

Erik Deckers and Kyle Lacy



Branding

How to Use Social Media to Invent or Reinvent Yourself

Yourself

Foreword by Ann Handley,
Chief Content Officer, MarketingProfs



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Praise for *Branding Yourself*

“*Branding Yourself* is a good beginner’s guide on how to build an online presence using social networks and blogs that will turn you into a thought leader or expert or just get you a job.”

—Dan Schawbel, #1 International Bestselling Author of *Me 2.0*

“The biggest problem most people have with embracing the power of online networking and personal brand building is they don’t know where to start. Erik Deckers and Kyle Lacy take out the guesswork and roll the dice with platforms to find the right combination for you in this book. The book is a recipe for success...your success.”

—Jason Falls, SocialMediaExplorer.com

“In this exceedingly useful book, Erik Deckers and Kyle Lacy provide step-by-step guidance for building and maintaining powerful personas. With wit, wisdom, and numerous expert tips, *Branding Yourself* is the new roadmap for navigating the sometimes complex world of personal branding. If your best marketing plan is *you* (and it is), then *Branding Yourself* should be your playbook.”

—Jay Baer, Coauthor of *The NOW Revolution:
7 Shifts to Make Your Business Faster, Smarter, and More Social*

“Our parents taught us to find a great job with benefits, put money toward retirement, buy a home, and work hard, and you’ll reap the benefits. Our parents were *wrong*. The job market was downsized; the retirement account was ransacked; the house lost its value; and working hard has only put you in the unemployment line. Those who personally branded themselves were able to capitalize on the down-turned economy, and their businesses exploded. Erik Deckers and Kyle Lacy are providing you the blueprint for kicking off your brand and effectively leveraging online technologies to transform your future. [This book is] a must read.”

—Douglas Karr, Founder of the *Marketing Technology* blog,
CEO of DK New Media,
and Author of *Corporate Blogging for Dummies*

“In an environment filled with philosophy, platitudes, and ‘30,000-foot views,’ Erik Deckers and Kyle Lacy give us a refreshing how-to guide for actually *doing* something meaningful through social media. Here’s a trustworthy book to help you (and me) take real action to leverage emerging tools to create customers and make them happy!”

—Trey Pennington, Entrepreneur, Story Prospector,
Author of *Spitball Marketing*

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Yourself

Erik Deckers
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que[®]

800 East 96th Street
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Branding Yourself: Using Social Media to Invent or Reinvent Yourself

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Foreword

I'm imagining that you're standing in the aisle of your local bookseller, or at your local library, or you're flipping through these pages on Amazon, and you're wondering: Should I read this book? And, I suppose you might be looking to me for clues and insight: *Well, should I?*

Look, you're busy. So, rather than feed you a bunch of bloated text about what a gem this book is and how genius its authors are, I'm going to keep it simple and direct and give you an easily digestible five reasons why I think this book may be important to you.

Five Reasons This Book Rocks

The truth is I do believe this book is a marvelous means by which to help someone understand how to build and sustain a meaningful network through the smart use of both online and in-person networking tools and opportunities. (And by "someone," I mean practically anyone, from a teacher to a high-tech marketer, from a cook to a CEO to a candlestick maker.) But borrowing a page from Erik and Kyle's book, I'd rather *show* you than simply *tell* you, so you can see for yourself what I mean.

1. **Online tools like Twitter, blogging, LinkedIn, Facebook, and so on have created an enormous opportunity for individuals to build their reputations and create networks with unprecedented reach.** No longer are you confined to do business or create relationships with people you know in "carbon form," as my friend Mitch Joel calls face-to-face meetings. Instead, you can grow your network exponentially, with people from all around the globe. *Yeah, but how? And what's the best way to connect?* Well, that's what this book tells you.
2. **Wait a sec...Twitter? Isn't Twitter just a bunch of people talking about the burrito they just ate for lunch?** Yes, Twitter. And umm, no; it's not just about lunchtime menus. Twitter is a much richer experience for those who know how to leverage it. As Erik and Kyle say, "Do you care about 150 million people paying attention and understanding your message?" That's why you should care about Twitter.
3. **Your content is your key differentiator online.** This theme is a backbone of the book (and it's also the major thrust of a book I wrote as well): The "content" you produce across every social platform— what you say on Twitter, what you post and how you interact on LinkedIn and Facebook, and what you say on your blog (and how you say it)—is the key way you can begin to build an online reputation and "promise"

to your would-be clients, customers, or potential employer. It's also a key way to differentiate you from your competition, especially if you have a compelling, interesting, and wholly authentic point of view.

4. **Authentic equals passion (and passion is everything).** It's one thing to show you how to leverage online tools, in-person networking, and public speaking tactics. But, the authors say what really makes the use of such tools and tactics authentic is when you apply them to your own passions—in other words, when you figure out what it is you love best and share it with your own growing community! “Authenticity” might be one of those amorphous, squishy words that can be hard to understand, but its meaning and value becomes much clearer when you start to think about it in the context of your passion and how you communicate it to those around you, both online and in-person.
5. **Finally, this book is not another boring business book.** Erik and Kyle made me laugh out loud with their asides, comments, and analogies. I'm a sucker for a those who write about business with both humor and honest empathy—in part because it gives you a sense of the real people behind this book and in part because it's flat-out a whole lot more fun to read.

So, there you go: five compelling reasons. Should you read this book? Add them up, and they equal a resounding “Yes!”

Ann Handley

Chief Content Officer of MarketingProfs and coauthor of *Content Rules: How to Create Killer Blogs, Podcasts, Videos, Ebooks, Webinars (and More) That Engage Customers and Ignite Your Business* (ISBN: 9780470648285 , Wiley, 2010)

About the Authors

Erik Deckers is the co-owner and vice president of creative services of Professional Blog Service, a ghost blogging and social media agency. He has been blogging since 1997 and speaks widely on social media topics. He is also a newspaper columnist and award-winning playwright.

Kyle Lacy is founder and CEO of Brandswag, a digital marketing firm working with businesses large and small. His blog, KyleLacy.com, has been featured on The Wall Street Journal online and many other blogs. He is also constantly ranked in many top blog sites around the world, most recently AdAge 150.

Deckers and Lacy coauthored *Twitter Marketing For Dummies*.

Dedication

To Toni, Madison, Emmalie, and Benjamin.

—**Erik**

To all my family.

—**Kyle**

Acknowledgments

We often say that social media is a community, and this book is no different. We couldn't have done it without some very special people.

