

THE  
EVENT  
ORGANISERS  
SURVIVAL  
GUIDE

# Welcome

## To the event organisers survival guide!

We have designed this guide as a resource for people who organise events as part of their role. We know that we have touched on areas that will be of assistance to you when organising an event. In my experience of working in and owning speakers bureaus for over 12 years, event organising can be a task that is thrown at an individual as part of their job. It can also be an expectation from Managers without the understanding of the knowledge and expertise that is required to turn an idea into a great, successful and memorable event. Organising a successful event can be a fabulous experience, a lot of fun and a great opportunity to learn new skills.

Being a Speakers and Entertainers Bureau, most of the information in this guide is related to talent. However, you will notice that we have included 'top tips' of some of Australia's leading Professional Conference Organisers (PCO's) and Event Managers. These people organise events and conferences full time - their experience and expertise is invaluable. You might want to consider using a PCO or Event Manager to work with on your events - and we would highly recommended any that are included in this guide. Working with a professional can add an experienced hand, give you someone to bounce ideas off and look after many of the time consuming and potentially messy areas such as flights, ground transfers, rooming lists, A/V, staging, themeing and menus.

Enjoy your opportunity to organise great events and have fun! – We hope that we can be a part of your success.

Cheers

Susie Christie  
Managing Director

# Why work with a speakers bureau?

## **TO GET UNBIASED ADVICE.**

There is no way that an individual speaker can give truly unbiased advice. As an independent, full service speakers bureau we do not 'own' or 'manage' any of the people on our books - we do not need to push any one presenter on to you.

Our job is to answer your brief and budget.

## **TO SAFEGUARD AGAINST UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES.**

As part of any bureau contract we are responsible for replacing speakers in the event of them not being able to attend i.e. ill health, accidents or even death.

## **SOMEONE ELSE DOES THE VERY TIME CONSUMING FOOTWORK FOR YOU!**

We have our finger on the pulse of the speaking industry - therefore we know who is new and who is working well in the current market. We are also in a position to advise you on who may be over exposed to certain markets, who is best to speak or if in fact they may work best as an interview subject or panel member.

Bureaus' have access to many thousands of presenters worldwide - that is what they specialise in. We do not organise events, book venues or choose menus. We only book talent. We have very valuable experience in knowing who works best for which audience and industry.

### **Top Tip from World Corporate Travel**

- Engage in some invaluable advice by seeking the assistance of a PCO when making a decision about which hotel/resort to use.
- Do all the hard work before the conference, make lists and put together a working program to make your conference a success on site.
- Dare to be different Why change?... last year's was our best yet!.....Change it
- Always have wet-weather ponchos on stand-by! Attention to detail is the key to making your guests feel like they belong at your event.

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## Working with a bureau

A bureau is different from an agent or management company - bureaus' do not have exclusive talent nor do they manage talent. We work on behalf of our clients to find the perfect person for a particular need.

Your speakers' bureau begins by conducting a needs assessment based on the information that you give. They ask numerous questions including: your event date, event location, type of event, attendance expected, group profile, session focus, previous speakers, your ideal presenter and budget. Once the bureau has a profile of your event they will put together a proposal complete with promotional material including cds, dvds and books (if available), fees and additional expenses of speakers who best match your requirements.

Most bureaus' can provide this information to you by either fax, courier, e-mail or via their website. Once a shortlist is established, the bureau will check the speaker's availability and ask designated speakers to place a courtesy hold on their calendars for the date of your event. Most speakers will agree to an interview - either by phone or face to face with a client prior to a decision being made. High profile celebrities may not offer this.

When a speaker has been confirmed for an event, a letter of agreement is issued to both the client and the presenter. A deposit (50% of the fee) is requested at this time to confirm the hold with the balance being required 2 weeks prior to the event (longer for International bookings). At the time of the agreement being prepared it is important to be clear on who is responsible for booking travel, transport, accommodation, printing of handouts and A/V. This should form part of the agreement. Business class air travel has become a preferred, but often negotiable requirement in Australia.

