

50 YEARS *of* SPEAKING ADVICE



**GIFTS, GUIDANCE, AND GRATITUDE
FROM HALL OF FAME SPEAKERS**

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Foreward

Celebrating 50 Years of Speaking Excellence

Welcome to a journey of half a century, a voyage through the timeless art of oration and the profound impact it has had on millions of lives. It is with immense pleasure and deep reverence that we present to you this extraordinary anthology, a tribute to the Hall of Fame Speakers who have graced stages around the world with their brilliance and eloquence.

Prepare to be inspired as you hear from a diverse group of individuals including business owners, healthcare professionals, magicians, comedians, military officers, and Miss America contestants. Each Hall of Fame Speaker is dedicated to honing their skills to the highest level, with a common goal of informing, entertaining, and making a positive impact across the globe. Get ready for a journey of motivation, laughter, and empowerment as their unique talents come together to make a difference in the world.

As we celebrate 50 years of speaking excellence, we have embarked on a quest to gather the wisdom and experiences of the most exceptional communicators in history. Each chapter in this book is penned by a distinguished member of the Hall of Fame Speakers, individuals whose names have become synonymous with inspiration, transformation, and the power of words.

To craft this masterpiece, we invited the recipients of the prestigious Council of Peers Award for Excellence (CPAE) to reflect on their journey and answer some profound questions that unveil the essence of their greatness.

We inquired about the very core of being professional speakers, as we asked them to reflect on these questions:

"What are you known for?" Their responses to this question illuminate the diverse array of talents and passions that have propelled them to the pinnacle of their profession. From engaging storytelling to unyielding authenticity, from profound empathy to infectious humor, these Hall of Fame Speakers have

carved their unique niches in the world of communication.

"What makes Hall of Fame Speakers stand out?" This inquiry delves into the soul of greatness. The answers provided by our honorees underscore that it is not just skill or knowledge alone that elevates a speaker to the Hall of Fame. It is their unwavering commitment to serve, inspire, and make a difference in the lives of their audience. It is the genuine connection they forge with their listeners, leaving them moved, motivated, and forever changed.

"What do you do differently that makes you stand out?" Here, our Hall of Fame Speakers reveal their secret ingredients—their special brand of magic that sets them apart from the rest. It is the courage to take risks, the willingness to be vulnerable, and the constant pursuit of self-improvement. It is the art of crafting unforgettable experiences that touch the heart and linger in the memory.

"What do you wish you had done more of? What do you wish you had done less of?" In these introspective moments, we find that even the most

accomplished among us harbor aspirations and yearnings for greater impact. Our speakers candidly share the dreams they continue to pursue, the areas in which they strive to grow, and the change they hope to create in the years to come.

As you embark on this literary expedition, we implore you to absorb the wisdom and inspiration offered by these remarkable individuals. Let their stories empower you to find your own voice, to embrace your unique gifts, and to make a lasting difference in the lives of others. Let their experiences remind you that greatness is not a destination but a journey of continuous learning and growth.

To the Hall of Fame Speakers who have graciously shared their wisdom, we extend our deepest gratitude. Your words have transformed this book into a timeless beacon of motivation and enlightenment. To the readers, you hold in your hands a treasure of insights that can shape destinies and change the world.

With boundless enthusiasm and appreciation,
The CPAE Leadership Committee of 2023

Bill Cates CSP, CPAE, Chair

Mary Kelly, PhD, CSP, CPAE, CDR, USN

Jane Jenkins Herlong, CSP, CPAE, Chair Emeritus

Phil Jones, CSP, CPAE

Lenora Billings Harris, CSP, CPAE, Cavett Winner

Sam Richter, CSP, CPAE

John Sileo, CSP, CPAE

Tony Alessandra

PHD, CSP, CPAE

Dr. Tony Alessandra is best known for The Platinum Rule and the online DISC assessment.

Focus on your topic, your delivery and your professionalism. Topic-wise, don't be all things to all people. Focus on a topic you know & love and become THE expert in it. Delivery-wise, hone your speaking craft. Get great speech coaching from experts such as Patricia Fripp & Jim Cathcart. As a professional, deliver on what you promise when you promise it. Professionals are defined not by the business they're in but by the way they're in business.

I have a NYC. Italian speech delivery with humor and stories that connect to my topic. In the early 1980's, Bill Gove took me aside and said that I was delivering my speeches as a professor when I should be delivering them as a funny, mischievous NYC Italian,

which I was off-stage. Once I took his advice, my career skyrocketed.

Early in my speaking career, I wish I had done fewer topics and focused on one signature speech, such as my Platinum Rule speech. I wish I had created fewer products and fully marketed the few significant ones. I wish I had done more occasional speeches and prepared more for the ones I did. I wish I had more speech coaching earlier in my career.

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Simon T Bailey

CSP, CPAE

Simon: Brilliance - book Shift Your Brilliance -
Harness the Power of You, Inc.

Simon says, take your MEDS - Meditate, Exercise,
Diet, and Sleep.

As a former Disney Sales Leader, I share profound
insights with actionable wisdom.

Build more business systems instead of paying
weekend warriors to scale my brand.

Be an original voice instead of an annoying echo.

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Barry Banther

CMC, CSP, CPAE

I help families work together in business and live together in harmony.

Obsess with inspiring your audience to reconsider their current state and open their hearts and minds to personal growth.

I bring hope to family-owned business leaders and closely held partnerships that they can succeed in business and live together in greater harmony.

I wish I had devoted more time to developing my intellectual property.

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Ross Bernstein

CSP, CPAE

Best-selling author of nearly 50 sportsbooks.

There is an old saying from the world of sports: “Will beats skill,” I think that is my unique differentiator -- to try to work harder than everybody else...to grind. To be a “grinder” in sports means you are relentless; you don’t take no for an answer; it means getting up every time you get knocked down; and sometimes, it means you win ugly.

To be successful in this business doesn’t always have to look pretty; it just means keep grinding. Keep going. Keep reinventing yourself. Keep making those calls. Keep solving your customer’s problems. Keep adding value.

There will always be better, more competent, qualified, and prettier people than you. Just don’t ever let them out-work you. That will be your ticket to success.

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Lenora Billings-Harris

CSP, CPAE

Turning barriers into bridges by disrupting bias.

Aspire to be the best you can be in your authentic way. Be culturally curious instead of a culture critic. It will enable you to make good choices within your area of expertise. Good choices lead to better decisions about your business and clients' needs.

My clients often tell me they hire me to work with them because they trust me. My style is not shame and blame; I listen and provide candid, actionable recommendations for their needs.

I wish I had focused more on my key talents and skills to share. I wish I had worried less about what others were doing in comparison.

Follow your passion and find ways to monetize it.

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Joe Calloway

CSP, CPAE

Keynote/Book: Becoming A Category of One. However good you think your speech is - make it better. Stay current and relevant by always thinking of what problem you are solving for your client.

I became very conversational with my presentations. I didn't give a polished, memorized speech. I used notes while making changes in the presentation, sometimes right up to when I was introduced. I never used PowerPoint. There was a lot of give and take with the audience.

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Colette Carlson

MA, CSP, CPAE

Delivering inspiring keynotes to leaders and teams to strengthen behaviors fostering a connected, communicative, collaborative culture.

The unexpected, customized combination platter I provide impacts audiences. One moment they are laughing out loud at my signature prop skit showing a day in their life, and the next, their pens are moving to capture current research and powerful language to leverage empathy, connection, and collaboration with their clients, colleagues, and teams. Applicable stories built with humor and heart remind audiences to lead with humanity. It's not uncommon for attendees to ask me, "How long have you worked for our company?"

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Christine Cashen

CSP, CPAE

Humorous Keynote and Stopping Global Whining.

Becoming a Hall of Fame Speaker is like being a chef—it takes time, dedication, and delicious ingredients. Here's the “secret sauce”:

- Whip up a personalized feast. How can you make feast the stars of the show? Find inside stories and scoop to let them know you have done your homework! It's like cooking up a special dish just for them.
- Add a pinch of humor. Look for universal truths and capitalize on finding the funny within your audience. Be relatable!
- Beware of the “ME Allergy.” The audience may get sick when you have too many “Me, My, and I's” in your speech. Add some “You's” to the mix, making your audience feel seen, heard, and engaged.