The words "thank you" don't do justice to our appreciation for your help. First, thank you to Katherine Bull, our acquisitions editor at Pearson, for taking a chance on us and keeping us on the right track. Thanks also to Brandon Prebynski and Leslie O'Neill for all those (at the time) annoying questions that, frankly, made this book so much better. And thanks to Karen Gill for copy editing (Erik says you didn't have to work as hard on his pages—yeah, right) and Jovana San Nicolas-Shirley for making this book look so good!

But we also want to thank people in our community who helped us become the kinds of people who knew enough about this stuff to fill a book, or even to become the kinds of people to write one. You have staggered us with your generosity of time and knowledge. So thanks to—in no particular order—Paul Lorinczi (Erik's business partner), Brandon Coon (Kyle's business partner), Lorraine Ball (Kyle's first employer and Erik's networking mentor), Hazel Walker, Doug Karr, Jason Falls, Tony Scelzo, Noah Coffey, Shawn Plew, the whole Lacy clan (Dan, Rainy, Kayla, and Kelly), Lindsay Manfredi, Jay Baer, the Brandswag team (Austin Wechter, Rachel Elsts, Stephanie Gray), Thomas Ho, Bob Burchfield—you people realize that if you're on the list, you have to buy the book, right?—Daniel Herndon, Sarah Robbins (who got Erik started in social media), Mike Seidle, and Scott Wise. (Scotty's Brewhouse has been a great place to meet and work on this book.)

(Erik would also like to thank Kyle for asking him to help with his first writing project, which led to this one, and hopefully will lead to many more.)

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We Want to Hear from You!

As the reader of this book, *you* are our most important critic and commentator. We value your opinion and want to know what we're doing right, what we could do better, what areas you'd like to see us publish in, and any other words of wisdom you're willing to pass our way.

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Public Speaking: We Promise You Won't Die

Maybe it's because we both have an obsessive need to be the center of attention, but we live for speaking in public.

Understandably, this gets a lot of weird looks and comments from our friends, because most people hate public speaking. Hate, hate, hate it with a fiery hot passion reserved only for snakes, tobacco executives, and Commies. (Our apologies to any snakes who may be reading this book.)

We speak in public for three reasons. First, public speaking is essential to building our brand and establishing our credibility. If we want companies and colleagues to realize we're experts in our field, we need to find ways to share that expertise with others. When we are seen as experts in our field, bigger clients are more willing to hire us for larger fees.

Second, we enjoy sharing knowledge with large groups of people. A big focus for Kyle's company is providing social media training; Erik taught public speaking for three years at the college level, and he very nearly went into education. So we both share a teacher's heart. (Kyle keeps it in a jar under his bed.)

Third, we like public speaking because people pay speakers to share their wisdom and knowledge. We were staggered to learn that organizations pay someone anywhere from a few hundred to several thousand dollars to come in and tell their people about stuff they do for a living. It could be a keynote at a conference, a motivational speaker at a national sales meeting, or leading a day-long seminar, but professional public speakers are well-paid to talk about what they do for a living, and to teach those skills to other people.

Think about what you do right now. Whether you're a purchasing agent, a marketing coordinator, a chef, or a license branch manager, you've probably found several shortcuts that help you do your job better, or you have some thoughts on the direction of your particular industry. Now imagine if someone handed you a check for, say, \$2,000 to talk for an hour to a group of your colleagues about these shortcuts or thoughts.

Staggering.

You've probably thought about a number of ways you can do your job better. You likely think that if you had a chance to share this knowledge, your job, your company, or your industry would be a good and happy place. The fact that you bought this book is proof of that: You want to learn how to share knowledge and thus create or grow your personal brand.

But, although it seems like getting \$2,000—or whatever you charge—for an hour's worth of work is the ideal job, you're not really getting \$2,000 for a single hour. You're getting \$2,000 for the hour you speak, the hours you prepare, the weeks and months you've spent writing about your topic, and the years you spent learning your craft. It only works out to a few pennies an hour, but it's \$2,000 more than your nonspeaking colleagues are going to get for the same amount of work.

Case Study: Hazel Walker, The Queen of Networking

Hazel is a good friend of ours, and she's the Queen of Networking. She owns the Indiana franchise of Business Network International, and she's a highly sought after speaker. We won't say how much she earns speaking each year, but she has a winter Lexus and a summer Lexus. We both look up to her for inspiration on how to grow our own speaking careers, so we're glad to give her a little space here to tell us how she got started.

I was forced to learn to be a public speaker. I believe that you must learn more to earn more, and speaking was one of those things I had to learn.

It became clear to me after I bought my BNI franchise that I was going to do more and more speaking. Even if it was only in front of my BNI chapters, it was important that I present my very best self. So the first thing I did was join a local Toastmasters group. Toastmasters is all about learning how to speak well—the technical aspects of speaking, and helping you overcome bad habits—which is what I needed. Toastmasters is where I honed my skills.

To learn and practice, I began taking free speaking engagements around town; then I started landing small paid speaking engagements. Once that started happening, I decided it was time to join the National Speakers Association since I knew that I wanted to be in the business of professional speaking.

ALL of my business comes to me by referral. I turn to my international network and ask for referrals, I go to my local network and ask for referrals, and I ask my clients for referrals. I have also landed several clients from my LinkedIn account and one or two from my Twitter account.

Today I do not speak for free. I ask everyone I speak for to at least make a donation to my favorite charity. This allows me to help my charity of choice, allows me to help those who want me to speak, and shows respect for my profession.

The most important thing about being a good speaker is being GOOD at it. Learn what you need to learn to be speak effectively.

Connect with your audience. I rarely ever use presentation software since it does not really connect to the people there to hear you. Get connected to the people who organize and attend; ask for referrals.

If you speak for free, ask the organizers to write you a testimonial and put it on your LinkedIn account.

Should I Speak in Public?

Depends. Do you like money and being a minor celebrity in your field? Next question.

No, Seriously.

Yes. Because if you're looking to move to the next level in your career, gain a national reputation in your industry, share knowledge and information, and even earn more money—in general, growing your brand—becoming a public speaker is one of the most effective ways to do this.

But I Hate Speaking in Public

That's fine. Public speaking is not for everybody. We don't expect everyone to become a public speaker. Not everyone can be an expert; not everyone wants to speak to large crowds. You can still have an outstanding career and can create a great personal brand without doing it. But most leaders and rock stars in their industry are asked to speak in public.

If you don't want to speak in public because you're afraid, don't worry about it. We promise you won't die. (Hey, that's the name of this chapter!)

A lot of people are afraid of public speaking. They're afraid of being judged. They're afraid people won't like them or will find out they're frauds. They're afraid of making mistakes and looking foolish.

One year, Erik was a volunteer speechwriter for a woman running for the U.S. Congress. She had been scheduled to do a recorded debate at a local TV station

against the incumbent. She was so nervous that before she could even give her opening statement, she tore off her headphones and walked off.

