

Hotel & Motel Management
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The Sales Clinic

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BUILD MORE SALES THROUGH PUBLIC SPEAKING

People would prefer doing business with people they know, people they like and people who are respected. One of the better ways to become known, liked and respected is to get involved in public speaking. We don't mean getting involved in the big stuff like addressing large audiences internationally, but doing things locally, in your own backyard. After all, in all probability most of your business is generated from local sources. Once groups know that you are available to address their members on topics that may be of interest to them you probably will get called upon pretty frequently. And, what's so bad about that? Your title and the name of your property always goes along with you when you speak and creates wonderful awareness and visibility for you and your hotel.

Ask any program committee member for any local organization about the problems they have getting speakers for their monthly membership meeting and you'll see why there is no problem getting booked. Of course, you need a story to tell, a group to tell it to and not be afraid to do it. This is where most people have a problem © being afraid. One of the biggest fears people have is to speak in public; most people dread doing it. Even with professional speakers there is always some level of anxiety, but the amount of anxiety gets reduced with experience. The more you get out and address audiences the easier it becomes and probably the more fun you'll get out of it. What causes most anxiety is a lack of confidence and experience. To reduce anxiety you need to have confidence in what you are going to say; therefore, only select topics that you care about, in which you have a great deal of experience or knowledge and feel comfortable in addressing. You should start off with small groups, particularly with those in which you already hold membership and know some of the people. In just about any city, if you take a look at the local telephone directory you will find a listing of clubs and associations that would welcome you as a speaker. And, there are loads of church groups, garden clubs, senior citizen groups and the list goes on. Check with the Chamber of Commerce for a listing and even ask the Executive Vice-President for advice about which groups to approach.

Just about any topic involving the hotel business, travel and tourism, and food service, would be of interest to most groups. We are in a very glamorous business and people love to hear about it; there is so much they do not understand, but find it most fascinating. And, here we are not talking about any long-winded speeches. Most groups only want 15©20 minutes for the monthly meeting. Certainly any property manager or sales person can come up with enough information on an interesting topic to cover that amount of time. Think of all the funny hotel

stories or sales stories you can tell. Or tell about the hardships or changes in the industry or just telling about how you do your job could be very informative and exciting.

So where do you start? First pick one or two topics with which you feel comfortable addressing. Make an outline to cover material for twenty minutes. Work in some support material (overhead transparencies, slides, posters, videos, etc.). Make sure you have an interest getting introduction to the topic (maybe even ask a question that would stir people to thinking). Practice the presentation with friends or family. Go through it a couple of times to make sure you are comfortable with it and at the same time you can fine-tune it.

As you get more experience you will want to add topics and audiences and without any doubt add to your business....just be sure to hand out your business cards to the people you meet. We have another Hotel & Motel Management sponsored Hospitality Sales Workshop scheduled for April 13-15, 1998. For more information you may contact me by email howardf@vt.edu or fax me at 540-231-3746.