- Feedback is like a buffet—it may have some dishes you love and some you’d rather avoid. Take the juicy bits of feedback that resonate with you, learn, and leave the stale croutons behind.
- Cook with natural ingredients. Don’t focus on becoming a Hall of Fame Speaker; instead, focus on perfecting your craft. Be as easy to work with as a well-prepared dish, sprinkle professionalism, uniqueness, kindness, and generosity. Keep honing your skills, stay humble, and let your authentic talent shine. Bon Appetite!

While other speakers may simply show up, give their speech, and head home, I try to take it to the next level. I always attend those extra functions, mingle with the crowd, and amp up my energy before stepping on stage.

Once I grab the mic, I become fully present, willing, and open to whatever comes my way. I thrive on those unexpected moments and embrace improvisation, going off script to address what’s on the audience’s mind. Those are my favorite moments, where I can riff

and connect with Authenticity and the “real factor.” And, look, Mom, “NO SLIDES!” It gives me the freedom to play, and the audience and I have an absolute blast!

I believe being fully engaged with the audience, going with the flow, and bringing that genuine, unscripted energy are the keys to creating an unforgettable experience.

“If I could turn back time” (cue Cher’s iconic song), I would have prioritized doing more of what truly ignited my passion and worried less about keeping up with everyone else. There’s no need to burden yourself with unnecessary pressure to blog, create YouTube videos, maintain a social media presence, send newsletters, or start a podcast if they don’t resonate with you. Instead, discover that one thing, that sweet spot, which propels your business and brand forward and fills you with joy. By focusing on what you genuinely love to do, rather than forcing yourself into tasks you dread, you’ll unlock a wellspring of authentic energy and creativity.

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Bill Cates

CSP, CPAE, MDSG

Referrals and Radical Relevance - speaking, books, video-based training, and coaching.

Building a successful business and continually becoming a better speaker. Some Hall of Fame speakers are pure keynoters. Some are trainers, seminar leaders, and even facilitators.

To be inducted into the Hall of Fame, you also need a current body of evidence that shows you excel in all the areas required by the Hall of Fame. While I don't think I do anything unique from other speakers, I have gotten good at creating highly customized presentations. I interview 4-5 audience members and make them the stars of my presentation for a few minutes.

I also have created a variety of channels where a client can learn my strategies and methods, i.e., speaking, video training, coaching, and writing.

I have created a long-lasting and visible reputation in my target market (Financial Services). I no longer need to prospect for business. The business comes to me.

Finally - I work hard to remain relevant for my clients. My “relevance lab” consists of my podcast, coaching, and pre-program interviews.

The best marketing strategy is to be a great and relevant speaker (emphasis on relevance). Being a great speaker, however, is not always enough. You also want to create a reputation for yourself, such that others talk about you. Creating a reputation is usually easier inside a clearly defined target market.

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Jim Cathcart

CSP, CPAE

Mentor to Experts, Author of *The Acorn Principle*, *what to Do When You're the Speaker*, *Relationship Selling* and *Mentor Minutes*. TEDx Top 1%.

Become the person who would achieve your goals. Develop the traits, attitudes, habits and personal qualities that make others want to hire you or become your friend. Be a magnet for the success you seek. Ask daily, "How would the person I'd like to do the things I am about to do?"

I see past the process and isolate the purpose. For example: what is the purpose of business? Is it profit? No, profit is an essential by-product of a well-run business. The purpose of the business is to solve a problem or make life better for the customer. Do that, and you'll earn the profits you desire.

How do you motivate people or yourself?

Identify their Motives. Motive + Action = Motivation. What they want is what causes them to take action. Connect with that, and motivation is more straightforward.

How do you reach the Top 1% of your field?

Study the industry or profession, the best and most respected people in it, and the value it provides to the world, and do likewise. Commit to improving the profession and being of service as a professional. That will propel you to the top of the field.

Send money ahead to the person you will be 30 years from now. Save and invest. Take time to savor this wonderful life. Don't just work; enjoy the work, people, and places where you do it. Make every part of your life reflect the person you want to be. Have integrity in your entire life. If you want to be admired, look for things to admire about others. Be a magnet for the life you want, be an "eligible receiver." That is what will make it last.

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Ron Culberson

MSW, CSP, CPAE

Keynote speaker focusing on the concept of “Do it Well. Make it Fun.”

Early in my career, many people told me to raise my fees and pursue the corporate market. But I was never driven by money or worked in the corporate market. Instead, as a former hospice social worker, I was drawn to the non-profit world, where people were more mission-driven. Deciding to pursue that market for my speaking business and keep my fees modest filled my calendar and allowed me to work in an environment congruent with my background and values. It made my work more enjoyable, and I connected with wonderful people. I think it's easy to listen to a lot of advice from successful people, but ultimately, we must find our place in the world. When we do, we get paid for what we love. How cool is that?

I have a background in hospice care as a social worker, middle manager, and senior leader. I did my graduate research on the benefits of humor. I feel it is this unique combination of hospice and humor that has given me a different perspective on life, work, and personal well-being. I help people seek excellence in everything they do while enjoying their time on the planet. Oh, and I'm funny. Not so much here, but onstage. Just saying.

I wish I had created a better habit of writing new material. While I had quite a bit, there are still dozens of unwritten stories.

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Mike Domitrz

CSP, CPAE

Ask First. Respect the Answer. Building a Culture of Respect & Consent.

Be willing to surrender to the moment and not feel a need to “have to” and instead “choose” that fits your soul and brilliance. Do less and do it Better! Doing less gives you the time to focus where you excel.

My ability to have a back-and-forth conversation through “Call and Response” with the audience and to adjust on the fly to what the audience needs or is seeking. One of my gifts is simplifying the message into actionable choices each person can make daily. And we do all of this while challenging societal norms in a safe atmosphere.

I wish I had done LESS more often. I made the mistake of trying to do it all the time. Give yourself more grace.

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Meridith Elliott Powell

MBA, CSP, CPAE

Turning Uncertainty To Competitive Advantage.

You never master the craft of becoming a professional speaker. There is always something to learn, someone to learn from. Remain humble, seek and take advice. Learn from your audiences, other speakers, and accept that material, stories, topics run their course. Always be open to making your keynote better, more relevant and more valuable for the audience. Our audiences give us something very precious and that is their time, ensure them return on investment.

This is a business, and one that has to be grown and worked every single day. If you do not think you are in sales, you do not want to be in sales, you will struggle and make this business so much harder than it has to be. Learn to sell early, learn to sell often, and even if you hire a salesperson, never completely delegate this role.

If I could turn back time, I would have focused more on storytelling, humor and audience engagement and less on content. I would have paid more attention to how audiences engage and what makes you relevant on stage, worried less about what I thought a keynote should be, and focused more on how to add value to my audience.

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Lisa Ford

CSP, CPAE

Speaking on Customer Experience, Creating Customer-Focused Cultures and Customer Loyalty and Bestselling DVD series on Customer Service.

Hall of Fame speakers spend time perfecting the art and craft of presentations. There will be fails and missed opportunities which are the lessons that propel us to keep moving forward. Success in this profession is having integrity, offering value to the audience and continuing to evolve expertise and performance.

My speaking career was built around the topic of customer issues. This focus gives me years of experience and expertise to offer to clients. My content is actionable, mixed with research and relatable stories. Staying “on topic” has helped me build a long and successful business.

Starting many years ago, I wish I had built up a mailing list sooner to nurture and sustain connections, as playing catch-up can be daunting. The one thing I am always happy I did is to take advantage of travel and life on the road. I love eating well while traveling and walking in great cities to experience life on the road.

Speaking is a profession and a business, not simply a passion. Passion alone will not suffice for a profitable career. Treat it as a business to guarantee long-term success.

