

# THE NATIONAL LAW REVIEW

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## How to Land a Speaking Engagement

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Marketing is a multifaceted endeavor. As legal marketers, we are faced with a multitude of customers with differing opinions on what tactics to use to ultimately help them all reach the same goal – building their brands. We do this, not just for individual attorneys, but for practice areas and our firms as a whole. As legal marketers we have a number of tools in our arsenal to accomplish this goal: newsletters, blogs, publications, social media and legal rankings, among others.

One tool that is often underutilized is speaking engagements. Speaking engagements provide attorneys the opportunity to set themselves apart from their peers, allowing them to establish themselves as thought leaders, generate leads and gain connections. For the firm, it is a great way to generate publicity and positive exposure.

There are thousands of conferences held in the U.S. every year. Once you have culled through the websites and identified the few to target, it is time to prepare the speaker submission. This is your chance to set your attorney apart from the pack and help them win the role of speaker.

### Identify Your Target Audience

Sounds easy enough. You want to present to a group of potential clients, but you need to consider who, what, where and how much.

- *Who is your target audience?*

This could be corporate counsel, CEOs, other attorneys, etc. Knowing whom you want to target allows you to narrow your search.

- *What events do they attend?*

Not geographically, but at what type of events. There are literally conferences, summits, forums, conventions and meetings for everything. Identifying the industry, size and type of event will further narrow your search.

- *Where is the attorney willing to travel?*

Whether an attorney wants to stay in their home state or are willing to travel anywhere, knowing their geographic limitations will help you to further narrow your search.

- *Is the firm willing to sponsor the event?*

Sponsorship is a tough one. While sponsorship is often expensive, many guarantee the lawyer will be presenting.

Once the conferences have been vetted and identified, you need to monitor the websites for the call for speakers and complete the speaking proposal. When completing these forms, it is critical to think like an organizer. If you were planning an event, what would help you in selecting a potential speaker?

### Propose Topics That Fit The Event



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The goal of any conference planner is to offer an agenda that provides attendees with useful information. What this means varies by event. If it is a niche summit, then a specialized presentation tailored to the audience is appropriate. On the flip side, at large conferences, proposing broad topics that give top-level information is more appropriate. These topics are more appealing to a larger and more diverse group of attendees.

## **Submit Multiple Topics**

There is a lot of competition for speaking engagements. Organizers frequently receive hundreds of applications for a few speaking spots. Submitting multiple topics for consideration not only highlights the breadth of the attorneys knowledge, but it also improves their chances of being selected.

## **Why Not How**

While difficult, refrain from offering “how to” presentations. There are many other mediums people can access to learn how to do something. Focusing on presentations that explain why will leave attendees with the desire to learn more.

## **Establish Thought Leadership**

Given two otherwise equal submissions, the organizers will gravitate to the person who has established themselves as a thought leader. Investing in their brand on an ongoing basis increases the lawyer’s presence. An attorney’s published content (blogs, articles, quotes, etc.), an active social media presence and posting videos online all contribute to growing a following and attracting influencers. The attorney with a more prominent presence will attract more attendees to the conference.

## **Specialization**

Whatever your area of focus, make sure you make it clear to others that you are an expert on this subject. Publishing articles, tweeting and blogging, as mentioned above, help to establish thought leadership. Make sure to carry this over to their bio page and conference materials. And there is no reason your area of focus should not change as the industry changes. Keeping on top of recent trends and adjusting the information put out there reinforces expertise and is critical to setting your attorneys apart.

Never forget that your speaker submission is a sales pitch. However, it needs to be compelling without being overly self-serving. You are selling the attorney to the event organizers, which will not be difficult if they have established themselves as thought leaders.

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