



## **Negotiating A Speaking Opportunity**

*Written for aspiring professional speakers but the principals can apply to any business situation where negotiating is involved.*

The telephone rings, its XYZ speaker's bureau. They have gone over your brochure and video with their client. The client wants you! They want you as their keynote speaker, as a workshop leader and as a panelist. As you float in the air, feeling like you just won the lottery, you hear the dreaded 'BUT.'

As you come crashing down, your attention once more riveted to the voice in your ear, the voice continues, 'there is a slight problem. The fee structure you submitted to them puts the total fee out of their range. They can afford X and they have to know right away as speaker Will Do It has the date available and is holding it open for them.' What do you do?

### **As I see it, you have four options:**

1. The first option is to say yes, you will do it for X.
2. The second option is to say no, my fee is my fee and I cannot change my fee.
3. The third option is asking the Speakers Bureau to reduce their fee thus cutting the clients cost.
4. The fourth option is to negotiate the best deal you can.

**The first step is not to panic.** Tell the bureau you feel confident that you will be able to work out a plan to satisfy everyone. Tell them you will call back within the hour with a proposal you think will satisfy the needs of the client.

### **Let's examine the options.**

**The first of course is to capitulate and do it for the offered fee.** We know in our heart of hearts we would do it for free so whatever they offer is a good deal. If we really think this, then why bother to have a fee list. By accepting the fee as offered you are telling the agency two things. The first

is they can throw away your fee list. The second is that you are hungry and you will take whatever anyone is willing to pay. Trust me, you do not want to be in that position.

**Our second option is to stand firm. "My fee is my fee and I cannot change my fee."** This is a fine principal and I can show you many a fine speaker who is no longer in the speaking business. How come? Do you like to deal with people who are rigid and inflexible? I don't, the agency doesn't, and certainly, the client doesn't.

**The third option is to tell the agency to reduce their commission, which, although attractive, I can guarantee will not fly.** They do not need you! You need them. This leads us to our fourth option, negotiating.

The client wants you and you want the client. This allows us to have a bit of give and take, to negotiate.

The client wants you for the keynote. Is there anything normally part of your keynote that you can leave out? For example, a handout or keepsake you normally pass out which could be eliminated and the cost saved? Perhaps they would allow you to insert an order blank for your books and cassettes with the client's materials.

If the client is having merchandise displays, perhaps they will give you a booth gratis to display your products.

In the workshops, do you normally include the materials? Perhaps you could charge extra. Do you make copies of the materials? Perhaps you can have the client make the copies, saving yourself the cost. Again, can you display your products at the back of the room?

Emphasize that although the products will be at the back of the room for viewing and purchase, they are not part of the presentation you have promised to deliver. Whatever you do, do not covert your talk to a sales pitch. It will be your ruin.

Wait a minute, you say, I don't have product. I have been meaning to create some, but I haven't had the chance. That's ok, obtain books and cassettes from other speakers or organizations which bear on your subject. I am sure they will be delighted to sell you their product at wholesale so you can make a buck.

**Look at your travel arrangements.** Can you combine a trip? What I mean is take a few extra days and make it a vacation? Many times these

conferences are at places you would go for a vacation anyway. Negotiate for a few more paid days at the hotel. Use your frequent flyer miles and take your significant other.

Call other speakers bureaus in the area, they might have something for you. While in their city, pay them a visit. Let them see you in person. Take advantage, be a double dipper.

Once you have had a chance to think things out, write it down on paper. Arrange the items to negotiate and revise your standard contract to include them. Call the agency after or during your faxing of the contract and discuss the points.

Emphasize you want to do the deal, BUT. Remember that this is a give and take situation and both parties have to feel they have won. The more points you have the more gracious you can be in conceding. **Who knows, the client may agree to everything!**

©Mike Crosa CPA, QuickBooks Coach 2008