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Mike Frank

CSP, CPAE

3,000 past speeches over the past 55 years...sales, customer service, leadership, creativity..... Cavett Recipient - 1990...My CPAE introducer was Dr. Norman Vincent Peale...via my bureau, I have booked 12,000+ speeches for 600+ speakers, including MANY CPAEs and celebrities.

Staying connected to other speakers, staying involved in NSA, continually marketing (phone and in-person trumps mass emails and mailings). Read Harvey Mackay's book, "Dig Your Well Before You Are Thirsty,"....and his book, "Swim with the Sharks Without Getting Eaten Alive."

Still believe in handwritten thank you notes sent in hard copy.

Wish I had done more: While I have written 3 books, I still have not written my dream book, "Realistic Thinking and Positive Doing".....wish I had realized

how important it is to keep information on all inquiries good now, but not the first few years, still have not finished my dream book, "Realistic Thinking and Positive Doing"not

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Patricia Fripp

CSP, CPAE

Cavett Award Winner

Presentation skills expert. Award-winning speaker and speechwriter. Coauthor of *Deliver Unforgettable Presentations*.

Speaker Hall of Fame members come from all backgrounds and levels of education. They all master their material. Craft a compelling message. Structure their speeches as a journey, eliciting emotions and fostering suspense. Present their information in a way that resonates with the story-loving human brain. They inspire action and excitement.

What sets me apart from others is my multi-faceted experience. I invested in speech coaches, screenwriting and comedy writing classes early in my career. This investment helped me as a keynote speaker. As a 46-year member of the NSA, I have

evolved into a superb speech coach. I coach executives, engineers, sales teams, and other speakers. To stay in demand and relevant, you can't expect to be hired for what you did superbly well 20 years earlier.

On reflection, I would have invested in speech coaching and embraced technology earlier.

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Randy Gage

Best known for the books “Mad Genus” & “Risky Is the New Safe.”

Don't be afraid to break out of the pack. The more unique you are, the better your possibility of being selected by meeting planners. When everyone else is zigging, you need to be zagging. Don't chase “hot topics,” and don't conduct your presentations or promote your practice the same way everyone else is.

I'm a CPAE, but I never use initials after my name. Two universities have offered me honorary degrees, which I politely declined each time. My brand is built around the fact that I was in jail for armed robbery at 15, expelled from high school, and built a successful business with street smarts. Why would I want to negate that by trying to present myself as a typical MBA or even a Ph.D.? That thing you may think disqualifies you or would give meeting

planners pause is probably the distinctive aspect that makes you jump out to meeting planners.

Don't try to be a derivative, either. The world doesn't need a female Tony Robbins, black Gary Vee, or the gay Zig Ziglar. What the world needs is you and your unique gifts.

Try challenging your people instead of pandering to them. Too many speakers only tell audiences what they want to hear. Doing this makes you a commodity, easily replaced. Whether podcasts, books, blogs or speeches, I get up in the grill of my tribe and challenge them to become a higher version of themselves. I believe this contributes to my success more than anything else. It's crucial that you don't do it cruelly or condescendingly (which, unfortunately, I did in my early years). Do it with love and a sincere desire to serve, and your tribe will love you for it.

I wish I had done more profound and less superficial work early on. I worked ferociously to market well and perform for standing ovations once I was on the stage.

Reflecting on this, it would have been better to concentrate more on the audience, what they needed the most, and how I could provide more excellent lasting value instead of just a feel-good speech.

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Steve Gilliland

CSP, CPAE

Making a Difference: A Matter of Purpose, Passion, and Pride

I am humbled, honored, and grateful to be a Speaker Hall of Fame member. Speakers who make a difference have the capacity not just to envision something abstractly but they have the ability and drive to go out and do it. The world has more good than bad; we can make the good bigger while shrinking the bad. I see my life's work serving others and influencing them to do the same. No matter what you face each day, you have to remain determined to find a way to bring joy and hope to the people around you. As a professional speaker, you must focus on having calmness, compassion, humor, and a positive attitude. While we don't know what challenges face the people we meet daily, we can bring someone hope, if only for a moment.

I'm not sure that other successful speakers haven't done this too, but I never tried to keep pace with other speakers because I never stood still or was good at fitting in. I generally take the road less traveled and have never chased trends or put much merit in predictions. I find that the very things I was criticized for, which were usually different and original, are the things that made me successful. I have always been faithful to my standards and way of doing things, ultimately making me happiest. I have never been afraid of what others would say, and never advised on something I haven't been successful at myself.

It took perseverance and an iron will to get where I am today. More importantly, it took an unyielding belief in my vision. When people fail, it's often not the inherent goal that was wrong or misguided; it is simply that the means to that goal were inappropriate. If you believe in something, regardless of the failures on the road to that dream, you must stick to what you believe in. You must be able to separate your vision from the path to that vision – sometimes, it's just the route you take that has to be altered.

I wish I had given more and taken less. My wife Diane and I created the Gilliland Foundation in 2017 to bring joy and hope to people who need it most.

Our two areas of focus support children battling cancer and helping to improve the lives of the underprivileged. Early in my speaking career, I didn't know what my destiny would be, but one thing I did know, the people I knew who were the happiest were not getting more, but those who were giving more.

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Barbara Glanz

CSP, CPAE

Customer Service and Employee Engagement - book and two movies, "The Simple Truths of Service Inspired by Johnny the Bagger®" with Ken Blanchard

To be honored as a Hall of Fame speaker, one should represent the "best of the best" in our profession. With this honor, I believe, comes a huge responsibility to model that skill, commitment, and Authenticity to the rest of the world in our words, our actions, and our lives. We must be lifelong learners, masters of our content and platform skills, resilient to change, open to new ideas, and have a servant mentality.

I think there are two kinds of speakers – Servers and Performers. To be truly successful, I believe one needs to be a Server with the audience's best interests at heart, not driven by ego but by the

desire to share one's wisdom to inspire and help others to live their best lives.

What sets me apart is my focus on immediately applicable action ideas. How often do we hear a motivational speaker, get all pumped up, and then get home and think, "What can I do today to apply their ideas?" I have three guarantees for every audience that I share at the beginning of my presentations – to "whack" their thinking, to give every audience member a deep sense of purpose that they CAN make a difference, and to get their creative juices going so they leave with at least 6-8 immediately applicable, no cost action ideas. My signature story, "Johnny the Bagger®," is a perfect example of what often happens in my audiences using this strategy.

I wish I had asked much more often for help from my fellow speakers. Even though most people were willing to share their ideas and skills, I never wanted to take advantage of my friendships in the organization. That was a big mistake! I encourage you to reach out, not as a "user" but always offering them something in return. I also wish I had hired associates sooner. We did not have the electronics

we have today. I spent way too much time trying to find usable systems and doing admin work instead of using the time to develop deeper relationships with prospective clients. Take the risk and only do what YOU do best as soon as possible. However, even though I “spun my wheels” a bit too often, I feel blessed to have been a part of this industry. Where else do we have the privilege to leave a legacy that impacts so many lives for the better?

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David Glickman

CSP, CPAE

Work-Laugh Balance: Musical Comedy Keynotes completely customized to the client's company or industry.

Perhaps one trait common to almost all members of the Speaker Hall of Fame is that they put in the hard work to make it look easy.

When you see the polished brilliance of a memorable performance, you're not seeing the hours, days, months, and years it took to get to that level of excellence. Indeed, a few outliers seemingly develop their talent overnight, but most Hall of Fame members have worked tirelessly to build their careers incrementally. Working hard to make it look easy.

My mantra has always been, "The More Specific the Humor, The More Terrific the Humor." While many speakers customize their keynotes, I've tried to turn

the customization into the highlight of the audience experience. With typically half a dozen song parodies and 15-20 parodies of famous book covers explicitly created for each keynote, the program is more of a one-person show than a typical speech but still with enough content to qualify for continuing education credits for various industries. Researching and writing into the customization is highly time-consuming, but it pays off with high entertainment value for my audiences.

