



What to Expect of Your Speaker & What is Expected of the District

The Complete Guide for District Leaders and Conference Coordinators

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You have been tasked with developing an educational program that will get everyone in your district to your Conference. There are many different schools of thought when it comes to using members of your own district versus bringing in a speaker from outside of your district. The benefits of using speakers from within the district are that you give them the opportunity to grow and develop as presenters and you save yourself a lot of cost associated with an outside speaker. The question you have to ask is whether or not these members of the district are going to provide the draw and excitement for your event that an outside speaker can provide.

The outside speaker can be that part of your conference, club officer training, or stand alone event that people talk about fondly for years to come. With so many districts today, there are more districts than there are outside speakers trying to visit them so if you do want to bring one in, planning ahead is critical. Because it can be expensive to pay travel expenses, many Districts simply choose to not make the attempt to bring in outside speakers, and thus lose some great opportunities. While there is a cost to bring in an outside speaker, there are great opportunities to turn this into a way for your district to make money. Below are some of the ways that you can use your outside speaker to help you generate revenue as well as some general ideas for what you can expect from your speaker and what you should expect to do for the speaker.

This document will help explain some of the best practices and options available to your district with respect to getting the best value out of your speakers and it will provide you with some best practices for the organizers to provide the speaker with the best value as well.

To begin, it helps to understand that speakers are not allowed to charge a speaking fee for Toastmasters events. While the speakers are speaking for “free”, it should not cost the speaker a lot of money to present for you. After all, they are providing your district with a service that will benefit your members. Some speakers do this to make a living and there is no reason that they can’t earn a profit from your event while you earn a profit for your district at the same time.



FUNDRAISING

The first step in this is for the district to earn enough money from outside sources to cover the expenses of the speaker. This can be done through corporate sponsorships, auctions, raffles, or additional events such as breakfasts or workshops. Let's take just a moment to look at each of these:



Corporate Sponsorships: Every District in the world has at least one club that is sponsored by a corporation. This provides you with a list of “warm leads” to ask for corporate sponsorships by contacting the club members and asking if they can assist you in presenting this to the corporate management. This approach will be most successful if you do two key things. First is that this should be assigned to someone in the district who actually enjoys fundraising and dealing with companies. Your Leadership Trio and Conference Committee Members are too busy so find someone who you can delegate this to who will enjoy the assignment. The second thing is to develop sponsorship packages where you are not just asking for money, but are instead offering an opportunity. A sample set of sponsorship packages is listed below. You can change the amounts and benefits as needed to fit your specific situation.

Silver –US\$ 500 – Includes signage at the event with company name and logo, a one half page ad in the conference program, and one full registration to the conference.

Gold – US\$1000 – Includes signage at the event with company name and logo, a full page ad in the conference program, and two full registrations to the conference.

Platinum – US\$3000 – Includes signage at the event with company name and logo prominently displayed during a meal, company name and logo placed on back cover of the program, a full page ad in the conference program, four full registrations to the conference.

As you can see, each of these packages provides an increasing list of benefits to the sponsor and it increases your attendance at the event. Best of all, you don't need to limit the number of sponsors. With just a few sponsors, you can cover all travel expenses of your outside speaker and more. This would allow you to lower the registration price for your members, or perhaps you can use that money elsewhere.

Auctions: You can ask your district members to either obtain items that can be auctioned off or perhaps they would like to donate something themselves. This can be anything from gift certificates to local restaurants, or paintings from local artists, or even gifts of services. Your outside speaker is probably willing to offer something for the auction as well. If you can get twenty items at an average cost of US\$50 each then you can raise approximately US\$1000 for your expenses. The more items you have, and of higher value, the more money you make.