Changes to any of the details of your event should be relayed to your bureau contact. Speakers also need to approve any publicity, to avoid any misrepresentation of speaker credentials. Any recording, video or audio must be approved in writing prior to the event. Expenses for travel, ground transportation, and meals (if not included in the original agreement) are invoiced immediately following the event.

In the post conference evaluation, the bureau will be looking for your feedback about the speaker's performance and customer service.

Most bureaus' list the same speakers, for this reason it is a waste of many peoples time if you give the same brief to multiple bureaus'. It is like going to a few travel agents and saying that you want a 5 day holiday in Hawaii for 'x' dollars, they will each come back to you with the same deals - just as bureaus' will all come back to you with the same speakers. We strongly suggest that you find one bureau that you enjoy working with and who offers you the level of service that you require and stick with them!

...We hope that bureau is Global Speakers and Entertainers!

## **Top Tip from Toni Brasch Event Management**

Too much detail is never enough!

Make sure you have written records of all elements promised to you by a supplier and of your requests to them. Conversations leading up to the event suddenly mean nothing on the day itself if a change of staff or lack of communication takes place at their end. They may think you're fussy but you're the one left smiling when all goes perfectly on the day!

[www.tbem.com.au](http://www.tbem.com.au) Ph - 02 9555 4811

So, you've worked with your speakers bureau to find an appropriate presenter; you've confirmed a professional speaker to deliver a presentation at your event, you've put together the agenda, and now you're waiting for the big day to come. You've certainly accomplished the basics, but you could be overlooking some key ways of using your speaker to make for an even more successful event. A tip: Consider increasing the role of the presenter you've already paid for to add a greater level of value to your meeting or event. Here are some suggestions based on our experience that have helped clients add value through their professional presenters.

- **Planning the conference.**

From their vast experience, speakers know the little things that can be done to make a good meeting great. Since it's in the best interest of speakers to participate in successful events, many of them are willing to spend time advising you on the agenda. They may suggest some changes, or a different room layout to facilitate interactive activities or other elements of their presentation. Grant Davies - one of Australia's leading MCs is brilliant at this.

- **Pre-event marketing.**

There are some corporate events that are voluntary for attendees, and many professional associations charge a fee to attend an event. In such cases, the speaker really can be the main reason people would invest time and money to come. Speakers who take part in these types of events understand the importance of attracting the largest possible audience, and many are happy to help market the event. They may talk to the press or provide their own marketing materials for distribution prior to an event. They certainly will have photos and other materials that can be used in advertising and direct mail. Max Walker - Former Australian Cricketer has autographed Cricket Balls that have then been sent to the press and attendees to generate enthusiasm for an event that he is participating in. This acts as a 'teaser', and builds excitement early for the whole meeting.

# Maximise your investment

- **Attend a VIP event.**

Many companies and associations coordinate special activities for the VIP crowd. Why not include the speaker?

This might be a breakfast, lunch or dinner where a smaller group of executives can have one-on-one time with the speaker to ask specific questions, talk about industry issues etc. This also can help the speaker get more specific information on the company before their presentation, which will make it more relevant and have a greater impact on the audience.

- **Act as MC.**

Professional speakers are often skilled in creating excitement, enthusiasm and energy among crowds of all sizes. This ability can be used throughout the entire event when speakers become MCs. They can introduce internal speakers, hand out awards, entertain briefly during a banquet and more.

- **Give the keynote and lead a breakout session.**

Consider asking a speaker to participate in a breakout session either before or after the keynote speech. This can be for high-level executives, the top-performing salespeople, or other targeted segments of the audience. The session can be an expansion of the keynote, or it can be on something entirely different. Since the speaker is already physically at your meeting, they often doesn't mind leading small sessions as well.

- **Consider a longer keynote speech.**

A common complaint among meeting attendees is they didn't get enough input or information from the speaker. This can be alleviated, for example, by extending the keynote presentation time from 60 minutes to 90 minutes. Or speakers could include more time for the Q&A period so specific issues can be addressed. Again, the speaker has already committed to the event and wants it to be as successful and meaningful as possible. Asking for a few more minutes can be the difference between a good and a great event.

