



Professional Speaker Services

Connecting Speakers with Companies & Associations Worldwide

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4 ways to Guarantee a Horrific Meeting

By Andrea Driessen, President, Amplify

We've all sat through them: meetings that have *bombed*....In fact, some of us (horrors!) have even been *accomplices* in planning them.

Worse-than-mediocre meetings are not only huge wasters of time and money...they also **drain our audience's energy**—that precious and non-renewable resource that **pulls from productivity and messes with morale**.

So, how to guarantee your next meeting is *horrific*?

1. Employ a Purposeless--or not Purposeful *Enough*--Planning Process.

Even before you set a date and find a venue, find a reason to meet. Sound silly? Well, how many meetings—large and small—have you *endured*....all the while wondering: what's the *point* of all this?

So, get to the point from the very beginning. Decide the key take aways for the event: What do you **want the audience to think, feel, do, believe and/or experience after the meeting that they don't currently**? If your answers aren't compelling--and tied to your business strategy--it's time to answer the questions again, or, indeed, *scrap* the meeting.

What *are* your key take aways? What should attendees *do* immediately upon returning to the office? Can every audience member recite their roles in achieving the newly set goals as they walk out of the conference center? *If not, you are an accessory to helping hold a horrific meeting.*

2. Arrange Out-of-Synch Programming and Messaging.

With proper planning and yes, extra leg work, we can ensure that all aspects of our meeting agenda are **aligned**—and **do not contradict** each other. Accomplish this quite simply with a few planning meetings and/or conference calls with *all* meeting-message stakeholders, from your C-suite, to your external keynote speakers, to your breakout session presenters and even your entertainers. (Imagine, for example, the audience's happy surprise at hearing an after-dinner comedian whose "call-back" reflects something your President said that morning!)

During this **message continuity meeting or call**, give each participant an opportunity to share their content plans, and ensure everyone's on board with ways to unite and align messages for more impact. This discussion also ensures that any content redundancies or contradictions are known and cleared up ahead of time, so that you can **make the most of every meeting minute**.

With information overload so common in nearly all meetings these days, the more you focus on just two or three key "meta-message" take aways, the more your participants will retain overall...and the more effective your meeting's **return on investment and return on objective**.

Trying to do too much means very little sticks. Often, we communicate more (and more is *remembered*) when we *communicate in a more strategic, streamlined, and unified way*.

3. Use only one or two Methods to Disseminate information.

Most meetings offer a rather **predictable format**: an introduction from the President, followed by an opening keynote, after which participants disburse for breakouts, reconvene for lunch, and...most likely, do the same thing again and again for the course of one or more days, til it's time to go home, overwhelmed.

Most information shared in meetings is transferred from a talking head ... into the **unengaged or under-involved heads** of the audience. All in the midst of too many PowerPoint slides.

While there may be some interaction via a raising of hands, smaller team discussions, and networking one-on-ones...most often, people are **learning by hearing and by reading**.

Pretty horrific, when you consider the many other options available to us for expanding our knowledge base. Next time, try integrating one or more of these ideas:

- Showcase "**You-Tube**"-type videos, recorded digitally by employees *before* the meeting—and shown *at* the meeting—to illustrate team accomplishments in a fresh, vivid and memorable way.

- Closely timed **round table** discussions that generate new ideas, bridge solutions, or air frustrations in a fast-paced, results-driven manner, along with awards given for the “best” ideas as voted on by peers.
- **Improv skits** on stage that get sales staffs thinking fast on their feet about next year’s new product line.
- **Games and game shows**, with ties to pop culture. For example, create your own “Deal or No Deal” game as a means to explore negotiation strategies; play your own Company Jeopardy game to test audience knowledge about other departments.

4. Schedule Speakers who Suck.

While you’d completely avoid this experience when you book [Amplify speakers](#)...we all know the power of a speaker to make our meeting horrific...*or* a big hurrah.

A short list of how to **ensure a home run** on the speaker platform every time:

- Always **preview** a speaker via a demo DVD or an in-person showcase. Just asking the speaker or the bureau for either will normally do the trick.
- To ensure a solid, all-around fit, talk with the speaker **before** you finalize the contract and **discuss your audience, goals and talk points**. If some aspect doesn’t align, revisit your speaker search.
- Personally call a **few of the clients** who hired the speaker to hear directly about their experience.
- Even before you book the speaker, talk about the extent to which he or she will **customize** the keynote session or make the entertainment extra special for your audience. The “canned” speech is a thing of the past. At the same time, it’s unrealistic to expect most external talent to create a from-scratch session just for your group—unless you’re willing to pay an additional customization fee. Be sure to clarify your expectations from the beginning, because speakers have their own concepts of what it means to customize.
- Whether you seek a motivational or content-driven speaker...a comedian or a magician...start your talent search **at least 9-12 months in advance**. The best speakers’ calendars fill quickest, so planning ahead saves you time, money, and disappointment.

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Amplify works strategically with clients to ensure your speakers get you where you want to go. Our time-saving methodology gets to the core reasons for bringing in speakers...and our thorough selection process means you streamline your choices and have the opportunity to select only the very best speakers who fit your parameters.

Call Amplify for a complimentary consultation about your event:

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