Someone from the station calmed her down and encouraged her to try it one more time. She put her headphones on, got through her opening statement, and then lost it. "I can't do this, I just can't do this," she cried. She then ran out the door, got into her car, and drove away. That was the news clip that made national news, which Erik was able to see while he was at a conference eight hours away.

The candidate's explanation later was that she got stage fright and let it get the best of her. She had been giving speeches around the district for a few months already but came unglued when there were TV cameras involved.

There are two important points you need to remember, that Erik's candidate forgot, when you give a speech, make a presentation, or even just toast the bride and groom at a wedding:

1. Everyone wants you to do a good job. Nobody is hoping you screw up so they can leap to their feet, point their finger, and shout "See? See, I told you she was a phony!"
2. Everyone in the room is just as nervous as you are when giving a talk, so no one's going to be unsympathetic or judgmental about your efforts. When Erik's candidate left her debate, even her opponent told the papers he understood that she was nervous.

Overcoming Your Fear of Public Speaking

If you're afraid of speaking in public, or you want to but just don't have the experience, you're not alone. There are organizations and opportunities for you to overcome your fear or gain valuable experience.

Toastmasters

The most popular, most useful organization for public speakers is Toastmasters. It's a great place to learn how to speak in front of groups, organize your speeches, give impromptu speeches, and even learn how to recognize what makes a good speech.

Depending on where you live, there may be one, two, or even dozens of Toastmasters clubs that meet weekly, every other week, or even once a month for 60 minutes per meeting. Each meeting has a set, regular agenda they follow. Members give speeches to earn credit toward certifications like the Certified Toastmaster and Advanced Toastmaster; they give speeches, learn to give feedback on others' speeches, which they present like a regular speech; and, even have the opportunity to compete in local and regional contests.

You can find out more information by visiting the Toastmasters website at www.toastmasters.org. Click the Find a Location Near You link to find a club in your area. Keep in mind that some clubs have membership requirements, like working for the company where the meeting is held. The downside to Toastmasters is that it can be a big time commitment. The upside is that the clubs are filled with some awesome people who really want to learn how to speak in public. You'll be surrounded by friendly people who want to see you succeed. The other upside is that dues are less than \$60 per year, payable every six months. It's the least expensive of the other options, but it provides the greatest value.

Toastmasters

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Classes at Your Local College or University

Taking college classes is another option for improving speaking ability. Although Toastmasters is an ongoing effort, you can give yourself a deadline by taking a course. You can take basic public speaking and even move into advanced public speaking, if you desire. The downside is that a college class can be pricey compared to Toastmasters. The upside is that you can cram everything you want to learn into a single class that meets once a week, or even a few times a week, for four months, and then you're done.

Seminars and Courses

Several organizations help people learn more effective communication. Whether it's leadership training, team management, or even public speaking, you can take 1-, 2-, or even 3-day courses on these techniques. The upside is that you get everything you need in less than three days. The downside is that they're often more expensive than a college course, and you don't get the same amount of time for practice and feedback that you do in either Toastmasters or college classes. These seminars are

great for refreshers or crash courses, but they're not enough to build an entire speaking career. There are thousands of courses and seminars available from national groups whether they're from organizations like National Seminars or Dale Carnegie, or local ones organized by local groups and instructors. A quick Google search will turn up any courses and seminars in your area.

Speakers Associations

There are several organizations for professional speakers, like the National Speakers Association, the American Professional Speakers Association, the World Speakers Association, and even the Advanced Writers and Speakers Association. These are geared more toward the advanced or professional speaker, and some may have an income-from-speaking requirement for applicants. Many of these organizations have meetings in larger cities, where members meet and learn how to become better speakers, how to get more speaking engagements, and how to promote their speaking events.

Private or Executive Coaches

We even know a few people who provide executive coaching when it comes to public speaking. These coaches will not only teach you how to speak in public, they'll help you reshape your image, dress for success, learn how to deal with new situations, and give you individually tailored, no-punches-pulled feedback on where you need to improve. The downside is that these coaches can cost a few thousand dollars. The upside is that you get specific feedback, and you learn how to fix your issues from a professional.

We don't recommend this option until you're ready to take your speaking career to that professional level. Make sure you try the easy, least expensive option first, and get some speeches under your belt before you look at a private coach.

To find a private coach, do a quick Google search to find speaking coaches in your area. Ask notable speakers in your area who they use. Ask the potential coach if you can speak to any of their past or present clients to get testimonials.

Finding or Creating Your Own Speaking Niche

You need to discover your speaking niche. What are you good at? What is your industry or field of interest? If you've been following along in this book, you've already figured this out. If you turned straight to this chapter, just be aware that this is something you need to do. We'll show you how.

First, this needs to be something you're not only good at, but have some expertise at. If you just started your very first job as a copywriter at a marketing agency two months ago, then chances are you don't have the expertise to speak to a room full of other copywriters about "The Top 10 Copywriting Secrets."

So if you want to become a speaker, you need to identify that area you're not only passionate about, but you have done for a few years. Once you figure that out, you need to find your niche.

Finding your speaking niche is critical in establishing your speaking career. You can't just select "everything" as your subject matter, any more than you can select "everyone" as your potential audience.

Even business motivational speakers know that they only want to reach a certain group or type of people—businesspeople, salespeople, people who want to make more money, and so on. Their audience is not the general population, or non-salespeople. They only want people who work in sales and marketing.

Start with the general picture, and then drill down further. Even a specialized field may have areas of specialty.

Let's say you're a cost reduction consultant. You help companies improve their bottom line by reducing their costs.

In fact, that's even your elevator speech when you explain what it is you do: "I help companies improve their bottom line by reducing their costs." (We'll ignore the fact that this is a boring introduction to what you do.) Believe it or not, that's not your potential audience when you're trying to find speaking gigs. Dig deeper.

"I help small businesses—businesses with fewer than 100 employees—reduce their costs."

Better, but that's still a lot of businesses. In fact, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2004, there were 5.7 million businesses in the United States with fewer than 20 employees. Get more specific.

"I help small manufacturing companies reduce their costs."

That's pretty good. We can live with that. We can actually go deeper into our specialty (small tool-and-die manufacturers, small tool-and-die manufacturers who work in the automotive industry), but that might be a niche to pursue for a business route, not your speaking field.

Keep in mind that you don't have to live exclusively in your niche. You just have to focus on that one particular field, finding different conferences, trade shows, and expos to speak at. Then, once you're comfortable there, you can branch out to a second niche. In fact, by focusing on one niche, like reducing costs for small manufacturing companies, you can choose a second one—one- and two-partner law

firms—without ever causing any problems for yourself, since those two areas will rarely overlap.