- **Bring more to the event.**

Besides bringing themselves, speakers can bring handouts and other materials to an event, if appropriate. This gives attendees something to review after the event and increases the value of what they have invested time in (or, in the case of association members or public events, actually paid for). Many speakers are also authors and will be happy to sign books, DVDs or CDs before or after a presentation. Sometimes companies will purchase these materials for the attendees in advance; at other times the speaker will arrange to sell materials.

- **Participate in meeting activities.**

Some meetings can span a weekend or even a week, and can include recreational activities for attendees or their families. Extend an invitation to the speaker to attend some of these activities, from playing a round of golf with the delegates, to taking a swing dance lesson. Attendees often appreciate the extra attention.

- **Book in bulk.**

Again, for the meeting that can span several days, there may be concurrent sessions that are appropriate for the speaker. Having one person stay on for three or four days can, in the long run, be more economical than flying in two or three speakers for each different event. John Lees - a leading business speaker also wears the hat of humorist and MC. This adds a fun and memorable element to the event, which complements the sometimes serious tone of some meetings.

- **After-event follow-up.**

Depending on the nature of the meeting, follow-up activity may be appropriate and helpful. This could be a conference call with the speaker and key executives or meeting attendees. Many times, speakers will add attendees to their mailing lists to receive newsletters & other ongoing communication from them. Speakers want to give their all at each event. However, some speakers may not be available or comfortable with these suggestions, while others may come to the table with ideas not even mentioned here. Knowing which speaker falls in which category is where your speakers bureau comes in.

You should always ask your bureau representative to help you identify speakers who may go above and beyond the call of duty, to help maximize their roles in your event. Some speakers will negotiate their role within their existing fee, and others may have a different fee structure based on what they are asked to do. In either case, the investment your company or association makes in a professional speaker could, and should, be maximized for the ultimate return.

### **Top Tip From JGH Events**

Before you start - Do you know what your Company wants to achieve from the event? Is it a reward, a learning experience or an opportunity for people to network? These might seem simple questions; however, they are the most important questions for a successful event. A glamorous five star establishment may not be the best venue to get the right results!

If you need assistance we would cherish the opportunity to work with you.

Call us on 02 9630 0955 - JGH Event Pty Ltd.

# Industry experts, professionals and celebrities

Industry experts are industry insiders who are knowledgeable about a specific topic, such as health care, social welfare, deregulation, changes in legislation, and marketplace trends such as the explosion of an aging population. Their expertise allows them to help others in the field make sense of current issues. Industry expert speakers are not the same as professional speakers. Not by a long shot.

Working with a bureau Professional speakers invest a lot of time and money marketing themselves, and building a career entirely around their topic and craft. Most professional speakers can fill the role of a keynote speaker, or they can tailor a presentation to your audience, industry or theme.

They fly across the country, to take part in meetings, seminars, retreats & conferences. Professional public speaking is what they do. Expert speakers, on the other hand, have "day jobs." They work within a particular industry, are not always easy to locate and do not make public speaking their ultimate priority. It takes research and diligence to uncover expert speakers who can communicate clearly and who can accommodate a specific presentation for your event.

The benefits of using expert speakers in addition to professional speakers, however, are numerous. They possess a specific knowledge and experience base that can be applied directly to fit a meeting's agenda, they know the industry "language" and can communicate meaningfully to delegates on all levels. Based on their particular expertise, they can address a specific area of importance to meeting attendees, providing substance to their presentations and great 'take away' value to the delegates.

Celebrities are another kettle of fish altogether! We really do expect a lot from celebrities - be they sport stars, TV Stars, pop stars, radio jocks, actors, authors, business leaders, ex politicians or socialites. For some reason it is expected that they will also be brilliant speakers, MCs or facilitators. This is where you really should take your bureau's advice. It is not in the bureau's interest to suggest someone who is not capable of adding value to your event.

