

7 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

If you're a newly established speaker or even one who just feels like starting anew, here are 7 questions that can help guide you as you kick off your speaking career or business.

1 What are your goals?

Why do you want to get onstage? Answers vary from "I have something to promote" to "I have a special story or skill or experience I want to share," Knowing why you want to speak is important and can help you make many decisions during this process.

2 Who do you want to speak to?

Visualize your perfect audience. Are they younger? Older? Working in a certain field? Do they have a certain title? Or do they have a specific question you can answer? Where do you find this audience?

3 What's your natural comfort level with public speaking?

Some people are naturally more out-spoken than others but almost anyone can do this with the right situation and enough practice. Maybe you are shy and so solo speaking engagements feel like too much. You'll want to stick with panels or round-tables, or maybe be a moderator to start off.

4 Do you need help or speaker training?

There are lots of great programs for beginning speakers and programs for moving more experienced speakers to the next level. If you need help, get it. How do you know if you need help? Video yourself! Give a presentation and then watch the recording. Do you seem at ease? Are you able to get your ideas across? Are you easily understood? No? More training or practice can help.



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5 What kind of speaker are you?

Are you a storyteller or a motivational speaker? Are you imparting deep knowledge or technical expertise? Knowing what kind of a speaker you are will help guide you to the right kinds of events.

6 What does your audience want to hear about?

Go to your industry's conferences and events and see which sessions are crowded and which ones aren't. While you know what your goals are, it's the audience's needs you should be considering. Meanwhile, the gatekeepers, the event managers, are also looking at what the audience wants.

7 What's your topic, identity or expertise?

While it makes perfect sense to look to your work identity for your speaking identity, this isn't always the best or only option. What are you an expert in? What experiences have you had? What lessons learned? Or, what's your passion? Instead of looking inward, can you look outward for a topic? What does the future hold? What are the topics or issues that everyone in the industry needs to know about? Create speaking abstracts based on these topics.