As I look back on my speaking journey, I wish I had not spent so much time analyzing (and over-analyzing) many decisions but instead had moved forward more quickly and more often. The late George Morrissey, CSP, CPAE, Cavett recipient, always said, "Done is better than perfect,"--but I didn't always listen to his sage advice. I've learned that the faster we can decide about our careers and content, the more we put ourselves on a path toward success.

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Laurie Guest

CSP, CPAE

I'm a Midwest farmer's daughter with a quick wit and a slightly sarcastic sense of humor. Expertise: Customer Experience.

My strength as a speaker is found in my ability to think on my feet, incorporating topical humor in the moment and responding to audience participation in a relatable way. Providing a perfect blend of fun and content has kept encore invitations coming throughout my 27 years in this field.

I wish I had done more original research, writing and less self-limiting thinking.

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Stacey Hanke

CSP, CPAE

My keynotes, training and mentoring - enhancing our client's ability to Communicate with Influence.

Members of the Speaker Hall of Fame are consistent in how they show up for their clients, consistent in their impact, and consistent in their work and be the best to everyone they interact with. They've done the work it takes to not "just be a speaker" but a CEO of their business. They're role models of what it takes to be a professional in their industry.

I can connect, engage, and present an essential message for my clients - making the conversation about them. My ability to be consistent in my work, delivery and how I show up for all interactions.

I wish I had played more and worried less about whether or not I could get to the next level of my business.

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Jeffrey Hayzlett

CPAE

Prime Time TV/podcast host, a global business celebrity who thinks BIG and acts BIGGER, a member of Five Halls of Fame, keynote speaker.

Renowned author Malcolm Gladwell said, "Ten thousand hours is the magic number of greatness." As a speaker, you must hone your craft often if you are to be considered part of the elite group of speakers – the more hours, the better. As speakers, not only do we practice, but we learn it as we do it in real time -- it's all about continued improvement.

Some of the best speakers I know in this world, even some in the Hall of Fame, stand behind the pulpit of what I refer to as a fraternal group. They are elite speakers and fans of other speakers and devote much time to watching, learning, and cheering. No matter how great we are, we must think of ourselves as 'beginners' – no matter how much experience we have. There are always opportunities to learn and

grow; we should all capitalize on those. To be a maestro, you must play many sour notes first.

You will make plenty of mistakes throughout your career and try out new ideas knowing you can always tweak or do them differently. That is what separates the good from the great. Putting in the hard hours, recognizing the skill and craft, and all the hard work that goes into becoming an elite speaker.

In the past, I have spent some of my downtime watching and reading old speeches from greats like Norman Vincent Peete and have also seen some of the best speakers in the world – learning from them first-hand. I enjoy watching speeches from some of the greatest orators of our time and reading inaugural presidential speeches. I have visited churches, for instance, the Marble Collegiate Church in New York City, to see how preachers deliver their speeches and what I can learn from their delivery style. I also watched plenty of comedians like Jerry Clower weave a story to delight the crowds and listened to records of his storytelling style. If we stay open to learning, there are plenty of places to find inspiration to continue honing our craft.

Being a great speaker involves being a great storyteller. I have even turned to cowboy poetry. Storytelling is an art that's been around since the beginning of time. The styles have evolved, but the principle remains the same – get the audience engaged, make them feel something, provoke emotions, and bring them on your journey.

I'm relentless. Relentless in the pursuit of being the best on stage, but also being the best in the business and in running the business of speaking. Most people view speaking as a passion – which it is- but the core tenet of being a great speaker is the ability to tell a story, and you must drive the business to get out there and capture that audience.

Another component, I would say, is being transparent. My speaking has been anchored in my previous business and entrepreneur experience. It's the 'been there, done that' – my speaking style and topics are all related to my striving & thriving in business. It's about buying and selling over 250 businesses in my career, operating a Fortune 100 company, and being a Prime Time television host. It's those experiences and the interactions that I had as a CMO, being a TV host at a global broadcasting

network and seeing the trends/development in the business world and parlaying how those steps can be deployed to businesses in Main Street South Dakota, all the way out to businesses on Wall Street.

Being authentic is what truly matters. Many speakers argue that you must have a pre-described style, language, attire, and a way of speaking, and I'm anything but that. I am ME, and I think every speaker should be themselves. If you look at all the Hall of Fame speakers, none are the same. Each has their style, personality, and something unique that makes them, THEM! I always tell speakers that they must be themselves – always be YOU. It would help if you did what you want to do. It's not better or worse than anyone else; it's YOU. Ultimately, that's what people buy and the story they want to hear.

I'm sure plenty of speakers will say that we should be more of ourselves and less of what others think we should be. The more authentic, genuine, and vulnerable, the more relatable we become to the audience we are trying to impact. The more vulnerable you are on stage, the more authentic the message comes across; you create a more significant connection and greater impact on the

audience. Ultimately, we're all trying to deliver a message – whether it be hope, change, compassion, etc., and to do that, you must be relatable.

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Lou Heckler

CSP, CPAE

Humorous keynotes, coaching other speakers, hosting coaching clients in our home.

Being supremely easy to work with is equally important as having first-rate platform skills. Be the man or woman that meeting professionals LOVE to work with and - more importantly -- love to RECOMMEND to others.

I put all my efforts into platform skills. With a background as a journalist, I had already gained skills in gathering information, interviewing experts, and organizing everything into a coherent message. Then I worked on watching and learning from outstanding entertainers of any kind so I could adopt or adapt the things they did well.

I wish I'd done more creative video demo material. I wish I had done fewer cold call mailings that ended up in meeting professionals' trash.

Love every audience and every opportunity you have to be before them.

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Jason Hewlett

CSP, CPAE

Dad & Husband, Saw Wife at Target, Award-Winning Las Vegas Entertainer, Author of The Promise To The One.

Members of the Speaker Hall of Fame are the crazy ones. We are obsessed with striving for greatness in this most unlikely of professions. There are so few on planet earth who would subject themselves to the scrutiny of a critical audience, the jeers of in-laws questioning their ability to sustain such a living, the absurdity that our words are worth so much as more than just a gift card of thanks for showing up.

And yet, here we stand, in front of the world, as we travel it, to be lauded, questioned, humbled, glorified in spurts of fame and return to anonymity once back in the elevator confident enough to believe our preaching and teaching, yet caring enough to record ourselves and listen back in horror at the latest offering, to improve daily. We gift all

who see us with that which only we can do, our very signature moves that become our legend, and thus, keeping a promise to march forth in this insane career, burning the ships of reason, being selected by peers we know are more capable than we are, who lift us to this place of imagination in a non-existent physical Hall of Fame, hoping to bring justice to its metaphorical presence as often as possible with every microphone we speak into.

As a Speaker, I have found a niche even in a space where it isn't on a request sheet: Former Las Vegas impressionist who can make us laugh, keep it clean, and entertain us enough to keep our people in the room engaged, yet teach us enough to justify it as falling under an education budget. Beyond that description, what makes me successful is that I aim to serve first. I would love to book every event, but I also am in search of serving the client and bureau. If they tell me they are looking for something I know someone better could provide, I lead with that. Over 23 years of having that mindset have kept me in business, perhaps leading with the knowledge there is a bigger pie, a real business strategy. Referring friends, peers, and even rivals, has created a trust for me with clients, repeat clients, who then become

friends and return to me for years; over has built my business on a promise I will never lead them astray. And then, if they end up booking me, I am confident that I can deliver in a way that they'll trust me to send the right person next year and from now on.

I wish I had been less critical of myself early on, written more books quicker, and trusted my gut to charge for coaching and mentoring before doing thousands of hours worth of it before talking myself out of it. Perhaps if I could turn back time, I step into the studio sooner when the music was written in my heart than on paper and never pressed record. The beauty of today, vs. when I began, there was no social media, no recording devices so readily available and inexpensive. I would have created content far faster, with less boundary of self, and shared faster, gone niche and broad all at once, and become someone of influence as soon as possible. Lastly, I would have saved a bit better when the cash came in during the seasons of feast and famine. However, I can also speak to the value of spending as much time and money as possible on your family when they are young; you can mainly throw away the farm and toss the family in an RV you can't afford, see the country, bring them with you on your

travels, you will never regret it as you look back at the photos and memories of your life, especially as they become teens and your body starts to wear down.