You can also have a small niche that fits within a large field. For example, we're both social media consultants with deeper specialties. Kyle focuses on corporate training and education, and Erik focuses on online marketing. These can cross into other industries with ease. Whether its social media training or online marketing, companies from every industry can use these services.

You can create your own specific niche that crosses borders, too. Whether it's transportation safety, identity theft protection insurance, Generation Y image consulting, or executive travel coordination, you can choose such a narrow niche that you can then focus on a wide market of ideal companies, like companies that are a specific size or are based in a certain region.

Again, it's important to drill down to that same focus as in the previous section. For example, don't just pick "small business consulting" as your niche. Even "marketing for small businesses" is too big. "International sales and marketing for small businesses" is a decent speaker's niche. A good number of businesses do business overseas, and you can tap into all kinds of government programs, sales organizations, and even specific industries to find speaking opportunities.

Once you identify your niche, you're ready to launch your speaking career.

How to Start Your Speaking Career

Do this: Go to your bathroom mirror, look confidently at yourself, raise your arms over your head and shout, "I am a public speaker!"

And now you are one.

@kyleplacy: Is that seriously how you got started?

@edeckers: Well, I didn't have a big mirror, but I... no, not really.

@kyleplacy: We need to write more than that. We have a page count we have to meet.

If you want to get started as a speaker, first identify your goal as a speaker. Is it to make \$5,000 in your first year as a speaker? To be a keynote speaker at your industry association's national conference? To speak to more than 500 people at once? Some goals can be met right away; others may take a few years, with these goals serving as milestones along the way.

For the purposes of this chapter, we are assuming you want to get paid as a speaker, whether you're giving talks as part of your regular job and you receive an honorarium, or you want to become a professional speaker whose full-time job is to travel around and give talks. These other steps we just mentioned will be milestones along the way.

Here's the problem: Most of your speaking gigs are going to be for free, especially in the first year. That's because you don't have credibility as a speaker, even if you just finished your third year in Toastmasters. You're still an untried, unknown quantity, and you're not going to get the same respect as the industry experts who have been doing it for several years. (And if you've spent three years in Toastmasters without speaking outside, you need to move off center just a little bit.)

Don't get hung up on the fact that you're speaking for free; in fact, learn to appreciate the opportunities. Think about all the stage time you're getting. You're honing your skills, developing your stage presence, and learning what works for you and what doesn't. This will help you achieve the speaking goals you have set for yourself.

Plus, speaking for free can sometimes produce the same results as speaking for money—getting more business, getting other speaking gigs, generating traffic for your blog, finding a new job.

Stand-up comics work like this when they start out, building stage time, trying to get as much as they can, as often as they can. They work up 5 minutes of material and perform it over and over—for free—at open mic nights. Then they move up to showcases, expanding their set into 7 minutes, and then 10 minutes. They hone that 10 minutes until it's perfect, and they keep performing it as many times as they can, usually for free.

A lot of these new comics drive for 2 hours just for the chance to do 7 minutes onstage. In fact, any successful comic you talk to or hear in an interview will talk about how they just did the same short set over and over, for free or little pay, until they started making it to bigger and bigger venues.

That's because one club owner will see that perfect 7 minutes and offer the comic a chance to do an industry showcase for \$50. Then all the other club owners will assume that if the comic did an industry showcase, he's good enough to do *their* industry showcase for \$50. Then the comic is good enough to do another showcase, after which another owner will ask the comic to open for a headliner in her club, and *bada-bing, bada-boom!*, one day, the comic is a headliner. And it's all because he was willing to drive 2 hours to do a free 7-minute set a few years earlier.

But the comics who do only two sets and then give up because they don't get a paying gig will be unknown, out-of-work comics who slowly grind their way to anonymous retirement at their data analyst's job in their tiny cubicle that's slowly killing them. (Oh, but we're sure it's different for *you*. Seriously, that won't happen to you.)

The lesson is the same for speaking. You need to speak for free for a while. That's the way these things work. But you won't always do that.

Because in the meantime, you're still blogging about your industry, you're still growing your network, and you're blogging to your network about all the talks you're giving, which is helping grow your personal brand.

As you give more talks, more people will see you. Specifically, more people who make decisions about getting speakers will see you. There are almost always decision makers or influencers at conferences. And they'll assume that if you are good enough to speak at this conference, you're good enough to speak at *their* conference. (Remember how club owners hire comics for their showcases?)

We can't count the number of speaking opportunities we've had because someone saw one or both of us speak at an event, only to be invited to their event a few months later. So while we're both out of the "speaking for free" part of our careers, we recognize that it was an important part of how we got this far.

Identify Speaking Opportunities

You'll start your speaking career by giving basic talks about your niche. They'll be to small audiences, they'll be local, and they'll most likely be free. That's because you're going to talk to local business groups, local fraternal organizations, and even small seminars for your local chamber of commerce and give them a basic overview of what you know.

You need to be greedy about these small, free opportunities. Get as many as you can. Get your name and your face in front of as many people as you can by calling business groups, attending their meetings, asking for speaking opportunities.

As you become involved with the business groups and chambers of commerce, you're bound to catch someone's attention in an area, someone who may serve on the board of a trade group or industry association, nonprofit, or conference organizer.

When you meet this person, pursue your own opportunities, don't wait for them to come to you. Ask the organizers and board members if they have speaking opportunities you could do. You can find a lot of speaking gigs this way.

That's because many of these people have a need, or will have, to find a speaker for their upcoming events. They may need to find someone to talk about your particular topic, or they may just need a speaker to fill a slot in three months. But they know that they are going to need to fill that spot, and that means asking their friends and colleagues for recommendations, putting the word out to group members, and working the phones and their contact list until they find someone.

And here you come, charging in on your white horse, shouting, "I'll save the day! I'll be your speaker for your next event."

@kyleplacy: What is it with you and shouting today?

@edeckers: WHY, DOES IT BOTHER YOU?!

By offering to fill the speaking slot, you're helping the organizer with a big problem. Not only will you get the speaking slot, the organizer will remember you. And when

the organizer is asked by her contacts if she knows any good speakers, she'll recommend the one who bailed her out of a jam several months ago by approaching her first.

Industry Groups

Industry group events are great places to speak, because you can focus your niche to such laser-like specificity, you would be surprised. We have been to conferences in which the presentations and sessions have been so esoteric, so far out, we were surprised people even came up with the ideas, let alone found a roomful of people interested enough to sit through it for an hour. But, that's the great thing about social media and the Internet: You can find a niche that interests you and then find other people who share your interests.

While some industry groups are national, many others are local. Figure out your chosen specialty area, and then see if there is a group in your area that focuses on it. It could be technical writing, visual artists, corporate travel planners, heating and cooling contractors, or left-handed actuarial scientists.

