

Speaking Tips

Below is information given to Search Engine Strategies speakers, which should help you understand more about speaking at our show:

Sales Pitches: Audience members react badly if they think they are being sold something. If you are too "salesy," they definitely let us know in the feedback, and that can impact whether you'll be invited to speak at a future event. Said one attendee:

The conference has been outstanding except where a panelist is interested only in selling their products instead of teaching us. I paid to come. I shouldn't have to pay for a sales presentation.

Obviously, we do want your company to get some promotional value out of your participation, but to avoid sounding too sales-oriented, keep any PR-style points to one slide and run through those briefly.

The funniest way I've seen this handled was when a speaker told the audience that his PR department gave him a list of things to say about his service. He put these on one slide, then said "but here's what you really want to know" and went on with the core of his presentation. The audience laughed and didn't mind the mini-commercial. I've also seen the audience break into applause when some says they'll simply skip the sales pitch.

In particular, if you must do PR points, then use a **SINGLE** slide to set-up why you are qualified to speak, such as outlining the types of clients you work with, the sort of audience you received and so on.

In some circumstances, you may be asked to speak on a topic that involves your own products. To avoid problems, if you must mention your own products, focus on a "real life" example of how it may have been used by someone, rather than a more sales-oriented explanation of features. Also keep pricing information to a minimum. You might include such information on a slide but only mention it briefly, telling the audience that the additional information is there for their future reference.

Dress Code: Wearing casual business attire is recommended. Formal business attire is perfectly fine. If in doubt, overdress. You won't feel out of place, as many speakers will also be in formal attire. How you look has an impact on how well the audience receives your presentation.

Planted Questions: Don't get someone in the audience to ask you a particular question. If you want to ensure a particular topic is raised, talk with the moderator. They can then note that you and/or the other panelists wanted to comment on that topic. If it is discovered that a speaker has planted a question, it will greatly decrease the chance of returning to speak at the conference.

Being Positive & Negative: Many of our sessions involve helping attendees understand which products and services might be helpful to them. If you liked a particular product or service, great! Feel free to let the attendees know. However, if you have a financial connection with that product, it should be disclosed to the

audience, if this isn't immediately obvious (such as when speaking about your own product).

If you dislike a particular product, service or company, you're welcome to say that, as well. However, use good judgment on when to be critical. If you are asked about a particular product, and you've used the product or know the opinions of many people, then it is fair to be critical of it. However, if you've never used that product, then be honest with the attendees and say you are uncertain. Instead, share with them your opinion of that particular class of product.

Be Forthcoming: You've agreed to speak and share your experiences with the audience. Don't hold back on the sharing. They'll respect the wisdom you impart, and your reputation will rise for having done this. Hold back, and they'll react negatively, as one attendee said:

Some presenters seem really reluctant to give information. I understand people trying to protect their work, but then they shouldn't agree to present if they don't want to give details.

Show, Don't Tell: The more "real life" examples you have in your presentation, the more the audience will love you. That's always a big thing they want more of. Rather than telling them what to do, try to show them more. For example, you might tell an audience that cost-per-click advertising is effective. However, what they will remember more is if you show them this by explaining how two or three different companies ran a particular campaign and received a particular return on investment.

Fight, fight, fight against the bullet point summary of tips! Focus on screenshots and stories. **SHOW** things, illustrate them, don't just tell. It will make a world of difference.

Provide Solutions: The audience is looking for actionable tips, as much as you can provide them. Please try to guide them with specific actions as much as possible, to avoid them feeling like this attendee:

Many of the sessions did not offer viable solutions. Serious issues were simply addressed as 'good' or 'bad' and subjectively many people were told that they were 'screwed' as far as search engine success.

Facts Vs Opinion: Search engine marketing is not an exact science. It's common for there to be a variety of opinions about what works and how things work. **Because of this, please remember to say things such as "in my opinion" or "based on my experience" when stating as fact things that might be disputed by others or where you are not 100 percent certain is absolutely the case, in all occasions.**

Your opinions and experiences are valuable. That's why you are being asked to speak and share them with the attendees. However, helping the attendees understand that others may have their own opinions and experiences will ease the confusion they sometimes experience, when hearing conflicting views. They better realize that they ultimately need to weight up the various opinions they've heard and make their own decisions.