Live this life as if you're retired, not unemployed, spend on memories, and invest in your family first, even as you become a Million Miler on your chosen airline. You're the best. Love you.

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Sally Hogshead

CPAE

Topics: “How to Fascinate” and “Different Is Better than Better.” Proprietary research on a million professionals. NY Times bestsellers.

Don't CHANGE who you are... become MORE of who you are. Resist the urge to dumb down your content or yourself. Fascinating speakers are different. They get inside our minds and into our conversations. They challenge and move us. They're unafraid to ask questions and, along the way, change how we think. Instead of getting us to listen to them, Hall of Fame speakers change us somehow. And the same is true for you. The world doesn't need another speech--we need YOU.

My topic is “How to Fascinate”... so I better have a fascinating speech! And you can too. Develop a topic that is irreplaceably yours. Imagine this: If someone can take YOUR topic, and put any other speaker's name on it, then your topic isn't proprietary yet. If

you can google it, and I can google it, it's still generic. Build intensely distinct opinions, stories, and research that are incomparably yours and yours alone. We'll love you for it!

At first, I only focused on how to give an outstanding speech. But GIVING the speech is more effortless than GETTING the speech in the first place. Yes, you do need to fascinate the audience, but first, you must fascinate the audience before the audience (clients, meeting planners, and decision-makers). 90% of success in speaking happens off-stage.

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Don Hutson

CPAE, CSP

Sales, Sales Management, Sales Negotiations,
Entrepreneur-ship

There is no substitute for Authenticity. Creativity and Innovation are essential. Skilled use of Humor can be the difference between a \$10K speaker and a \$20k speaker. Strive to tell your audience things of value that they have never heard before.

There is magic in tying in people in the audience, hopefully humorously and entertainingly. Use AI to research your client and their industry so that you can impress them with the homework you have done. Nobody wants to hear your talk #3, which is not tailored to the client and their needs.

I wish I had come out with my first book 10 years sooner! Don't wait to write a book - write a book and wait - good things will happen to you!

The currency of the future is your database - keep up with your clients and stay in touch - the payoffs will keep on coming!

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Dale Irvin

CSP, CPAE

The Professional Summarizer. I say what you are thinking.

Get good. I mean, really GOOD. Also, save your money so that you own your future.

I do something different from everybody else out there.

I wish I had spent more time with my family and less on the road.

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Elizabeth Jeffries

CSP, CPAE

I work with healthcare executives and physician leaders who want to grow their leadership skills, enliven their organizations, and turn ALL their leaders into high performers.

As a Hall of Fame Speaker, it's important to be clear about your message, why you want to share it, and who your best audience is. Master your expertise in a body of knowledge and be ready to deliver it in various ways speaking, writing, coaching and consulting. Be excellent on and off the platform, be authentic, exude confidence with humility and be playful. Everyone isn't skilled in humor, but we can all be playful and conversational with our audience. If you are passionate about your message, your audience will be passionate about it, also. Ask a few people you trust to give you feedback on material, delivery and the business of speaking.

Keep learning! Hang out with people who 'get' you

as they will be the cheerleaders you need.

Besides all the work to get to and stay relevant on the platform and other places to share your expertise, several points have contributed significantly to my longevity in this business.

1. I've built a body of knowledge that I can share in multiple ways and shift as I move through different chapters of my life.
2. I have used metrics for information and decision-making since day one 40 years ago to track the best clients, fees, etc.
3. Since I'm in a solo practice, creating a solid financial future has always been important. Earn/save, spend/save, give/save. Understanding business, marketing, budgets, saving, spending, etc., is critical to stay in our long-term work. This medium brings financial freedom and deep joy without worries for the future!
4. My business took about five years to stabilize. After that, all my business to date has been built on referrals. That's the power of building relationships, which has been vital to me being around today!

I attribute my 'success and longevity' to the attitude that I don't own this business. I asked Jesus to be my owner and CEO right from the beginning. He's who I go to with prayer and petition, and I do my best to wait for the answers. Praying before each interaction with clients and audiences gives me a perspective of responsibility and accountability for what I need to do. Then I can celebrate every outcome, whichever way it goes, knowing it was for the best.

I wish I had trusted, niched, and raised my fees sooner. It took me too long to return to the market I knew so well in hospitals and medicine. It took me a while to see my value in my marketplace. Bill Gove always said, 'Go with what brings you,' and it's so very accurate. I would also have worried less and trusted myself more in so many areas. I would have stopped the comparison game much, much sooner too!

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Jane Jenkins Herlong

CSP, CPAE

Southern humor, stories and singing, plus my book, *Sweet Tea Secrets from the Deep-Fried South*.

Members of the Speaker Hall of Fame are not just a product of natural talent but a result of dedicated practice and a deep appreciation for the power of connection. The key to success in any field is to strive for excellence, continuously improve, and never lose sight of the importance of serving others. Whether crafting a speech, writing a book, or simply engaging in conversation, always remember the power of words to impact and inspire those around us. Let us use our words to spread positivity, create connections, and make the world a better place.

One of the things that sets me apart as a speaker is my unique blend of singing, storytelling, and humor. As a Southern native, I draw on my authentic experiences and use them to craft powerful stories that are both relatable and entertaining. By weaving

together the emotional power of song with the down-home humor of the South, my goal is to create a one-of-a-kind experience that leaves a lasting impact on my audiences.

If I could turn back time, I would take more risks and embrace the discovery of my true passions and talents with less fear. Life is too short to play it safe, and the journey of self-discovery requires the courage to step outside our comfort zones.

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Willie Jolley

PHD, CSP, CPAE

Author of the book and PBS Special - A Setback Is A Setup For A Comeback!

The original meaning for CPAE was Latin. It was Continuare Professius, Articulus Excellere, which meant that the person who received the CPAE honor, even though they were excellent, still had a responsibility to continue to get better!

I would encourage all CPAEs not to let this be the end-all and be all for you as a communicator. I would implore you to use this as a stepping stone on your journey to lifelong learning and never-ending improvement. I would encourage you to continue to look at how you can expand your skills and reach, understanding that life teaches that when we do not expand, we will become expendable in time!

I share with young speakers my thinking on growing as a speaker and as an entrepreneur, we must speak and perform our craft like we have been speaking for 100 years, with a high level of proficiency, yet we must continue to market and continue to aspire to more extraordinary skills like we are brand new.

Keep building your skill set and brand, and then look for opportunities to expand your skills and brand. I started my business with speaking, then radio, then books, and then added digital programming, yet it all came from a desire to keep learning and improving daily.

Someone asked me why I keep pushing myself, and my answer was, "If I continue to work hard and keep getting better, one day I will be a good speaker!"

I encourage CPAEs to keep getting better and doing what the original Latin implored us to do, with continual growth and proficiency in articulating with excellence!

I am just a guy who speaks and sings with an unbridled enthusiasm that comes out in everything I do. First, it comes out in my speeches and my music. Then in my media on my Sirius XM radio

show and my daily syndicated Wake Up & Win with Dr. Willie Jolley radio and television shows. And then it comes out in my books and other products. Everything I do shares my positive perspective of the world and reaches audiences with high energy and enthusiasm (taken from the Greek word entheos, which means the God within). I wrap it all in an intense desire to uplift and inspire people to believe that their best is still yet to come, no matter where they are!

I wish I had done more media waiting until the opportunity was presented. I should have created my own media business long ago to reach out to more people in a mass media program.

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Mary Kelly

CDR, PHD, CSP, CPAE

Military leadership strategies and tactics on how to lead resilient teams through crisis, challenge, and change. Author of 15 books, including Master Your World and Why Leaders Fail.

Here are some of my observations of what I have learned about Hall of Fame Speakers.