Your goal for speaking to these local groups is twofold: 1) to find new clients. Remember, if you show people how smart you are, they'll hire you to do a project for them or come work for them; and, 2) to find new, bigger speaking engagements. Small speaking gigs lead to larger ones, so speak to industry groups on a local level, because they can lead to national speaking opportunities down the road.

Once you make your name on the local scene in your specialty, take the leap into the national scene, and try to get a speaking slot at the national conference. Check out the conference's website, find the Call For Speakers section, and submit a proposal.

You don't have to limit yourself to just speaking to industry groups you're involved in. If your topic fits outside a single industry, go for it. Just make sure your chosen subject will somehow fit within what that group is already doing, even if it's a cross-over topic. In fact, a cross-over topic will sometimes be a bigger draw than the traditional topics you usually find at an industry conference. For example, HR professionals are probably sick to death of hearing about the latest EEO hiring requirements but would love to hear a seminar on how to use Facebook for recruiting and hiring.

Table 10.1 has a list of a few cross-over suggestions.

Rather than focusing your specialty on your own industry group, find other "allied" groups that might benefit from your talk.

If there's not a particular industry group in your area, or you live in a smaller area, find one that's within driving distance and make the trip.

Table 10.1 Possible Cross-Over Groups and Topics

Your Specialty	Cross-Over Industry Group	Cross-Over Topic
Tax law	Chamber of Commerce	Taxes for small businesses
Trade show displays	American Marketing Association	Pre-trade show promotion
Technical writing	Startup companies	Proper software documentation
Web designer	High school teachers	Creating a class website
Marketer	Visual artists	How to market art
Direct mail	Nonprofits	Save money on fund-raising
Financial planning	High school business teachers	Financial planning for teens
Cost reduction analyst	Office managers	Cutting office expenditures
Health insurance	Human resources pros	Saving employee benefit costs

Remember, stand-up comics are willing to drive 2 hours just for a 5-minute set, so you should be willing to drive at least 3 hours to deliver a 1-hour talk. And although it's good to get paid, don't expect to make big money when you're starting out. (But it doesn't hurt to ask for travel expenses for those multihour trips.)

Civic Groups

If you think of industry groups as a B2B (business-to-business) audience, think of civic groups as a B2C (business-to-consumer) audience. You're not going to get as in depth with a topic with civic groups as you would with industry groups. For example, instead of talking about tax law for small businesses, you may end up talking to a group of Shriners about the personal tax implications of using those little cars and scooters for parades. Or, instead of talking about financial planning for young professionals, you may end up talking to a fraternity's national conference about how to pay off college debt in five years.

The two best places to find civic groups are the Yellow Pages and the Internet. In fact, unless you're attached to your Yellow Pages, you can head straight for the Internet. Do a Google search for the civic groups you're interested in talking to, or just do a generic search for "civic groups" in your area, and then check their website and see if they have any lunches or special events where you can address the members. Send them an introductory email and see what happens.

Conferences, Trade Shows, and Expos

This is something both of us have spent the past several months doing. We're scouring conference websites in the industries we want to be known in and checking to see if they are looking for speakers. We've also been subscribing to newsletters that have different speaking opportunity lists.

You can find different trade shows and conferences with a little detective work and your favorite search engine. First, check to see if there are any trade associations or groups for your chosen industry or profession. Many trade associations will have a national conference, and you can usually find that information on their website. Some will even have regional conferences or local chapters, and you might find some opportunities there too. Submit speaking proposals when they're being accepted. Next, look for any allied, related, or even competing trade associations, and look for their conferences. Finally, be sure to blog about the hot button issues the association members are dealing with. Then make sure the conference organizers are in your social networks—Twitter and LinkedIn, especially—and that they receive notifications about your blog posts.

When you find a trade show or conference that looks interesting, go to the speaker submission page and see what kinds of speakers they're looking for. There are four main types of presentations you could make:

- **Poster session**—You usually find these at educational conferences. A *poster session* is basically a series of 6-foot folding tables with pop-up displays and pages of your latest research taped to them. You stand around and hope that people ask you questions, but they don't. They're there for the free hors d'oeuvres being offered to bring attendees into the poster session. (Not that we're bitter or anything.) Maybe we're biased, but we don't consider these real speaking sessions. Don't waste your time with them. In many cases, poster presenters won't even get a discounted admission to the conference, which tells you how highly they're regarded. (Hint: they're not.)
- **Round table**—Imagine putting 75 people in one room with 7 different tables, and presenters at each talking about 7 different topics. The attendees split up and sit at different tables. Talks may take 15 minutes or an hour. Although you don't get the same benefit as speaking to your own room, at least it's not a poster session. Sometimes this may be your foot in the door for a future speaking slot at the next year's conference. Once you've been a speaker for a while, avoid doing round tables unless you also get to do a breakout session. You don't get enough time to get into the meat of your topic, and the room is often too loud to be heard properly.
- **Breakout speaking session**—These are the standard speaking sessions that most speakers get. Most breakout sessions are scheduled as one of several going on during an hour, and the attendees have to choose which one they want to attend. You will speak at your session for an hour, and not have to worry about competing tables, posters, or people showing up for free hors d'oeuvres. Sometimes you may be asked to

give your session more than once, because there aren't enough speakers. Other times, there are so many speaker submissions that the conference can only accept a fraction of them. There is a varying degree of skill and energy in these sessions, so this is a great way to stand out from other speakers. If you can do a great job compared to other speakers the attendees have seen, you look like a brilliant orator to their 60 minutes of sucking out loud. Sometimes these are paid slots, but most often they are not. Speakers often get free admission to the conference.

- **Keynote address**—This is the granddaddy of all speaking sessions. (Actually, organizing your own seminar is, but we didn't want to discuss it in here.) Although a breakout session only lets a speaker reach a fraction of the conference attendees, the keynote speaker not only gets to address all the attendees at once, he or she often kicks off the entire conference. Some conferences will even have one keynote speaker per day, which means there's more than one opportunity for you. Plus, this is a paid speaking opportunity. At no time should you agree to do a keynote session for free.

Introducing Yourself

Once you've identified the groups you want to speak to, write a cover letter or email that explains what you want to do, what your area of expertise is, how long you've been doing it, and where you've done it in the past. Make sure that your grammar, spelling, and punctuation are perfect, and be sure to write each letter as an individual pitch to that group. Explain why you and your session would be a good fit for them, rather than relying on a form letter. Direct the groups to your blog (you do have a blog, right? Check out Chapter 3, "Blogging: Telling Your Story," if you don't.)