## **The question remains: Are they any good?**

Planners need to know that the speaker they hire can perform. Again, this is easy to determine with professional speakers who have promotional videos, books, articles, and other marketing materials. A speakers bureau also can provide testimonials of a professional speaker's performance. Can a bureau do the same with expert speakers? Not always. However, it certainly adds the necessary light and shade to a programme when you offer a mix of talent. Consider perhaps a professional speaker, celebrity MC and a special guest sports person or business leader in a programme. Remember that it is our job to make you look good - so we will not risk using inappropriate talent at your event.

## **Top Tip from Event Management Professionals-**

Creativity is not driven by a monetary value. Work with whatever the event budget is, providing your delegates with achievable outcomes and realistic possibilities. Deliver more than expected every time. Keep effective quality control on all event goods and services by developing the best supplier relationships, continue to work only with those suppliers who share your work ethic and business values.

Oscar van Elten - Event Management Professionals  
Ph 02 9411 2483 [www.eventpro.com.au](http://www.eventpro.com.au)

## **mc/moderator**

The objective of having an MC is to link all of the presentations at a conference together and to keep timings on track. The MC should be treated as and feel like one of your conference team.

- Have a briefing meeting wherever possible. Celebrity MCs often are not available for face to face briefings.
- Make sure that you provide your MC with introductions, outro's & product information on each presenter – well in advance.
- Work together with the MC on a run sheet with approximate timings.
- Avoid publicising the run sheet. Our advice is to – where possible - give only start and finish times for the day.

The role of an MC is to throw all of the light and 'glory' on to the other presenters - make sure that the MC does not operate from ego. Some of our media 'stars' have problems with this concept! (your bureau should be able to advise you on this) If a presenter was a no-show for any reason, is your MC capable of filling in for a session? Many professional MCs have this ability and it can make them great value for money and a true godsend in times of emergency!

## **cocktail parties**

The main objective of having talent at a cocktail party is to add atmosphere and to help break the ice if the crowd don't know each other. Suggestions - Jazz ensemble (with or without vocals), Chamber Group, Classical trio or quartet, roving magicians, card sharks, characters, caricaturists or paparazzi!

- Music adds instant atmosphere - make sure that you have briefed the talent on volume and style, if they are to be background only - let them know.
- If you do book an on stage 'act' make sure that they go for no longer than 20 minutes - people get very fidgety when they have to stand with a glass in one hand, napkin and

toothpick in the other, the handbag tucked under one arm, feet throbbing from the high heels and they are expected to applaud!

- With wandering entertainers we suggest a 1:50 ratio for the first 100 guests/people and 1:100 after that workshops.
- Work with the presenters to come up with a presentation topic that will attract delegates to the session.
- Workshops are geared more to skill development than attitude change.
- Advise the presenter approximate number of participants for hand outs etc.
- Allow enough breakout rooms.
- Ensure that all A/V is ready and checked.
- Allow a minimum of 1½ hours for a workshop.
- Product? Have clear agreements with the bureau regarding product sales.

### **Top Tip from Conference Focus**

The event doesn't end when the last delegate departs.....there's always the dreaded final account to check!

This often arrives on your desk a fortnight or so later. Which can take a week or more to breakdown and decipher! - A major headache!

Ask your venue to bring daily group billing sheets whilst you're on-site. You can then review and sign off on them while the whole event is fresh. That way, when your final group account arrives, (and even if it is 2 weeks later), you know you'll have checked most, of the daily group billings, know the account is correct, and quickly get it off to your accounts department.

It's a beautiful thing!

Conference Focus Pty Ltd

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## **conference openers & closers**

(speakers)

An 'opener' is expected to set the scene and enforce the theme and a 'closer' is really responsible for tying everything together and reinforcing the learnings and experiences. Depending on the MC, this can be a perfect job for him or her. The opening and closing speakers should ideally be high energy, memorable & importantly - fit the theme.