First, they run their business like a business. They professionalize their processes, systems, and staff. They invest in their business.

Second, they dedicate effort daily to learn more about their area of expertise and actively seek to increase their knowledge base. They attend events, read books, and participate in activities that increase their human capital.

Third, they are different. They have a different approach to their area of expertise. They make the common seem uncommon.

Fourth, they engage others. They listen, inspire, and connect on an emotional level.

Fifth, they are good on stage. They can adjust in seconds because they know their material.

Finally, they live to serve others. Yes, they tend to be successful, but the goal is having the ability to influence others, not a dollar amount positively.

Many people underestimate how much work a successful business of any kind is. I work in this business every single day.

I also have systems and processes to ensure the business runs smoothly so that I am 100% present for my clients when I attend an event. Meeting professionals feel assured that I am their trusted partner in the success of their event. That means I show up early with current research and data, and I listen to the concerns and ideas of their audience members.

Everyone in the audience gets access to my vault of leadership and economic resources, and they love having this fantastic post-program follow-up. I genuinely want my audiences to be delighted every time because I love the people aspect of this business, and that comes through.

Part of my responsibilities in the Navy for 25 years was getting people to do work they didn't want to do. Let's face it - that is why it is called work. If work were what we always wanted to do, it would be a hobby. But doing the work means putting in the work.

The military creates checklists and procedures for everything. I created my own when I started this leadership and economic development business. I have brought strategy and structure to their organizations by sharing those with clients.

My daddy was a salesman. He taught me to plan my work and work my plan, and that is what I do. Every day I review my monthly goals and productivity plan for the day, and I work through those tasks and lists. It doesn't matter if I am traveling or on vacation; I will have a plan and work the plan.

My secret weapon is my mastermind group: Mark Hunter, Meridith Elliott-Powell, Sam Richter, Peter Stark, Victor Antonio and Ross Bernstein, who push me to be better, help me think more extensively, and always have my back.

I wish I had learned to market better earlier so I could have spent less on campaigns that didn't work.

I wish I had created my contact list earlier.

I wish I had followed up better with those who gave me their business cards in those early years.

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Linda Larsen

BSW, MFA, CSP, CPAE

Delivering value-driven, customized, high-content, ridiculously funny keynotes and “I wish my co-worker/spouse/friend had been here to hear this” funny.

What sets me apart from other speakers is the merging of my diverse backgrounds, expertise and experience. As a former social worker turned professional stage actress also working in film and television, I have combined my undergraduate training (BSW) and experience in the field of human behavior with my graduate training (MFA) and 20-year career as an actress to provide presentations that have rich content, are highly entertaining and engaging, and loaded with lots of humor. Working onstage for years with comedy legends like the late great Sid Caesar helped me hone my craft and understand what it takes to keep people on the edge of their seats, not wanting to miss a moment.

I wish I had learned earlier on about the trap that I was going to fall into. And that is - believing that since my instincts were good, I was quick on my feet, had a body of expertise and experience, and could make people laugh - I had everything I needed to be a successful speaker. I thought my “winging it” was better than most people’s planned presentations, so I would be fine. Oddly, I would fall victim to this thinking since, as a professional actress for decades, I would NEVER just wing it on stage.

THINGS CHANGED FOR THE BETTER when I started applying the principles of my successful career as an actress. When I focused more on the preparation side of things, memorizing the script and spending hours in rehearsal, I found the confidence in my speaking career to be more authentic and spontaneous and present on stage.

As the great acting teacher Sanford Meisner would say, “Prepare and improvise” - strongly emphasizing “prepare.” As a speaker, preparation entails knowing my topic, with a commitment to continually upgrading my information. It means deep diving into who is in each audience, their challenges and struggles, designing customized preparations addressing those

challenges, and practicing new transitions, content, funny examples, etc.

When a speaker goes on stage with that level of preparation, it feels them up to (another acting term) “Live truthfully moment to moment.” When you don’t have to put a single attention unit on “What comes next?” or “What was the CEO’s name again?” or “Am I running out of time?” - when you don’t have to give a second of your attention to thoughts like those, THEN you can be fully present in each moment, listening and responding to your audiences verbal and non-verbal reactions, perhaps expounding slightly when you perceive there is a question. And - when you do this, you can have SO MUCH MORE FUN!!!

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Eileen McDargh

CPAE

Building resilience to transform the life of work and the work of life.

Persistence. Practice. Patience. Powerful speakers are there to serve and not to shine. Authenticity on and off the platform carries the day!

Depending upon the speaking spot, I bring in wisdom from other speakers. and reference them. I come early and stay late. I become one of them, responding spontaneously. I have been known to register participants, move chairs, and join the dance line. ! I have fun!!

Although I have written 8 books, I wish I had written my ezine earlier. I also wish I had been less cautious and used singing and improvisation in my work.

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Brad Montgomery

CSP, CPAE

Funny motivational speaker.

What sets me apart? My clients tell me I'm ultra-authentic and vulnerable. My audiences tell me I'm amusing. I also am known for being able to be in the moment with my audiences; much of my content comes from them.

I wish I had invested more in my onstage "product" and less time on websites, one sheet, and a million distractions sooner. The best thing you can do for your business is to ensure your program is first-class. (And there is a great chance that, like me, you think/thought you're better on stage than you are. Go back to school. :))

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Jim Pancero

CSP, CPAE

“You Can Always Sell More” Advanced sales & sales leadership training and consulting.

I advise you to stop calling yourself a “Professional Speaker.” I learned decades ago (when I introduced myself as a professional speaker) that others took it as merely an ego statement on my part. Call yourself a trainer, a consultant, a << Your subject here >> expert. My business became more successful when I stopped calling myself a professional speaker (sounding very me-focused). Instead, I focused on my potential customers with more you-focused descriptions of how I can help improve their business (or energize their lives).

Research - research - research. Every group I’ve worked with thought they were unique in their needs and challenges (even when they weren’t). I offer every new client the opportunity to ride with their salespeople for a day (when doing sales

training) or to interview several of their sales managers (when doing leadership training). It's not just the reality of learning new things that will help your speaking business, but also the perception you communicate of your investing in your client and their unique challenges. Doing more research upfront makes selling additional work to that client a lot easier!

Over the last 40+ years of professional speaking, I've observed that our industry continues to evolve and change every few years. Looking back, I wish I had gotten involved in mastermind groups a lot sooner and been more open in sharing and building sharing relationships with others.

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Randy Pennington

CSP, CPAE

Globally recognized expert on corporate culture and leading change. Author of award-winning books “Results Rule!”, “Make Change Work” and “On My Honor, I Will.”

Hall of Fame speakers make many of the same choices as Hall of Fame companies: They tell themselves the truth about how good they are and aren't. They pursue the best over the easiest in every area of their profession. They leverage the power of partnerships and learn and grow daily. The goal is to be so good that having “CPAE” behind your name makes no difference to your success. The designation should be the recognition of the obvious from our clients.

The best thing I did in my career was to stop thinking of and calling myself a speaker. Speaking is a distribution system. Mastering this distribution system is crucial for success, but calling myself a

speaker is like calling myself a Coke machine. I focused my efforts on being the Coke, not the Coke machine.

Professionally, I wish I had written more and more often sooner. I also wish I had more discipline to say "No" to myself and others more often. That would have allowed me to stay on message more and wander less.

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Naomi Rhode

CSP, CPAE, GSF,

Cavett Award Winner

Inspirational Keynotes, The Gift of Family, The Gift of Friendship, My Father's Hand, Speaking Secrets of the Masters.

Viewing Professional Speaking Excellence as an art form, an information venue, a life-challenging and life-changing privilege, and above all, a 'call on your life.' A Call to take your God-given 'gifts' and to strive to magnify their excellence to serve others.

This profession is a thrilling journey and never a destination. As an inspirational keynote speaker and now a Life and Speaking Coach, I have learned to 'Ask, Listen, and Love' the people I serve...whether thousands or one-on-one. Customizing keynotes has been a passion of mine to meet the theme of the meeting and the specific needs of the event or coaching session. This thoughtful, researching,

question-asking process is priceless in achieving excellence. My joy and ability to craft and share stories to imprint and impact the listener is the glue that holds the change which occurs.

