

# WHAT SPEAKERS DON'T KNOW THAT CAN HURT THEM



## 10 Questions Every Speaker Must Ask Before Stepping On Stage

By Arvee Robinson



## “What Speakers Don't Know That Can Hurt Them:

### *The 10 Questions Every Speaker Must Ask Before Stepping on Stage”*

by Arvee Robinson

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Imagine this, someone contacted you and asked you to speak at their event. You are all excited and do the happy dance. You send them your topic, bio, and picture. You find out when you're speaking, how long you are speaking, and you rush out to celebrate.

However, there is so much more that you need to know. If you don't ask these important questions, you could fail.

## **Before Stepping on Stage Ask These Questions**

There are two types of questions. One group is to help you make the decision whether to take the engagement or not. Once they have passed that first step, then you need to ask the second set of questions so you can prepare for your speaking engagement and create the best result.

## **Questions to ask to determine if you should say yes to a speaking opportunity:**

These questions will help you make an intelligent choice about whether to agree to a speaking engagement or not. Before you say yes to a speaking opportunity, ask the following questions.

### **Question 1: How many people are going to be in your audience?**

The reason you want to ask this question is to evaluate whether it is going to be worth your time. In other words, if you're driving an hour and a half and there are only going to be 7 people attending you may want to do it virtually or not at all.

If the organizer responds and says there will be 15 people, understand that usually means there will be 10 who show up. Likewise, if they say 10 people, they really mean 7. People will estimate a little higher than the actual number in hopes of getting that many. Especially when they say, "Usually we get..." know that whatever number they say, take off about 25% of their number and you'll have a more realistic audience size to expect.

For extra clarification, you could also ask: How many people are already signed up? They may or may not tell you. That too is an indication of what you are committed to.

### **Question 2: How long have you been running this program? How long has this event been going on?**

Whether it's a live or virtual event and it's their first one, whatever they said in question 1 it is not substantiated – it's just their guess or desire. I've had people say we're expecting 300 people and get 30. It's ok if it's virtual but not ok if you drove or flew there and were expecting 300.

If it's a brand-new event, and I know they are not going to make their numbers. I ask them follow-up questions:

### **Question 2a: Where are you getting your audience from?**

Their reply will be twofold:

1. If they answer, they are getting their audience from their database, then ask, "How big is your database?" If it's a free event, they are only going to get 1% of their database to attend. That means, for example, if they have 800 people on their list, they will get 8 to

register, and then 50% will not show up. You can gauge the event attendance by the size of their database. If they tell you their social media reach is 10,000 typically, that's zero signups. It is not going to garner one person. Unless of course, they are people with celebrity-like status (like Tony Robbins) and/or they are spending a ton of money on advertising.

2. If they tell you they have multiple speakers that are going to send out promo emails, recognize that these speakers are NOT going to send out the email to their entire database. I have been there; you cannot depend on the speakers. They mean well but, they are not going to promote your event. I've seen it event after event. They may have signed a contract saying they would send a solo email, however, in the eleventh hour they often let you know they cannot send an email or promote your event. By then, you have already advertised your event and promoted it with the speaker's name and face. Too late!

In the long run, you are better off doing your own events. Make them small and don't rely on other people to promote them for you.

If it's not their first event and they've done this event over and over, they will have a track record and know how many people will be there. For example, I'm in my 7<sup>th</sup> year of the Million Dollar Speaker Summit and I can tell you how many people will be at my next event. I have a proven marketing system. I know what my database and my social media will produce. I know that 150 people will sign up (paid and free) and 60 of them will show up. Do the math. Take your signups and multiply them by 20% and that will be your number of people who show up. If you have 80 people who paid, 20% of 80 equals 16 and that means 64 people maximum will show up. That's the beauty of knowing your audience and tracking your results. You can also give tickets away for free, however, be realistic, and know most of them will not actually show up. If you can get a few of those freebies to show up and buy a big-ticket item it's worth it.

I've done my [Million Dollar Speaker Summit](#) for 7 years. I have been doing live events for 18 years. I've had multi-speaker events with big names on my stage and I've had Christian events. I've had private public speaking workshops and masterminds. My events are always about speaking in some way or another, I just love putting on live events. You will too when you master getting the cheeks in the seats!

### **Question 3: Ask when the event and promotion dates are?**

Of course, you have already asked about the event date, checked, and marked it down in your calendar. First, they will tell you the date of the recording, or live event. In addition to the dates of the event, if it's an event that you must promote (multi-speaker or summit) then you need to also ask them **what are the promotion dates?**

If you are expected to promote the event, typically they will provide you with the promotional material. This may include sample emails, social media posts, and your personal affiliate link.