## conference openers & closers

(entertainment)

Just before or immediately after the opening or closing speaker is often an appropriate time to add a energetic, unexpected entertainment to really seal the event. Raw Metal - a high energy all male, funk, tap troupe from Brisbane are a perfect option for this spot - and they are a great example of exemplary team work or Drum Café - a Sydney based, South African drumming group who certainly get everyone drumming to the same beat. Think outside the square and go for something different.

## sporting speakers

Many sports people are keen to make an appearance at corporate events & to participate in a well run Q&A session. They have many great lessons to share with us. However, not all of our elite athletes are up to the big task of presenting solo. Most bureaus' can advise you on the individual strengths of these great Australians as speaking talent.

Lisa Curry-Kenny for example is an elite athlete and very successful business person who certainly knows how to communicate to a conference audience. However, most elite athletes (eg Olympians) have been trained by professionals on the skills of handling interviews. A strong MC can bring out the best of the stories, experiences and lessons of athletes.

## after dinner presenter

There are probably more 'rules' around after dinner presentations than any other area. Some hints to help you make the most of an after dinner presentation. (speaker or entertainer)

- Entertain don't educate! - Alcohol & education don't mix!
- Cease all table service during the presentation.
- Set the presentation (except for trivia or casino) for after entrée or main course not dessert.
- Avoid having a dance floor between the presenter and the audience. Set up a small stage on another wall if necessary.
- Always allow room in your budget for staging, sound and lighting. Why bother arranging great entertainment if the audience can't see and hear them perfectly.

Suggestions for after dinner - Comedy, Cabaret, Hoax, Sporting.

Brief the presenter in detail with regard to what is & is not acceptable - one man's trash is another man's treasure!

Ensure that someone is responsible for introducing the presenter, most professionals will provide a written introduction - please pay them the respect of using it - it is often written in a way that 'sets the audience up' for what is to come.

## bands

Have a very clear understanding of the audience and the event.

Are they party animals? What is the age group? What is the theme? What has worked well in the past? Don't replicate - innovate! Is it to be a stylish, glamorous event where you may need one show set and then 2 dance sets? Or is 3 dance sets going to be the right thing?

Things to consider with live music

- Do you need to impress or attract with a name?
- Don't book a horns style band for an intimate dinner - the audience will be blown out of the venue!
- Have you allowed enough access time to the room to complete set up and sound checks prior to guests arriving?

It is important to be clear with the band during your briefing session. if you have requested background dinner spots, don't be afraid to tell them to turn down the volume - the comfort of your guests is paramount.

- Be realistic with the budget - has the band included production in the quote or is that your responsibility?
- Always arrange a band room for meals and refreshments, mirrors and close access to bathrooms.

## it's a wrap...

We hope that the Event Organisers Survival Guide has been of value to you. Enjoy organizing great events that leave a positive mark in the minds and memories of your guests. Keep raising the bar and be creative with your themes and use of talent and venues. We look forward to being a part of your success.

**If you need to mediate or motivate,  
ruminate or cogitate,  
entertain or educate,  
just have fun or facilitate.**

**Give us a call – We'll make it great!**

# Bureau brief form

**Having answers to the following questions will help the bureau to find the right speaker for your event.**

What is the event and why are you holding this event?

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**Are you looking for a:**

<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Trainer</b>	<b>Facilitator</b>	<b>Entertainer</b>	<b>MC</b>
<b>Band</b>	<b>Comedian</b>	<b>Ice-Breaker</b>	<b>Wanderer</b>	

Are you looking for a big name to attract an audience?

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If so, have you allowed for the right budget. In Australia you can't get a draw-card speaker for less than \$7,000 and for an International the starting point would be \$US15,000.

**What are your budget expectations?**

**Under \$5K   \$5K-\$7K   \$7K-\$10K   \$10K+**

What are your expected outcomes? When the audience leaves the event what do you want them to do differently? How do you want them to feel? What new skill do you want them to have learned? What new attitude do you want them to have acquired?

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**What is the theme?**

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**Tell us about the audience - How Many? Age? Gender?**

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**Why will the audience be attending?**

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**Who has this group experienced previously?**

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**When and where? Date, Venue & Time**

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