

THE INSIDER'S GUIDE TO  
BUILDING A SPEAKING CAREER

# SPEAK FOR A LIVING

SECOND EDITION

ANNE BRUCE & SARDÉK LOVE



# **SPEAK FOR A LIVING**

SECOND EDITION

ANNE BRUCE & SARDÉK LOVE

**atd**  
PRESS

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# Foreword

Much has changed in the world of speaking since the first edition of *Speak for a Living* was released. Social media has become essential for business, online training programs like webinars are commonplace, and YouTube training videos are a must-have on your website. What hasn't changed, though, is that professional speaking is a tough and competitive business. Sure, the folks onstage make it look easy, but the truth of the matter is they do hours of research, travel, self-marketing, and refining their presentations before you even sit in the audience.

We've been in this business long enough to know it's both mentally and physically hard work. But having a passion for what you do makes the hard work worth it.

What also hasn't changed in this book's second edition is the wisdom between its covers. Anne Bruce has joined forces with the unflappable Sardék Love to bring you even more truths about building a career as a professional speaker. You still need to know what drives you to become a speaker, and you still need an excellent support system to back you up at home. And of course, you still need to make money doing it.

What's new is how you do it. This is a profession of “here today, gone tomorrow,” so staying power is a must if you want to grow a scalable business and be a long-lasting success. How do you keep your message fresh, front, and center, and how do you deliver it? Why must you establish a social media presence? And most important, why can't you just speak for a living? All these questions—and even those you didn't know you needed to ask—are answered in this book.

Anne and Sardék share their personal victories—and their downfalls—in this no-holds-barred guide. They've interviewed other speakers who share the same so you don't have to repeat their mistakes. The common denominator for speakers today is that they're not just speakers—they're so much more. They're trainers. They're coaches. They're authors of blogs, books, seminars, and e-books. They host webinars, workshops, prestigious retreats, and podcasts. Pros in this business all hustle in one way or another to sell themselves and keep their messages relevant. They depend on repeats and referrals to make a living doing what they love. And following the guidance in this book, you can too.

Anne and Sardék have distilled their knowledge of more than 35 years' combined experience as professional speakers to give you the tools, tips, and advice you need. Learn from them, do the assessment, use the tools, and heed the wisdom they share so you can avoid making rookie mistakes as you begin your own speaking career. It will mean the difference between doing a job or working to create a career you love and will be passionate about for a very long time.

—Betty Garrett  
President and CEO, Garrett Speakers International

—Michele Lucia  
Owner, ADL Speaker Management LLC

## INTRODUCTION

---

# This Isn't a Hobby; It's a Career and a Business

**Speaking for a living is a competitive career and business, and it needs to be treated as such.**

Some of us were born to get onstage, and some of us sharpen our skills over time and grow to become the speakers we are today. Anne, for instance, played her first gig at age three at a Knott's Berry Farm medicine show. She became a journalist and author whose career path naturally gravitated toward speaking and training. Sardék came to the game a little later, after he was fired from his dream job. Interestingly enough, he followed the advice in the first edition of *Speak for a Living*: He completed the “So You Want to Be a Professional Speaker and Trainer” assessment, developed his skills, joined ATD, and took the leap—he's now a successful speaker and trainer. His dedicated efforts and networking landed him here as co-author of this expanded and updated edition of *Speak for a Living*! How's that for a success story?

If you're reading this book, there must be something inside you that drives you toward this career. The vast number of YouTube channels show that there are thousands, even millions, of people out there with something to say—but are they professional speakers who make their living solely

from speaking and training engagements? Sure, it's easy enough to post a video on the latest trend. But do you have a powerful message to share that will empower, inform, or entertain your audience? We doubt there are many people who wake up one morning and say, "You know, today is the day I'm going to get onstage and share my message with the world." Speaking for a living is a competitive career and a business, and it needs to be treated as such.

## **Begin at the Beginning**

From little seeds do mighty oak trees grow. Anne, a native New Yorker from the Bronx, gave her first paid speech in a big red barn in rural Toad Suck, Arkansas, for a whopping \$500. She placed her handouts on haystacks. Sardék's first paid speech was in Asheville, North Carolina, also for a cool \$500. Toad Suck and Asheville are about as far away from our world and our reality as you can get. But that's the life of a speaker.

We often find ourselves in places around the globe that are far from home. Yet we are fortunate and grateful to be welcomed into the diverse worlds and cultures of others. When speakers are invited to step into and experience someone else's map of the world—other lifestyles, industries, sociopolitical environments, professional associations, places of worship, special events, retreats, or megaconferences and seminars—they get the opportunity to expand their map and gain more insights for developing their speaking and training materials. In our opinion, it's the speaker, trainer, or consultant who is the greatest beneficiary when this happens. Audiences will always give you more than you could ever give them.

What you as a presenter put out there is always going to be a mirrored reflection back to you in grander, more intense proportions, as you grow yourself and your platform of topics and product lines in years to come.

