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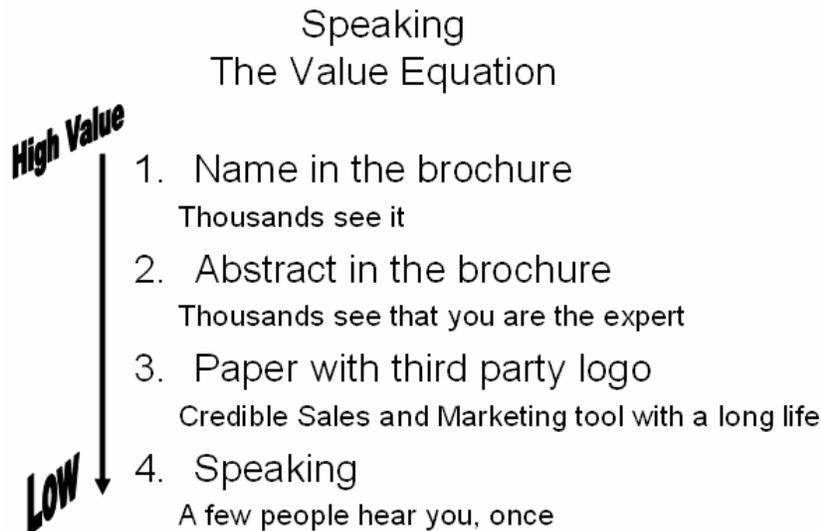
Advancing the business of software

Public Speaking - The Value Equation By Olin Thompson

Speaking at public forums (conferences, seminars and forums held by independent organizations, trade associations, professional and industry trade groups, and academic institutions) gives a person and their company exposure and credibility. Speaking at public forums has proven to gain more business, through increased awareness of the company and specific subject. But the real value is not showing up and speaking.

When judging the potential value of a speaking opportunity, we all think about the audience. We consider who and the size. We think about the percentage of the audience who are in our target market. We think about the roles and titles of the audience. Of course, we think about the size of the audience. Understanding the audience helps give us an understanding of the value of the speaking opportunity. However, we typically do not understand or even see the total value of the opportunity.

The value of speaking opportunities can be derived from many sources. Although showing up and speaking at the event is valuable, a number of potentially higher value opportunities exist.



Name in the Brochure - Most speaking engagements include promotion by the organization sponsoring the event. If the sponsoring organization includes the speaker's name and company name in the promotional materials, they are seen by a very large

audience. The audience has just seen the company and person as endorsed by the sponsoring organization as an expert in the topic.

Abstract in the brochure - If the promotional material or event materials include an abstract of the speech, the person and company have just been endorsed as an expert in the specific topic. The combination of these endorsements and the long list of people who receive the promotional materials have significant value to the speaker and the company. This value can be further leverage by referencing future and past speaking engagements in your promotional materials. For example, a web page listing speaking engagements on your web site allows you to present your credentials, as endorsed by the event sponsors to your customers, prospects and other for other organizations looking for speakers.

Hand-outs - Organizations often insist on some type of handout. It may be a copy of slides or a paper. In both cases, these handouts can be used as marketing and sales tools for the speaker and the company. Assuming the organization will allow you to use their logo on the handout, the use of the logo will increase its credibility as a sales or marketing tool. The document is no longer a sales piece but a third party endorsed document.

What if the organization does not require a handout? You can still create a handout for use as a sales and marketing tool and, perhaps, still use the logo of the sponsoring organization.

Speaking - Showing up and speaking has value but often the value is limited. Even for the larger audience, the value in the actual speech is often a minor part of the total value (promotion, third party endorsement, visibility, etc.). When a speech is made, relatively few people hear it and it has no longevity.

Is speaking good for the individual and the company? Usually, the answer is yes. When calculating the value of a speaking opportunity, look beyond the specific audience for the speech. Value is derived from additional opportunities beyond showing up and speaking, often the most of the value has little to do with the actual speech.

About the author

Olin Thompson has over 25 years experience as an executive in the software industry with roles in general management, sales, marketing and business development. Olin advises software companies on strategy and tactics in business strategy, sales and marketing. He is a frequent author and an award-winning speaker on topics of interest to both software industry and end-user companies. He can be reached at OT@OlinThompson.com.