Raffles: Please be aware of restrictions imposed by your host location with respect to raffles. Some organizations do not allow them as they are considered games of chance. What you are actually doing is selling chances to win an item. This allows you to collect more than the item value. For example, if you were to raffle a new smart phone worth US\$400 and raffle tickets were priced at US\$5 each, then once you sold 80 tickets you would have collected the entire value of the item being raffled. If you sold 90 tickets then you would have raised US\$50 more than the item was worth compared to an auction where most items sell for below the listed value. You can also do something called a 50-50 raffle where you are raffling a chance to win half of the money collected in the raffle. If you raised US\$300 in the 50-50 raffle then the winner would win US\$150 and the District would be able to put US\$150 toward expenses.

Additional Event: It may sound like the last thing you want to do is to add even more events to your hectic program, but it may be just what your members want. In a workshop or keynote session during your conference, your members are part of a large group and may not have a lot of opportunity to ask questions. Doing an event in addition to your conference, such as a breakfast the next morning provides the opportunity for a smaller and more intimate setting where your members can engage with your guest speaker in a more profound and meaningful way. By charging a separate fee for this event, you can raise the needed funds to pay travel expenses for your speaker.

As you can see, there are many ways to raise funds. By using more than one of these methods in combination, you can increase your income in significant ways. While there is a limit to the travel expenses for your speaker, there is no limit to how much money you can earn through these fundraising efforts. Money left over can be used for programs within your district. Your speaker should be happy to work with you to help you provide maximum benefit to the district in the fundraising efforts. Some speakers will even come in early or stay late to assist you with additional fund raising events and marketing for the district.



Keep Expenses Low

It is always best to keep the expenses for your guest speaker manageable. If you are holding your event at a hotel, you might be able to arrange for a complimentary room through the hotel so that neither you nor the speaker need to pay for lodging. If your speaker is flying in, you might be able to have a member meet them at the airport and provide transportation back and forth to eliminate the need for taxis or car rental. You should plan to offer your speaker a complimentary full registration package. This is good practice with any speakers, even those from your own district. If your speaker is traveling far enough to require a flight, you should plan on providing coach class airfare. If your speaker is coming from an international location, you might see if you can get a sponsor to provide business class airfare. Some speakers will upgrade their own accommodations if you provide the economy class ticket on their airline of choice. If your district is home to an airline, they might be willing to be included as a sponsor for providing the airfare alone. Again, anytime neither you nor your guest speaker need to pay the expense the more profitable you will be.



WHAT TO EXPECT OF YOUR SPEAKER

This is your event and your speaker should work to make sure that your event is a success. There are many things that speakers can do to provide extra service for your district.

Marketing Visits

It is possible that your speaker can arrive a day early or stay a day late in order to help the district with marketing efforts. This could include visiting corporations where you are trying to start a new club or resuscitate a failing club. If your outside speaker is a Past International President or Past International Director, they have been trained to make these visits. You might also get your speaker to assist you with a demonstration meeting for a specific club. Just like the outside speaker can be a draw for your conference, they can be a draw for the club as well.

Marketing visits might also include appearances on local news media like television or radio programs. If your district produces a television program, you might want to make arrangements to interview your speaker for that video to be included in a later program.

Topic Selection

Your speaker should be flexible in terms of your topic so that the presentation fits the needs of your members, supports the mission of Toastmasters International, and perhaps even incorporate a conference theme. All of the outside speakers who are typically invited to speak at district events have a set of presentations that are ready to go. They may include handouts, PowerPoint slides, and they are well rehearsed. If your speaker is doing product sales, the presentations might be tied to the product. This does not preclude you from making specific requests of your speaker. Chances are they will be able to either modify an existing presentation or they may create new material just for your conference, club officer training, or stand alone event.

Extra Duties

Your speaker should be willing to step in to help you with any appearances that you think would make your event more special. For example, if your guest speaker is a Past International President or Past International Director you might enjoy having them do an invocation for your business meeting. If your guest speaker is a World Champion of Public Speaking, you might invite them to help you handout trophies at your speech contest. If your speaker is an Accredited Speaker, you might ask them to do a session on what the Accredited Speaker program is and how your members can apply if they are interested. You can also expect your guest speaker to be available for meals and at other times to circulate and interact with your conference attendees. Seeing your speaker on the podium is one thing, but sitting and interacting with them is more memorable and special for your attendees.