I wish I had done more 'follow-up' speeches and sessions to reinforce and cement change.

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Sam Richter

CSP, CPAE

Prospecting and Creating Relevance through Online Intelligence.

There is no magic silver bullet for speaking success. It would help if you continually worked on your “art” - your speech. This art means videotaping your speeches and then, as an athlete would, watching your speech section by section. Where do you pause? Are you interacting with the audience? What are your non-verbals? When does your voice become loud? When is your voice quiet? Do you talk too fast or too slow? Are you engaging and motivating? Is your program highly customized for the audience? Then, watch videos of speakers who you think are great. What are their techniques? How do you compare?

Then it would help if you worked on the “science consistently” - of your business. Do you have processes in place for sales, marketing, finance, etc.? How many sales calls do you make every day? Are you asking for

referrals? How many genuine prospects who you know would benefit from your message and who you know pay your fee are in your pipeline? Are you communicating with your pipeline consistently? What is your process for follow-up, negotiation, and post-conference value?

Getting up on stage and delivering a speech is the easy part. Hundreds of thousands do it every day. Mastering the art and science of building a successful speaking business takes incredibly hard work, and you must be willing to take risks every day.

One of the things I do is provide unrivaled post-program value. I highly customize my speech - I've never delivered the same keynote twice. Then, I provide custom resources and applications that my audience uses to implement what I share. I also provide post-conference webinars for all attendees to answer any questions and ensure that attendees implement what they discovered during my program. All of this is included in my fee.

If I could turn back time, I would invest more capital in my business, primarily hiring additional staff to

manage the areas where my input provides the most negligible value.

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Marilyn Sherman

CSP, CPAE

I'm a motivational keynote speaker helping people live and lead from the front row.

You don't have to wait to be a Hall of Fame Speaker. Ask yourself, what would a Hall of Fame speaker do? How would a Hall of Fame Speaker think and act? That motivated me to act as if I was already a CPAE, and the following year I was inducted. Someone once told me that NSA doesn't give out the designation, and then you become great. Be great; then, a bonus is to be inducted into the CPAE Speaker Hall of Fame.

Many motivational speakers talk about their successes and admit many failures. I leave examples of success by sharing examples from my audience members or clients. Lou Heckler coached me not to be the hero of my own story. This style has served me well as my clients notice I am genuine, approachable, and authentic on and off stage. I also

have a superpower to connect with people before the event - even if it's the reception the night before - and remember their names when using customized stories during my keynote. My clients and audiences love that!

I wish I had done more list-building, keeping track of my clients to reach out to them more efficiently. I wish I had stopped comparing myself to other speakers sooner! We all have unique gifts and can build that pie that Cavett taught us to do!

Remember to ask yourself two questions before speaking to calm your nerves: Do I believe in my message? Do I believe that this message is of value to this audience? If you answered yes to both, let go of everything else because worrying about your appearance and sound is ego. Focus on adding value to that audience. And, if you don't get a gig, don't take it personally. It just wasn't the right message at the right time for the right audience.

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John Sileo

CSP, CPAE

Turning \$2M in cybercrime losses into \$20M in gains.

Put in the hard work. Get on stage a lot. Ask for help. Do it your way. Make yourself distinctive without being cheesy. Don't aim for the Hall of Fame; get better and let it come to you.

Others do this too, but I don't get distracted by all of the shiny-object add-on products, services and marketing that are out there. I keynote and only keynote. One focus. Thanks, Joe Calloway.

I don't do much social media, which is pretty rare. I make sure to give a speech that gets a speech (or two). That's it.

Watching other great speakers, worrying. Make friends. That's what it all comes down to, anyway.

Sam Silverstein

CSP, CPAE

Accountability and Workplace Culture, Author of 12 Books, Founder of The Accountability Institute™ and the Certified Accountability Advisor™ program.

After over a decade in this business, I realized that my career and business were not what they could be. Stepping back, I saw that I lacked a clear understanding of what I was about. If, as a speaker and businessperson, we lack the clarity of who we are, why we are here, and what we are trying to accomplish, it is almost impossible to sell our services to someone who will have even less understanding.

Reflecting inward, I discovered my unique purpose and mission and reconnected with my values. I put my blinders on, discovered my core message, accountability and workplace culture, and began writing, researching, and thinking only in that area.

By going deep, very deep, in a specific area of focus, you develop an understanding that is at a different level than the market, you become known for something, and you create clarity for both you and your potential clients that makes building a successful business a greater reality.

Once this happens, you sell more speeches, books, online courses, and any service or product you have created. This significantly impacts your clients and, in a broader sense, the world around us.

Ultimately, I believe we are in this business to make a difference. Gaining a better understanding of who we are, the value of our unique message, and building more successful business positions us to significantly impact our communities and the world around us as professional speakers.

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Laura Stack

MBA, CSP, CPAE

Laura Stack is The Productivity Pro.

Don't claim to be an expert in everything! Pick a lane and stay in it. Other speakers, clients, and bureaus can't recommend you if they don't know what you're known for and good at. Don't accept engagements not in your lane to make a buck.

Always be writing a book! I consistently checked myself into a hotel every quarter to write and turned out a book every two years. I published with a large house for the reputation factor. My eight books have kept my material fresh and updated.

I wish I had hired out administrative tasks sooner and done less myself! Just because you CAN do it, it doesn't mean you should. Hire a bookkeeper right away. Don't do your graphic design or website. Don't do your taxes. Please stay in your lane, do what you are good at, and let other people do what they do.

Time is money, so talk to potential clients rather than create artwork.

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Kelly Swanson

CSP, CPAE

Award-Winning Storyteller.

Be a category of one, and then own it.

There are very few things I can claim to do that nobody else has done or is doing. That is folly. However, I think I have come pretty darn close. Creating an imaginary town that is going through a challenge to be brave and making that the template of my keynote, along with creating a newspaper for the town Gazette that goes in every seat - well, that's pretty unique.

The key is not finding something different - but finding that different thing that LIGHTS YOU UP. And just because I created it doesn't mean it will make lots of money. And I don't care. I wish I had not early on. I let their business models influence me more than listening to my inner voice tell me who I wanted to

be. Value the advice, but don't put it in the driver's seat.

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LeAnn Thieman

CSP, CPAE

Chicken Soup for Nurses' Souls, SelfCare for HealthCare for HealthCare, Balancing Life in Your War Zone tools to care for minds, bodies and spirits.

It's not about the money or the number of events on the calendar. The sooner I learned that this was not a competition, I didn't have to keep up with other speakers' stated "successes," the faster my business grew.

I remind myself, my clients and anyone who will listen that we must truly live our priorities. We are constantly juggling balls of responsibility, and we must discern which are rubber and glass. The "rubber" balls are usually all our "stuff" and even our work. The "glass" ones are usually the people we love and our health; if they are broken, they can be irretrievably broken. Don't drop them.

I develop presentations and programs offering tools to care for our bodies, minds and spirits. In this increasingly secular world, I was hesitant to delve into the “spiritual” parts of our beings. Yet my audiences and readers crave that the most.

I wish I had done more delegating and less “I’ll-just-do-it-all-myself” to save money. I was tardy in practicing, “Do what you do best and delegate the rest.” MY BUSINESS GREW once I hired people to do the things I seemingly had little talent (or interest in!). And then, I could hire more people to help, and it grew more.

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Bruce Turkel

CPAE

Good brands make people feel good. Great brands make people feel good about themselves.

Laser-focus your presentation on the intersection of what you bring to the platform and what your audience needs to hear from you. Always remember that anyone can fill 55 minutes on a stage. Only you can share the brilliance of your uniqueness.

My personal skill stack is made up of three components: 1. I see things differently than other people do and create solutions they haven't thought of; 2: I can present those ideas - I speak, draw, play music, write, and entertain; and 3: I can get people excited about the ideas I present to them.

