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Put Me In, COACH!

A little coaching can go a long way to improve your speaking game

BY JULIE ANN SULLIVAN, MBA, CLL-E

No matter what age you are or how long you have been in your chosen profession, there is always a time to ask for help. The trick is to know when that time is and to be specific about what you need. Could you use some coaching to take your speaking business to the next level in 2016?

First, look at your strengths. More important, take a long, hard look to identify your challenges as well. We all have them, and they change over time. Once you have a clear picture of where you need the most improvement, look for a coach who can support you in that specific area.

There are many coaches who can teach you platform skills, sales skills, marketing strategies, how to write a book and other areas of endeavor. A coach should not be the one, however, to identify the weaknesses in your business. It's a more efficient use of your time to be introspective and know your limitations beforehand. With this information in hand, you can select the "right" coach for you.

Invest in Yourself

Good coaching isn't cheap, so taking the time to make the best decision up front is worth it. What is your coaching budget, and what are your time constraints? Examine all of your options. Some coaches charge by the hour, or month, or program. A small package is a good way to test the relationship and their advice.

My experience has been that there is a "sweet spot" somewhere between three months and a year for lasting results. A top coach will cost you thousands of dollars, but I have never felt I didn't get my money's worth. You always have to check with your own tax professional, but, in most cases, coaching fees are classified as business expenses.

Every time I have indulged in a coaching program, it has taken me to a new level of success in my speaking business. Several coaches have assisted me over the years in marketing, the secrets of delegating and, more recently, how to book more business.

Coaching also can be beneficial to you if you abide by these critical steps:

- Take a good honest look at yourself, your successes and challenges.
- Talk to other people who have worked with your coach of choice. Most professionals have testimonials on their websites; chances are you know one of them.
- Don't try to tackle too much at one time. It's better to be coached in a precise area.
- Set specific goals with your coach before you begin. It will give you good insight as to your ability to work well together. (Your chemistry is vital!)
- Keep an open mind. You are paying for someone else's expertise.
- Do your homework!

You might ask, "Where can I find a qualified coach?" There are plenty among the NSA membership, but my best advice is to ask the people you know. Nothing is more valuable than a recommendation from someone who has had success. Hiring a professional can move you and your business forward. The strong and smart ask for help; not the weak.



*Motivational speaker
Julie Ann Sullivan, MBA,
CLL-E, works with clients
to create workplace environ-
ments where people are
productive, engaged and appreciated.*

Visit julieann@julieannsullivan.com.