Seven Ways Keynote Speakers Can Pay for Themselves

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By Leah Doyle, SpeakInc

Some meeting planners’ budgets are so scrutinized that they have to justify every expense. Every dollar must be accounted for and needs to get a return on investment. Some planners, therefore, will dismiss paying $5,000, $10,000 or $20,000 on a keynote speaker because of budgetary considerations. But in reality, the right keynote speaker can improve ROI. Here are seven ways to sell your boss on paying for a speaker—showing how, in fact, a $20,000 speaker can pay for her or himself.

1. Quality speakers on interesting subjects boost attendance.
A terrific keynote speaker will create more of a demand to attend your conference. Even if it’s not a name everyone immediately recognizes, if the speaker’s subject matter and résumé hit the mark, potential attendees will take note. More attendance makes vendors happier, sponsors happier, and supervisors happier. This makes your conference a success, which makes you happier.

2. Speakers add credibility.
People go to meetings to increase their knowledge. There are many speakers available for $20,000 or less who either have a great story to tell or have experience in your market segment. Promoting your speaker adds credibility and weight to your conference. Not having a quality speaker can have the opposite effect.

3. Speakers add value for attendees.
Depending on the number of attendees you are anticipating, the cost of a dynamic speaker can easily be recouped by a relatively small increase in total conference cost. Many planners are focused strictly on the numbers involved in their event. If you change your perspective and view the cost of your conference pass against the overall cost an attendee will spend, a modest ticket price increase will likely cover the added expense of a speaker. And the attendee is getting something for that increase—the power of a professional speaker.
4. **It is an investment in future conferences.**
Most meetings happen year after year. If you are employed as a meeting planner or are in charge of putting together a conference, you are likely looking at building your meeting into a “must-attend” event. When you select a speaker with an interesting background and a talent for delivering his message, people will talk. This can build a reputation for your conference or meeting that will build every year. It doesn’t take a $50,000 or $100,000 speaker to accomplish this. You can start with this year’s meeting and a speaker budget of $20,000 or less.

5. **Speakers engage attendees.**
Attendees take the time and spend the money to attend conferences in order to network and to learn. But they really get engaged if they can also have a good time. A well-researched speaker can provide both knowledge and entertainment. There are $20,000 speakers available to talk about their remarkable adventures of survival. There are speakers who have found streamlined ways to accomplish goals or overcome adversity. Most understand that their message needs to be customized to the audience and be entertaining. After all, in a lot of cases, this is what they now do for a living. They work hard to build their reputation and their business. They need to inform and entertain. Those are two things your attendees will appreciate and find value in.

6. **A speaker can help create social media buzz.**
Most speakers in the under $20,000 range are pretty savvy at promoting themselves. They will have a social media presence and many have large followings. You can tap into this by connecting your conference with that social media presence. Most speakers today have video snippets that can add fuel to the promotion of your event. Getting those videos out as samplers of what your speaker delivers can generate buzz about your conference. In essence, you can view a portion of the speaker’s fee as “promotion.” You can also use your own social media to open a discussion about the type of speakers attendees would like to see for the following year’s event.

7. **Use your $20,000 speaker off stage, too.**
With help of a professional speakers bureau, you can find $20,000 speakers who will do pre-event media interviews or conduct a short videoconference before your meeting. You may be able to arrange a special VIP table or special session with the speaker for a limited number of attendees and/or sponsors. This makes your $20,000 speaker go farther!

Learn more about speakers in the $20,000 and under range at the [SpeakInc Web site](http://www.speakinc.com) and find more tips at the [SpeakInc blog](http://www.speakinc.com/blog).