

Dan Coughlin's Approach to Giving a Keynote Speech

Background

I began my full-time management consulting business in January 1998. From 1998 through 2007 my primary focus was on providing executive coaching. During that time I coached Division Presidents, Vice-Presidents, and Senior Directors at McDonald's, Marriott, Coca-Cola, Toyota, St. Louis Cardinals, and more than 30 other organizations. I conducted more than 1,500 executive coaching sessions and invested more than 3,000 hours on-site observing and coaching these individuals.

All of my executive coaching was customized and outcome-focused. All the relationships began with clarifying the business outcomes the individual wanted to improve. We then worked together toward leveraging the individual's strengths and honing key behaviors in order to improve those business outcomes. In 2005 I began to shift from advising one individual at a time (executive coaching) to providing practical business advice on leadership, innovation, branding, and sales to hundreds of people at a time (keynote speaking).

Target Audience and Topics

My audiences fall into two specific categories: they are either members of a single business or members of an association made up of numerous businesses. The audience members tend to be business owners, presidents/CEOs, vice-presidents, operational managers, and/or sales/marketing managers. All of my keynote speeches are about practical ideas to accelerate the sustainable achievement of the group's most important desired business outcomes. My keynote topics are leadership, innovation, branding, and sales.

Purpose of a Keynote Speech

To me, the purpose of a keynote speech is to impact the behaviors of the audience members in ways that generate better sustainable results for their organizations. Before every keynote speech I work with the decision-makers to clarify the desired outcomes of the meeting 100 days after it is over. I then provide in my keynote speech very practical ideas the attendees can consider using to impact those outcomes.

Research and Customization

For every keynote speech I do extensive research on the organization or the association. I conduct phone interviews with a dozen people. I send out an e-mail questionnaire with five open-ended questions to anywhere from 50 to 500 people who will be attending the meeting. I read any hard copy documents or websites about the group that I can gather. Many times I go on-site to the organization before my speech in order to better understand their nuances. Based on all of this research I select the key ideas to focus on. I create a hard copy Learning Guide for the attendees and Power Point slides to highlight these ideas.

Value Added After the Speech is Over

For a speech to make a lasting impact that improves business outcomes, I believe the ideas need to be reinforced periodically with the audience members. Consequently, I write follow-up articles for the organization or the association to use in their internal electronic or hard copy publications. In these articles I highlight the key ideas I delivered in the keynote speech.

I can provide numerous examples of each of these components of my keynote speeches.