Dear Ms. Havisham:

I am interested in speaking to your Wedding Planning Professionals of Orlando organization at an upcoming luncheon. I am a direct mail planner and would like to speak to your members about how using direct mail postcards can help brides and their families save money on invitation costs.

I have been in direct mail sales for 10 years and have been speaking to wedding planning professionals and other party planners for 3 years. I recently gave a talk at the National Wedding Planning Professionals Association conference about this same topic, and it was well received, ranking as one of the top five sessions of the entire conference.

You can read more about me at my blog, <http://BobScrumrunner.blogspot.com>, as well as see some videos of my past talks. My usual speaking fee is \$500, plus travel expenses. I will follow up with you via phone in five days. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Philip Pirrip

Follow this up with a phone call a few days later as you promised, to see if the groups received your letter and if they have any opportunities for you to speak.

(And give yourself 10 bonus points if you said, “Hey, that’s *Great Expectations!*” when you read the letter.)

Promoting Your Talk

You’ve got your first speaking session arranged. Now you need to make sure people actually show up. You can always hope the organizer is going to do a lot of the promotion, but you need to do it, too. You have access to other people that your organizers may not: your blog readers and your Twitter and LinkedIn networks. Not only will you bring people from your network to your own talk, but you may end up introducing those people to the entire event, which is an added bonus for the organizer, and makes you look like a star.

What are the best ways to invite people to your talk? In this section, we’re going to help you...

...Learn five ways to attract an audience to your presentation

...Discover three secrets every professional speaker uses to increase audience participation.

Do you see what we did there? Your brain probably fired a few neurons, and your metaphorical ears perked up a little bit. We attracted your attention by promising five ways to attract attention, and three secrets that the real pros use.

This is a common technique used by professional copywriters to get people to not only read their sales material, but to get them to buy their products. If it works in a sales letter, then you should use the techniques in your promotional efforts as well.

We’ve discussed this elsewhere in the book, but it’s worth mentioning again: There is something about a numbered list in a headline or copy that makes people take notice. It’s like brain candy for humans, because our minds see that information and say, “Hey, that’s something I can easily understand. I want to read that!” Umberto

Eco even told *Der Spiegel* (a German news magazine) in 1999 that we like lists because they establish order out of chaos.¹

So take advantage of that little quirk in all humans and use it when you promote your talks. You can use these techniques whether you're writing a blog post, an article, or even an email.

First, write captivating copy. (Don't write the headline first. The headline is going to come from the copy.) Use the numbered list ideas, and generate Three Big Things the audience is going to learn. But then give each of those items its own list. For example:

1. Learn five ways to attract an audience to your presentation.
2. Discover three secrets every professional speaker uses to boost attendance.
3. Learn the five free social media tools you can use to promote your next talk.

Once you have written all the text, the headline will follow. Use the same techniques we just discussed, and create a headline that covers one of the hot button issues your audience wants to hear about. You can find this out by asking the event organizer what the hot button issues are for their members. Then, design your presentation and write the headline based on that.

For example, if Facebook is a big issue in the human resources field, create a headline like "Five Ways to Use Facebook to Streamline Your Hiring Process."

With this headline, we have hit three hotspots for HR professionals:

- We have a finite numbered list. It's more than just how they can use Facebook, but an actual number of items they can use.
- Facebook is a big deal right now to a lot of HR professionals and hiring managers. In a recent survey, 75 percent of hiring managers used the Internet to get a better idea of the job candidates they're screening.^{2,3} So by tailoring a title to a current issue, we are more likely to catch their attention.
- We're trying to make their job easier. Everyone has things he doesn't like about his jobs or things he wishes were easier. The hiring process is one of those things for HR professionals, so by "streamlining their hiring process," we're telling them they can learn how to make their job easier.

¹ www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/0,1518,659577,00.html

² http://articles.cnn.com/2010-03-29/tech/facebook.job-seekers_1_facebook-hiring-online-reputation?_s=PM:TECH

³ <http://www.atelier-us.com/e-business-and-it/article/one-in-five-hiring-managers-screen-applicants-myspace-and-facebook>

Email the description of your talk to the show organizer, who will put it in the conference directory. Then post an article on your blog, and then start promoting that blog post via Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and any other social networks you belong to.

Promote your talk frequently, about 2–4 times per week. Don't just send a notice out once and hope people show. It's going to take a number of different messages on your different networks and your blog to people to get them to start noticing that you're going to speak somewhere, and then a few more to get them interested in coming.

When you're at a conference, don't be afraid to invite people to your session. We know, we know, you don't want to feel like you're being needy, but you're speaking in public because you crave the attention, so that ship has already sailed. Swallow the last of your pride, and start inviting people.

Remember, the fuller your rooms are, the more you can spread your personal brand and earn new opportunities or gain new clients. Visit other sessions during the day, and invite people to your session afterward, especially if your two topics are related. You can also invite the other speakers, and as a form of professional courtesy, give them some love during your talk. (That's hipster talk for "Mention them.")

Your goal is to get as many people in your session as you can, which unfortunately means other speakers may have fewer attendees at their session. Don't feel bad; it just means they should have promoted their talk better. Buy them a copy of this book.

How Does This Apply to Our Four Heroes?

Although people generally speak for the same reasons—they're often desperately craving attention and want to make some money on the side—the path they take to get there may be a little different. So how will our four heroes from Chapter 1, "Welcome to the Party," use public speaking to advance in their career path or find a new job?

- **Allen (influencer)** spent 14 years as an account manager and has a lot of expertise in account management, marketing campaigns, ad creation, and the like. He would be a valuable resource to new marketing managers and coordinators, so speaking about a niche within marketing management would be a good one to pursue. Topics like "Marketing Analytics" and "ROI Measurement" would be good subjects to present to his local chapter of the American Marketing Association. Not only can he share his knowledge, he might be able to make good connections with potential employers there.