I wish I had spent more time honing and sharing my unique abilities and less time fitting into a corporate environment to please my clients.

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Al Walker

CSP, CPAE

Inspiring, humorous keynote and book - Thinking Big & Living Large and Leadership programs and book "The Sheep Thief."

One of the most significant and influential pieces of advice came from Dr. Norman Vincent Peale when Mike Frank interviewed him, and he spoke to the CPAEs in 1990 at our convention in Atlanta. Dr. Peale was 92 at the time and still going strong. When Mike asked him what his secret was to be still speaking around the world at his age, his two-part answer included, first, his faith in God and what that had meant to him over the years, which was no surprise since he was a pastor and had previously been at Marble Collegiate Church in NY for some years. The second one caught us all off guard. We were expecting the usual, never smoked or drank alcohol, exercised daily, etc. He said, "I've never lost my curiosity." I was 43 years old, had a successful speaking business, had my degree from the University of SC, was a CSP, CPAE, and had read almost every one of the

classic self-help books. I didn't realize it, but I wasn't pushing myself as hard as I once had. I made a promise to myself that day to never lost my curiosity. And have done all I could to keep that promise.

I don't think I do anything that unusual. I have always strived to be the same guy on the platform as I am off the platform. I'm afraid we have some folks in our profession who have let their ego get out of control and has them thinking they are more critical than their audiences. I also am constantly on the lookout for the funny things that happen around us every day and then try to figure out how and where I might be able to use that in my presentations.

I've tried my best to live a life with no regrets and can honestly say that there is nothing I would have done in another way when I look back over my life. However, I'm quick to add that some people I've worked with, family, and friends might have a few suggestions. If there is one thing, it would be that I'd written earlier in my career.

I joined NSA on the advice of a mentor who was not a member but had attended one NSA convention as a guest. When he told me he'd found a group of

people like me and that I should join them, I did immediately because I knew he always had my best interest. So, without knowing anything about NSA, I signed on in 1981. Bob James was right, and today, 42 years after joining, I can honestly say that I'm a product of the NSA. Almost everything I've learned about our profession came from NSA.

More importantly, my most significant, most meaningful, and highly treasured friendships are with several current very successful NSA members like Jane Herlong, Willie & Dee Jolley, Nido Qubein, Patrick Henry, Naomi & Jim Rhode, Jim Tunney, Doc Blakely, Lou Heckler, and many more. Then there are those whose friendship was significant, that I miss very much, and who were some of the great icons of our profession that have passed away, like my dear friend Robert Henry, Jeanne Robertson, Bryan Townsend, Bob Murphy, Cavett Robert, and others.

The NSA imprint on my life changed my life forever, for which I am eternally grateful.

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Brian Walter

CSP, CPAE

Customized infotainment, flashy blazers, and, oh yeah, lots of costumes.

Here's how to tell if you are at the CPAE level. If audience members are asked, "What does X speak about"... they don't just enthusiastically gush with an answer...they enthusiastically gush with the SAME ANSWER. You are known by topic, hook, brand, and experience.

I do extreme interaction with customized humor that makes it all about the audience and their experience. They are the heroes. I transform them from recipients of information to participants in an experience.

To quote Cher, "If I could turn back time..." I would have developed a scalable product or service earlier. Time for money is a good model for a while. But if you are the only one earning, that's a limit. I figured

it out and now have multiple streams of income. But I waited until 2009 to learn that lesson.

I wish I had joined NSA right out of college and met the founders of our association.

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George Walther

CSP, CPAE

Power Talking: Say what you mean to get what you want.

Always remember that every word matters, whether on stage or in your life. A single word can set you up for success or conflict. Watch what you say!

My goal is never to hear, "You're a wonderful speaker." What I'm after is, "You must have worked in one of our divisions before. How could you know our business so well? You really understand our industry and the challenges we face." That makes my presentations relevant and keeps me fresh and learning.

I wish I had NOT taken time away from my professional life as it reached a crescendo. And I'm so glad I took time away from my speaking job to focus on my much more important job of raising my child!

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Waldo Waldman

MBA, CSP, CPAE

Nat's bestseller *Never Fly Solo* on what it takes to be a wingman (trusted partner) in business & life.

Yesterday's success doesn't guarantee today's, so never take your craft, skills and success for granted. Continually look to evolve your content, platform, and marketing skills so that you always remain relevant and fresh in our constantly changing world. Seek coaches, mentors and partners who can improve your perspective on business, branding and speaking, and always remember you have something to offer others. Build relationships and plant seeds continuously. Be generous, lend your wings, and help others to fly along your journey.

I ensure I am relentlessly prepared for every keynote and earn my reputation, credibility and respect by emulating what I say from the platform. I also have a great combination of real-world sales

experience to complement my military/combat experience. My audiences respect that I have “earned my wings” in both. Finally, I bring heart, passion, and humanity to the stage to authentically connect with my audiences by revealing my failures, fears and doubts. I’m not afraid to take occasional risks from the stage and speak my truth (with tact and respect.)

I wish I had invested more time developing non “keynote” products, coaching and revenue streams and less time working on my speaking.

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Rory Vaden

MBA, CSP, CPAE

New York Times bestselling author of *Take the Stairs*.

Early in my career, I heard Larry Winget say that building a great personal brand comes from learning to “find your uniqueness and exploit it in the service of others.” Another one of my mentors, Eric Chester, told me that too many speakers say “a little about a lot instead of a lot about a little.” And therefore, they get absorbed in and among the crowd’s noise and never stand out. If you want to be seen as a world-renown expert, you need to become the expert on 1 particular area of focus and study. Until you find your uniqueness, you’ll likely bounce around in a sea of mediocrity, obscurity, and anonymity.

In the first 3 years of my career, I spoke 304 times for free. I spent 3000 hours watching films of other speakers and graphed 200 presentations from the

World Championship of Public Speaking. I took multiple courses on speaking, read dozens of books, invested thousands of dollars and received over 1100 written evaluations from other speakers. That was all by the time I was 23 years old. So when I was inducted into the Professional Speaking Hall of Fame at age 38, people said, "You're so young!" And that makes sense that they would think that because I believe I was the youngest American ever to be inducted. But what most people don't realize is that while I was young in "age time," I was already extremely old in "stage time." Most people aren't willing to do the work. Most speakers want the glamour of the big stages without being willing to put in the grit of the small stages. That's the truth about why very few ever get there.

I wish I had invested more money into my graphic design, video editing and visual identity much sooner. I grew up in a culture that made fun of marketing as if it was for soft and weak people. That was stupid. Waiting to get good at marketing was one of the most expensive mistakes ever. But what I had going for me was that I grew up in a sales culture, so I knew how to sell. My mom, wife, and others pitched me directly to prospects to book me

to speak. We won on sales despite spending 20 years behind on marketing.

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Phillip Van Hooser

MBA, CSP, CPAE

The business leadership speaker with uncommon, common sense.

I've discovered the best leaders are those with a clear-eyed, committed plan for building strong, authentic relationships with those they serve. I believe the same to be true for the best speakers, trainers and platform professionals. Master-level speakers are uniquely capable of crafting and delivering an original message that simultaneously inspires, equips and encourages audience members to achieve the results their roles demand and the success they desire.

In an attempt to relate to every audience, I've learned to successfully employ a conversational presentation style interspersed with foundational stories, each carefully chosen to illustrate some universal wisdom or truth. At the heart of it all, my personal speaking objective has always been to

engage, empower and elevate every audience member to some level beyond their current state.

Looking back, I now realize I've walked past far too many available opportunities to learn from and interact with countless experts and authorities I've encountered along my journey. I wish I had shown more interest and taken more time to build even stronger personal and professional relationships sooner.

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The National Speakers Association is about growing your influence, impact, and income as a community of the world's leading speakers. We would love to have you join us!

We have national events as well as state chapter events. Several states also welcome speakers virtually through streaming meetings. Please join us!

<https://nsaspeaker.org/>