back. Fix the lowest letter first.
- 40 – 59** Early stage. You're building. Don't try to do all five at once. Pick your lowest letter and spend the next 60 days on it.
- 20 – 39** Foundational. Most speakers at this score skip straight to A (outreach) without fixing S or P, which is why they stall. Start with S.
- < 20** Consider whether speaking is the right primary business for you right now — or whether speaking should be a secondary lever on top of a business that's already paying you.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Based on your weakest letter

Find your lowest-scoring pillar. Do this one thing this week.

S

Spend one week clarifying your problem statement.

Write it in one sentence. Test it on five people this week. If four out of five don't immediately say "tell me more," rewrite it until they do.

P

Build ONE signature talk. Kill the others for now.

Pick your single strongest idea and build it into a 45-minute outcome-framed talk with a 90-second description you can send from your phone.

E

Rewrite your bio for event planners — not for you.

Three falsifiable proof points. One line on who you serve. One line on the outcome. Delete anything that only matters to your LinkedIn.

A

10 direct, personal outreach messages per week.

Not posts. Not ads. Individual messages to named people at specific organizations. One hour a day, five days a week.

K

Map your revenue beyond keynote fees.

List every way a single booking could turn into three more bookings — referrals, workshops, consulting, cohorts. Pick one to build this quarter.

STUCK ON WHERE TO START?

Get a free 15-minute Speaker Business Assessment with Dan.

Not a pitch. A real diagnostic: we'll look at your audience, your pipeline, your revenue model, and tell you exactly where the biggest hole is — and what to do about it.

Book your SBA call: thespeakerlab.com/SBA

"Never again will I build something for someone else without building something for me."