- **Beth's (climber)** goal is to move up the career ladder to a chief marketing officer position in the insurance industry, so she should pursue a speaking plan in one of two directions: She can either speak to the marketing industry, or she can speak to the insurance industry. And she can even do it with the same topic: "Marketing Tactics in a Heavily-Regulated Industry." The talk can be geared toward any regulated industry, like finance, health care, or pharmacy. Or she can gear it back toward her regular industry and retitle it "Marketing Tactics in the Insurance Industry."
- **Carla (neophyte)** wants to change careers from pharmaceutical sales to nonprofits, she is better off focusing on nonprofit issues rather than pharmaceutical ones. Although it would be easy to focus on a pharmaceutical audience, those aren't the people she wants to work for. Because a lot of nonprofit professionals don't think of themselves as business-people, business topics geared toward nonprofits tend to gather big audiences. Carla should focus on speaking to nonprofit professional organizations (that is, the Kentucky Fundraising Professionals Organization, Planned Giving Professionals of New Hampshire) and teaching people how to take a sales approach to fund-raising. This will not only show her business development expertise, it will put her in contact with people who are either hiring fund-raisers or know about fund-raising positions.
- **Darrin (free agent)** is a commodity as an IT professional because he "fixes computers." (Sorry, IT folks, that's the way we non-IT folks see it.) Darrin wants to start public speaking to enhance his career and job growth possibilities, so he has two choices. He can try to impress the IT hiring managers by speaking about a particular growing field, like "Walking the Fine Line Between Network Security and Social Media." Or he can do basic presentations to reach C-level hiring managers, like "Basic Computer Security for Office Staff." Either way, Darrin's talks should be geared specifically toward the right audience. And because Darrin usually only transfers laterally based on more money, giving the right kind of talk to the right kind of audience might also get him a bump up the career ladder.

Giving Your Talk

When it comes to giving speeches, there are a lot of books, newsletters, and blogs to read, besides classes to take. In fact, we already mentioned a few of the beginners' opportunities at the start of the chapter, so we're not going to go deeply into how to prepare for your talk. We're going to assume you know how to do these steps, like

outlining your presentation beforehand, rehearsing your presentation, dressing appropriately, and using language effectively.

But we will offer these seven ideas for organizing your talk:

- **Avoid putting a lot of text on your slides**—Our preference is you don't put more than 5 words on a single slide, in 144-point size or bigger. Use photos and graphics instead. This way, you can speed up or slow down your talk as needed. You can skip slides, spend only a few seconds on them, or even tell a 5-minute story about that particular slide. And people in the back of the room won't burst a blood vessel trying to read the tiny print on the screen.
- **Show up early**—Scope out the room. If you can go a few days early to check it out, do it. You want to get a feel for the room, see where the projector is, how the room is laid out, how much room you have to walk around, and in general to get more comfortable. But if you're speaking at a conference, you may not have that chance. Then you have to assume the conference organizers know what they're doing and be fairly flexible on your requirements and adaptability. Still, it doesn't hurt to plan for the worst, in case the organizers aren't too adept at managing technology. (See the section titled "Important Technology Tips for Presenters.")
- **Make sure the lighting is appropriate**—Under no circumstances should you allow the lights to be turned down low so people can see the screen. They are there to see *you*, not your images. You can give your presentation without PowerPoint/Keynote; your slide deck can't do squat without you. Lights need to stay up at a normal level. Let the people see your smiling face.
- **Treat talks like theatre**—You're not relaying information; you're *acting*! You should consider yourself a performer, and it's okay to act like one. Actors often use the phrase, "playing to the back row." This means their projection and gestures are meant to be bigger so they're heard and seen by the back row. Although you don't have to bellow and make large sweeping gestures, don't have conversations with the front row. Make sure you make eye contact with the people in the back of the room so they feel included in your talk. Also, new speakers often have a tendency to speak faster than they think they do. Make sure you speak at a normal rate of speed.
- **Mention other people, especially other speakers, during your talks**—This gives you more credibility, plus you come off as gracious, sharing, and noncompetitive. Speakers who do this tend to be recognized and

appreciated for those qualities when it comes to future, more lucrative opportunities. (At which point, you can totally crush those other speakers and grind their souls into the dirt.)

- **It helps to have a soundtrack you sing to yourself as you're being introduced and walk on stage**—If you have time beforehand, listen to music that puts you in a good mood and leaves you feeling confident. One public speaking trainer once suggested humming the opening bars of *Rocky* to ourselves as we walked across the stage to begin our talks.
- **Record your talks, and study them afterward**—You will be your own harshest critic, so watch and listen to tapes of yourself speaking. Take notes on what you need to fix, and then fix them. Stand-up comics record themselves and then listen to the tape to see what parts of their set need to be fixed.

Important Technology Tips for Presenters

We both love using our computers for our talks, and we're both particular about what we use. We're both rabid Apple fans and use our MacBooks for everything. Despite what our friend Hazel said about presentation software, we both love Keynote and the fact that it is stable and not prone to crashing. However, we recognize that PowerPoint is widely used and is easier to transfer a slide deck to someone else's computer. (Keynote can also export slide decks to the PowerPoint format.)

Both systems have their pros and cons, but regardless of who is right, there are several technology tips every presenter needs to know before you start giving your talks in front of people.

- **Make sure your computer is ready**—Shut down every program, hide all files on your desktop in another folder, and clear out your browser history and disk cache. While you don't surf Internet porn on your work computer, your friend probably does, and this is something your friend should know. So loan him this book (better yet, buy him his own copy), and make sure he reads this section.

We've all heard stories about presenters who clicked the wrong button on their computer and had some rather embarrassing photos pop up on the screen for everyone to see. While the safest bet is to never look at those kinds of things to begin with, at least make sure they're not easily accessible or accidentally switched on. So clear your history and cache, hide any personal photos and documents in a safe place, and make sure all programs except your presentation software are off. You should even turn off your Wi-Fi unless you need it for your presentation.

- **Use big photos and (almost) no text**—PowerPoint and Keynote can be used effectively *if they're used correctly*. When we do slide decks, we get Creative Commons photos for slide images and put 2–4 words on a slide. Remember, as the speaker, that *you* are the focus of the room, not the slides. The slides are there for visual support, and perhaps a little comedy. They should not contain the important information; you should.



Tip

Creative Commons licenses are copyright licenses from the creator of a work (photo, graphic, text) that allows others the right to reuse the copyrighted work—without changes, and at no charge—in things like presentations or in blog posts. If you use photos from a photo-sharing site, such as Flickr or Picasa, you need to make sure they are Creative Commons photos and not “All Rights Reserved” photos (which is legalese for “Do not reuse!”). There are different kinds of Creative Commons licenses, so make sure you research before you start publishing someone else’s content.

If you do use text, make the point size at least 144 (2 inches) so people in the back of the room can see it. If they’re straining to see from the back, your projector isn’t big enough. Hopefully you scouted out the room ahead of time, saw how huge it is, and noticed that the projector was about as effective as holding up slides and a flashlight.

But if you don’t get that chance, always assume the worst when it comes to available technology. If you stick with photos and huge text, you’ll be fine. If you only use photos to support your points, not make them, you’re not lost if the projector fails or is too small, or your presentation software crashes. You can still speak without these props.

- **Use *your* computer for presentations**—A lot of well-meaning people will offer you the chance to use their computers for your presentations, but that is sometimes more trouble than it’s worth. They may have an older version of PowerPoint, Keynote won’t run on a PC, or they may not have a remote or the right monitor cable for their laptop. You will have tweaked your computer to perform the way you want it to, and it’s hard to try to learn someone else’s setup or operating system, especially if you’re setting up your presentation 5 minutes after the last speaker finished and 5 minutes before you start.