Recently, I received an invitation to speak at a virtual event where they will pre-record the speaker's presentation. The organizer's objective is to build their own database (with your database). Often the problem with this approach is the people that listen to the recordings are few or zero. Why would you do it? Any exposure as a speaker is good. People may not hear you speak on a recording; however, they saw your name on an email or on a banner or other promotional material. Also, perhaps you can do a stage swap with the producer which will help you build your own database.

A producer asked me to speak at this type of event however, he didn't have a track record. This was his first event. I'm all for helping people, but I had to gracefully decline. Why? Because the promotion dates were too close to my [Million Dollar Speaker Summit](#) and I'll be heavily promoting that. Keep in mind, it's a bad idea to promote someone else's free event so close to your own. It could confuse your list of followers. Always look at the promotion date and make sure that works for you and your schedule.

### **Question 4: How long do I have to speak?**

Your time is valuable and the event, therefore, it needs to be worth your time. At this point in my career, I typically, don't drive an hour and a half to speak for only 10 minutes. As a new speaker, it may be good practice to take such a speaking opportunity. There are times when I think it may be worthwhile. For example, if it's a great organization that I know, been there before, that had a great turnout, I will gladly go and speak. You need to take everything into consideration before you say "yes."

***Just as a reminder you should also know how far away the venue is. Then look at it on the map.***

If it's a live event that requires a lot of driving to get to, find out how long. Early in my career, I didn't do this, and I drove 2 hours to speak to 7 people in a noisy restaurant. It was not my ideal speaking engagement. Of course, once I showed up, I gracefully did my duty as a speaker, no complaining just smiles. That's what you need to do when you find yourself in a less-than-ideal speaking situation.

### **Question 5: Who is the audience?**

Make sure the audience is a group of people that hold the same or similar values to yours. You don't want to put yourself in a situation that would be uncomfortable for you, your audience, or your topic. Read my blog about when to say no to a speaking engagement:

<https://arveerobinson.com/when-to-say-no-to-speaking-engagement-opportunities/>

These first five questions will help you make a good decision about accepting the speaking opportunity. If you decide "Yes," then be sure to ask the following questions to set you up for speaking success.

## **Questions to ask to help you prepare for your confirmed speaking engagement.**

Getting the answer to the next set of questions will help you prepare and ensure you shine as a speaker.

### **Question 1. Ask for details about the venue, location within the venue, and set up.**

Go deeper with your inquiry regarding the location. Find out if you will be speaking at a hotel, a conference hall, or a restaurant. The space will matter. If it's at a restaurant, they may not have a stage or equipment. Therefore, you can't do a PowerPoint presentation. Continue to probe and ask:

- Is it in a private room?
- Do they have a stage?
- Is there going to be a screen?
- What is the setup like?

Then be sure to go there at least 30 minutes early to set everything up and do a mini test run.

## **Question 2: Is there a microphone?**

Having a microphone is not a given. If the event is, for example, in a Denny's restaurant with an audience of 10-15 people, you won't need a microphone. Most speakers can speak to approximately 40 people (tops 50) without a microphone. The more people in the room, the more sound is absorbed, and your voice won't reach the people in the back. There will be only "dead sound" in the back of the room. Therefore, depending on the size of the audience (which you should have an idea of by now), find out if a microphone will be available.

If they answer, "Yes," then ask: What kind of microphone will be available?

It could be a lavalier, handheld, or gooseneck (attached to a lectern) microphone. In the latter case, you will need to know if you will be forced to stand behind a lectern. Ideally, you want to be able to be free to walk around and not bound by a microphone.

Can the gooseneck be taken off the stand? Is there a cord or wireless? Is there more than one microphone so that someone can introduce you? These are examples of additional questions you may want to ask.

It's also not a bad idea to get your own lavalier or mini microphone that you bring with you just in case you need one.

## **Question 3. When during the meeting/event are you going to speak?**

At this point, you know how long you're going to speak. Now you want to know when during the event you are going to speak. The reason this is important is so you can be prepared. I have been surprised. I showed up early and found out that I'm speaking while the audience is eating their lunch. This is not optimal for many reasons, including not knowing when I will get to eat lunch or if I will get to eat. Find out if you're speaking before, during, or after the meal is served. There are so many more distractions if you're speaking during food delivery. Servers are rushing by with platters of food.

It's okay as long as you are prepared. This has happened to me many times where I'll be speaking while waiters are busily walking around with trays of hot food, with no regard to who I am or the fact that I am giving a presentation. They are oblivious.

Again, find out the meeting schedule, when the food will be served, and when you will be speaking. Knowing when you'll be speaking will help you determine what you can and cannot

do. Then you'll be mentally prepared to speak and deal with whatever else is going on around you.

