

# The Nuts & Bolts of Great Speakers-Bureau Programs



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**M**aximum impact from speakers-bureau programs can be achieved if one knows how to deliver excellent content that supports and enhances the marketing message and can flawlessly execute these programs. The best content in the world won't have impact if attendees can't find the meeting room because of poor directions.

What follows is a practical checklist of insights, suggestions, ideas, and advice to ensure that large-scale speakers programs are a 100% success, whether a company has selected "preferred vendors" or is charged with finding the perfect partner to execute these very important programs.

## Developing a Checklist

**Resources:** Speakers-bureau vendors must have sufficient resources and systems in place to provide all standard speakers-bureau services. But what about innovative enhancements? In today's competitive environment, one size does not fit all as far as meeting formats go. Pharmaceutical sponsors should work with a company that has demonstrated creativity and experience across every type of meeting format.

**Capacity:** Make sure that the selected partner not only has the staff to handle large volume programs, but also has the operational and financial resources to ramp up quickly to add a large number of programs or staff and equipment in a short period of time. Without this flexibility, the selected partner company may be slow to start up, unable to pay physician honoraria and expenses in a timely way, or to handle the volume in the middle of the program.

**Technology:** Most companies employ sophisticated database technology and Web-based systems in support of speakers bureau and related programs. But, it's important to make sure that these systems are continuously challenged and improved upon. Ask up front how often a company's technology is updated

and refined, and how this technology can help by providing real-time reports through a client extranet site.

**People:** Choosing the right program coordinator is a key factor. Make sure that the selected partner places equal emphasis on the human and automated components of the process. The program coordinator is the single most important person in making sure that everything runs smoothly and on schedule and that everyone is informed in a timely manner. Keep in mind that the coordinator interfaces with key physician customers and sales representatives. Make sure this person is who you want representing your company.

## Enhancing the Components

**Faculty Recruitment:** Spend the time and money up front to profile the speakers so valuable resources aren't wasted training those who don't speak to the needs of your company's audience. Once the right speakers are found, it is important to track and drive the activities of this group and ensure that the field is using them.

**Content Development:** Make certain that the scientific staff working with the faculty on content development has a credible reputation and can speak to the science as well as the faculty can. This is crucial in designing slides that will present data in a compelling and meaningful way to the audience. It also doesn't hurt if the scientific staff has relevant therapeutic category experience.

**Faculty Training:** An annual faculty meeting needs to be enhanced with additional points of contact throughout the year. Update the faculty by providing them a tool for easy access to data, slides, and information about their speaking engagements — they'll be sure to use this tool if they can get information, such as when honoraria and expense checks are being mailed.

**Logistics Management:** Again, the key to flawless logistics are skilled and experienced program coordinators. They will ensure that everything runs smoothly because they have extensive knowledge of best practices and the insight to be flexible to manage the last-minute issues that inevitably arise. ■

## What Every Great Program Coordinator Needs to Know

### 1. Scheduling

Evening programs work best, but never on Wednesday nights.

### 2. Recruitment

The keys to good attendance are:

- Getting doctors to save the date
- Picking a good meeting site
- Reminding everyone as the date gets closer

Make sure all territory reps know what's going on so they can promote the meeting.

### 3. Timing

Make sure events start and stop on time by assigning someone to manage this key element.

### 4. Venue

Choose the right size location. Don't make the mistake of

a too large a group in a small room, or having a small group be overwhelmed by massive conference space.

### 5. Sound

If the speaker cannot be heard clearly by everyone in the meeting, the program is doomed before it starts. If your venue does not have a quality sound system (quality microphone, quality amplifier, and quality speakers) buy, rent, or borrow. The quickest way to sabotage a meeting is by overlooking the need for superb sound.

### 6. Lights

Attendees get antsy if they cannot see what is happening. Make certain that the speaker is fully lit so the audience can see facial expressions and gestures.

### 7. Atmosphere

The appropriate ambience sets the mood and tone for

the meeting. Attention spans will easily evaporate in a hot stuffy room. Therefore, make every effort to keep the room at a comfortable temperature adjusted to the size of the crowd.

### 8. Seating

To every great meeting there is a sense of order.

### 9. Introduction

The introduction is a critical part of the program that builds the credibility of the speaker and piques the interest of the audience. The introduction should begin only after the audience is seated and the room is quiet.

### 10. Conclusion

The speaker should not have to dismiss the audience. It should be clear by the tone and pacing of the content when the topic is concluded.

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