If you use someone else’s system, you’re at their mercy. It’s also more than a little maddening to know more than the technical support guy

who's supposed to "help" you but doesn't quite know how everything works. Rather than putting yourself in a situation in which your entire presentation hinges on the quality of someone else's system, insist that you use your own computer. If you can't, be gracious about it, find a way to make it work, and hope it goes well. (If it doesn't, don't apologize for not having a slide deck. There's no point in embarrassing the organizers; that will only get you blackballed from speaking at future events. Instead, use your computer as cue cards, and speak without a deck. That's why the point about using big photos and almost no text is so important.)

- **Get a separate presentation computer, preferably a MacBook**—If you want to make a living giving presentations, you need a computer that's not prone to virus attacks, crashes, and glitches that will pop up in the middle of a presentation. For stability, ease of use, and graphics capability, you can't go wrong with a MacBook. And yes, there's Windows 7, which is much easier to use and more stable than all the other versions that came before it, and yes, Macs aren't immune to viruses. But a Mac is less likely to suffer these things and is less likely to crash in the middle of a presentation. And if you follow the first points steps as well, you'll have smooth sailing with a Mac.

And if you've got the budget, get a decent LCD projector. Don't cheap out and get the smallest, least expensive one you can find. Get a good one that can *brightly* fill up a screen from 25 feet away.

- **Upload your slide deck to SlideShare.net before you give your presentation**—We've been in rooms before where everything was hard-wired and bolted in place, including the computer, and we were forced to use their system instead of our own. (See the bullet "Use your computer for presentations.") Although it's possible to export a Keynote deck to a PowerPoint version, this really screws up the formatting and fonts, and it looks bad. There's nothing worse than seeing weird fonts and screwed-up slides as you're giving your talk and having no possible way to fix it.

 **Note**

SlideShare.net is a presentation slide deck-sharing site. Just like YouTube lets you share movies and Flickr lets you share photos, SlideShare lets you, well, share slides.

Instead, upload your deck to SlideShare the day before your presentation (see Figure 10.1). Then, before your talk, log on to SlideShare and pull up the deck in full presentation mode. It may mean you have to stand next to the keyboard to change the slides instead of using a remote, which is wicked cool and makes you feel like a big shot. However, at least you don't have to mess around with putting your presentation on a thumb drive and hoping your presentation software isn't newer than theirs, or exporting your deck to their software and hoping the formatting isn't messed up.

Finally, by having the SlideShare uniform resource locator (URL), you can give people the URL to your deck rather than wasting paper on printing 50 copies of handouts and giving them out to the 20 people who showed up. It wastes paper to have to bring home 30 copies of handouts that can't be used again because you created a custom deck and handouts for that particular presentation.

You can also shorten the URL at a shortening service like bit.ly (www.bit.ly). A bit.ly-shortened URL is 20 characters, so it's easier for audience members to write it down. You can also ask people to email you so you can send them the URL. This helps you add to your list of contacts as well, so you can communicate with them in the future (like when you're speaking again or have a book for sale).



Figure 10.1 One of Erik's presentations available on SlideShare.net. Note the clever use of a numbered list in the presentation title. And you can get a Simpsons version of yourself at SimpsonsMovie.com.

- **Always carry a monitor cord and extension cord with you**—Most places already have a projector available, but they don't always have a monitor cord. Carry a monitor cord (and a Mac-to-RGB adapter if you took our earlier advice and got a Macbook) to be safe. Also, get a 12-foot 3-to-1 extension cord. Then you can plug in a laptop and the projector and reach the plug across the room. Be sure to tape down the cord so attendees don't trip on it as they're filling the room. So you'll want to bring duct tape as well.

You may even find it helpful to carry a presenter's bag. Keep the cords, colored markers, notepads, index cards, duct tape, and any props you may use in your talks. Leave it in the trunk of your car when you're not using it so you don't forget it if you drive to your presentations.

- **Create screen shots of websites you want to use**—It's nice to be able to pull up a live website and show it off to a room full of people. But too often, you don't have access to the conference's Wi-Fi, or it's the public Wi-Fi and everyone is on it, so it's slower than a turtle with a limp. Don't depend on having Wi-Fi access. Create screen shots of every website you need, and keep them handy. Better yet, incorporate the screen shots into your slide deck, so you don't have to jump around between applications.

If you do have Wi-Fi access, open all the websites you're going to need ahead of time. Consider using a browser like Firefox or Google Chrome for additional stability and speed. And again, don't forget to clear your disk cache and history before you start. (See the first bullet, "Make sure your computer is ready," if you need a reminder.)

Miscellaneous Tips, 140 Characters or Less

- You're *on* the minute you walk into the building. The person you're gruff or abrupt with could be the person who gives your introduction.
- "Winging it" disrespects the audience. If you couldn't bother to take the time to prepare, why should they bother to pay attention?
—@LisaBraithwaite
- At a conference, be friendly and helpful to everyone before/after your session. They'll remember that as much as they remember your talk.
- Ask people to email you for a copy of the slide deck. It's a great way to track the number of people interested in your topic.
- Asking people for their email is also a great way to gather names for your newsletter. Just be sure you ask if you can send it first.

- Practice vocal variety by reading aloud. Children's books, newspapers, poetry, and comedy dialogue help you work on pitch, pace, tone, and volume. —@LisaBraithwaite
- Have a central idea to come back to if you get on a tangent. It should be something to make it seamless while you find your thoughts. —@that_girl_lola
- Start fast, especially online (e.g., webinar). Attention spans are shorter than ever. —@1080group
- Don't give a speech. Talk to your audience and add at least some element of discussion to it. —@GloriaBell
- We all have butterflies before we speak. Train yours to fly in formation, so the energy expends with purpose. —@IkePigott
- Before you start, drink something that gives you something in your stomach. —@CoxyMoney
- Use Tweetwall for Twitter comments and Q&A. —@CoxyMoney
- Make a friend (or four) in the audience by using them as repeated points of eye contact. Smile within the first 30 seconds. —@GrindTheMusical
- Keep your visual aids as free of words as possible. Use blank slides between photo slides often, so they're looking at you, not the screen. —@GrindTheMusical
- All the books, blogs, and trainings in the world don't mean a thing if you don't apply your learning. Make opportunities—get out and speak! —@LisaBraithwaite
- Q&A your ass off. —@CoxyMoney
- Put your closing AFTER the Q&A. The last thing the audience will hear is your final message, not a random or irrelevant question from the crowd. —@LisaBraithwaite

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