#### **Question 4. Are there other speakers speaking at the event (other than me)? Where am I in the line-up?**

It is critical to know whether or not you have company on the stage. This will create another set of questions. 1) Where are you in the line-up? 2) who are the other speakers, and 3) what are they speaking about? Your placement in the event is important if you are going to sell something (which is the next question). If you are able to sell a product or service, it's better to be the last speaker. If you're not selling, it's better to be first. Speakers can be selfish and take more time than they are allotted. For example, if each speaker goes 5 minutes over their speaking time, by the time you get to the last speaker, they could have half of their time cut. If they are renting the room, there may be another meeting immediately following. In which case, everyone will need to quickly get out of the room. So, it's not always a good idea to go last.

If you are the first speaker, then be a professional and always stay on time. Never steal time from other speakers. It doesn't feel good when it's done to you.

#### **Question 5. What can I offer? Can I sell something? Can I offer a free giveaway? Can I have them fill out a form or have them sign up with my calendar link?**

Many events only allow you to make an offer for a free gift. You don't want to offend anyone. Find out what kind of offer you can do and then get really clear on what that is. If they say you can do a "soft-sell," ask them what that means, because it might not be what you think.

Always speak with respect to the audience and organizers and hopefully, they will invite you back. Read this blog [How to Turn One Speaking Engagement into Multiple](#) to learn how to leverage get asked back and find new speaking gigs easily.

Those are the 10 questions to ask before any speaking engagement to ensure you have the best outcome on stage.

### **How To Know if Speaker Training Can Work for You**

[Book a complimentary strategy session](#) with me here to get more advice and find out whether speaker training can help you land more clients, grow your visibility, and build the your positive reputation and business. <https://calendly.com/arveerobinson/30min>

## Quick Reference Question List

Keep this list handy the next time you receive a speaking opportunity.

### To determine if you should accept a speaking gig, ask:

- Question 1: How many people are going to be in your audience?
- Question 2: How long have you been running this program?
  - How long has this event been going on?
  - Where are you getting your audience from?
- Question 3: Ask when the event and promotion dates are?
- Question 4: How long do I have to speak?
- Question 5: Who is the audience?

### To prepare for a confirmed speaking engagement, ask:

- Question 1. Ask for details about the venue, location within the venue, and set up.
- Question 2: Is there a microphone?
- Question 3. When during the meeting/event are you going to speak?
- Question 4. Are there other speakers speaking at the event (other than me)? Where am I in the line-up?
- Question 5. What can I offer?
  - Can I sell something? Can I offer a free giveaway?
  - Can I have them fill out a form or have them sign up with my calendar link?

If you are ready to **consistently** land great speaking engagements, let's talk:

<https://calendly.com/arveerobinson/30min>

## About Arvee Robinson

### **Dynamic! High-Impact! Engaging!**

Arvee Robinson, The Master Speaker Trainer, international keynote speaker and three-time bestselling author. She captivates her audiences with high-energy, high-content, interactive presentations filled with vivid stories. Her audiences have fun while learning workable strategies they can put into action immediately. Arvee has presented over 3,500 motivational keynotes and content-rich educational programs all over the world. She has shared the stage with speaking giants Mark Victor Hansen, Brian Tracy, Les Brown, Sharon Lechter, Loral Langemeier, Tom Hopkins, and many others.



As an in-demand speaking coach for the past two decades, Arvee has taught over 5,000 business owners how to attract more clients, generate unlimited leads, and grow their business fast by clearly communicating what they do. She teaches simple, proven systems for delivering persuasive presentations, magnetic introductions, 5-minute business showcases, and promotional videos. Arvee has helped hundreds of individuals eliminate nervousness, command their audiences' attention, and deliver sales-winning speeches.

Arvee is a published author of *Speak Up, Get Clients: How to Use Public Speaking as a Marketing Strategy to Attract High-paying Clients*. She has published chapters in five collaborated books, #1 best seller *Live the Life You Love*, #1 best seller *Ready Aim Captivate*, *Inspiration to Realization*, and *Profitable Social Media*. And her latest accomplishment is #1 Bestseller for her compilation book: *The Impact of One Voice! Your Voice, Story, and Message Matters*. She is also the Host of the Million Dollar Speaker Podcast with over 100 episodes and over 5,000 downloads.

Arvee is a SCORE Orange County Presenter, Chair of the Women Business Owner Conference, and the Chair of the Women in Business Breakfast.

On a personal note, Arvee holds a B.S. degree in Information Systems and lives in Southern California with her boxer, Zeus.

### **Looking to hire an in-demand speaker?**

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