WHAT TO EXPECT OF THE DISTRICT

Now that we have covered what you can expect from your guest speaker, let's take a moment to discuss what they should expect from you. The good news is that most of what they should be able to expect from you is really just good coordination for any speaker whether from inside or outside of your district. To begin, early decisions are greatly appreciated. We recognize that many districts don't want to choose speakers until after Spring elections when there is certainty of team members, however this often leaves very short notice to line up speakers and it limits your opportunity to advertise to your members. If at the conclusion of your Spring Conference you can announce the date, location, and keynote speaker of your Fall Conference you have an excellent opportunity to get all of your district members excited about the conference and they will help you advertise by telling their club members. If you don't do this, then you must start advertising from square one at every event.

Plenary Sessions

Both you and your speaker should plan on a keynote or plenary session where everyone in attendance will be in just one session. This not only reduces the amount of coordination and break out space you need to run your event, but it makes sure that all of your members get to hear your guest speaker. This is especially important if your speaker is selling a product. Many attendees will not want to purchase the product if they have not seen the presentation to know what it's about. If you are not going to have your guest speaker do a plenary session, please be clear at the beginning that this will be the case. Please do not be offended if your speaker chooses to attend another district event where they will be a keynote or plenary session. If your speaker is a professional speaker, they need to consider their ability to earn income through product sales since they are not charging you a speaker's fee.

Product Sales

If your speaker is selling products, please read the District Leadership Handbook with respect to guidelines and policy surrounding this effort. The key points are that your speaker may sell products only for a limited time. The time begins once their session is complete and may continue for no more than two hours. It is important to note that no product sales may take place during your business meeting and you might consider speech contests of equal importance to your members. If your event is running a tight schedule, your members may need to use other facilities or make phone calls thinking that product sales will be open later only to find they missed an opportunity. Be clear in your program when sales tables will be open. This is not meant to imply that nothing else can take place while sales are open. Quite the contrary. It can be very effective to have the two hour window span lunch time programs, or even other educational sessions. This is also an excellent opportunity to have your speaker engage your audience on the night before or morning after your main event so that there is less happening during the time for product sales. Most speakers are willing to do sales more than once if your program allows it.



Product Sales Support

Please note that you are not responsible for providing someone to assist your speaker with set up and sales, however you might ask your members if anyone would like to volunteer to help. It may not be a current district officer that helps, and chances are your speaker would be willing to give some free products to anyone who helps them with set up, sales, and take down. If any of your members volunteer, please make sure they are introduced as early as possible. Also, for product sales, please be clear on where the product tables will be set up. If possible, have the tables in a high traffic area so that more people can see the products. It is also helpful to have the table available at least thirty minutes before your speaker's session begins so that your speaker can set up in advance and cover the display with a table cloth.

Meal Service

If your speaker is presenting during a meal, you can choose to have a head table or you can choose to allow other members of your district the opportunity to interact with your guest speaker on a more personal level. If you choose to not have a head table and your speaker will be seated among your other members, please be sure that your speaker's table is first to be served so that your speaker has time to eat prior to getting up to speak. They will not have time to eat after the presentation due to your members wanting to interact, even if the speaker is not doing product sales.

WHAT TO EXPECT OF EACH OTHER

Your event has a much better chance of success if you have a written agreement with your speaker to ensure that all expectations are clear. Ask if your speaker has their own speaker's agreement or if they would like to use the sample provided by Toastmasters International World Headquarters. Speaker's agreements should contain most of this information and any other requirements your speaker may have such as podium placement, dietary restrictions, or any other factors which will help them provide the service you desire.

Remember that we are a communications organization and the more you communicate with your speaker the more successful your event will be.

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