The reason we shared our humble beginnings up front is this—we all must start somewhere. Whether it's Toad Suck, Arkansas, or Asheville, North Carolina, where you start your speaking and training career doesn't really matter. Never be ashamed of where you get your start.

And as any new speaker can testify to, in the 21st century, with the breakneck speed of the Internet combined with ever-evolving mobile technology, there's really no such thing as a small and unimportant town anymore. The residents of Anytown, USA, might just want to hear what you have to say—and be willing to pay you for it—after checking out your website and streaming your videos.

## **The Timid Need Not Apply**

Stepping up to a microphone in front of 500 people in a hotel ballroom waiting to hear what you have to say is not for the faint of heart. The saying goes, “The meek shall inherit the Earth, but they’ll never get booked to speak in Las Vegas before an audience of 1,500 bounty hunters.” And if you’re looking for nothing but positive praise on evaluation sheets, or if you require constant validation and adulation—get a puppy. You’re probably not cut out for this profession.

There is one thing of which we are certain: There is a huge desire to be part of a fictional, so-called exclusive club of speakers and trainers who travel the globe and share their ideas and inspiration. We can honestly tell you that in the hundreds of presentations we have done, it is rare that we are not approached afterward by someone who wants to know how they can do what we do for a living. The interest in this field is extraordinarily high—but so is the failure rate. It’s a very competitive business.

We updated this book to emphasize just that—the speaking industry remains fiercely competitive—and you must capitalize on all the tools available today to ensure your success. Social media use has exploded since the first *Speak for a Living* was published, and you must establish a strong online presence, powerfully market yourself, and advertise what makes you different from the pack. Online training programs like webinars and tutorials are available for practically every industry, are more appealing to geographically widespread audiences, and are therefore also vital to cementing your reputation for providing high-caliber and timely materials. Unchanged since the first edition but equally relevant today is having a stellar website complete with your video clips and training session

videos. You still must have the determination and wherewithal to follow through on your endeavors, and always be your best self while you do it. As up-and-coming speaker Patrick Monifold says in his book *Change Your Life: The Secrets of Self-Discipline*, “The greatest gift you will ever give yourself is the power of self-discipline.” If you wish to become a full-time speaker and trainer, then you must begin your journey aware of all the opportunities and pitfalls in this industry.

We intend to help you increase your chances of success and diminish your chances at failure. And the only way you can do this is to jump in with your eyes open, aware of the real-world working conditions of this business, and then decide if it is worth it to you.

## **Do You Make the Cut?**

You’re considering chucking the status quo to jump into the speaking and training arena. You’re pumped after seeing Erik Wahl’s TED Talk, “The Spark and the Grind.” You even walked on hot coals to prove you’re pumped, primed, and ready for anything. But now you’re back home and reality sets in. It’s time to ask yourself, “What is driving me toward this profession?” “Do I know everything I need to know to make a go of it and succeed as a paid speaker and trainer?” “Do I have the self-discipline needed to persevere?”

How do you know if you are truly cut out for this life in public speaking and training? We have created an assessment tool to help you decide if this is the right career for you (Figure I-1).

Do you want to get into this profession for the right reasons? If the answer is yes, then you need to complete this exercise. We believe it will help reveal your inner motivation for moving in this direction. It’s not a scientific study, but having worked in the business for more than 35 years combined, we have seen the common denominators among the most successful speakers and trainers worldwide as well as those who are headed toward being chewed up and spit out in short order on the circuit.

This exercise is not about having right or wrong answers. It’s simply about helping you reveal the reasons why you think you can make it in this



industry. It's a tool to uncover your strengths and determination to make this dream a reality. It's not an assessment that requires having the correct responses. It's an assessment that requires you to ask yourself all the smart questions you need to prepare yourself for this leap of faith. This will be the first step in preparing yourself for success and opportunities you never thought possible in a career.

Don't overanalyze your answers. Respond from the heart—that's where a speaker's and trainer's best answers always come from. As you read this book, you will return to your responses and innermost thoughts about becoming a speaker or trainer. Answers to your questions will reveal themselves as you learn more details about starting your own speaking and training practice.

Figure I-1. So You Want to Be a Professional Speaker and Trainer?

Smart Questions	Your Answer
<b>Attitude, Ego, Self-Motivation, and Your Personality</b>	
What do you want to achieve by starting your own speaking and training practice?	
What is your perception of yourself? What perception do others have of you?	
Who are you? Describe your authentic self.	
Do you maintain a positive outlook on life?	
How will you keep yourself motivated in this role as speaker and trainer? How will you motivate others?	
How do you influence others daily? What's your definition of influence?	
Do you believe in the power of a positive attitude? How do you demonstrate it?	
Do you possess a positive physiology? Do you use positivity to get well and stay well? (Maintaining good physical health is essential for speakers.)	
What motivates you to want to be in front of people speaking and training, day in and day out?	

Figure I-1. So You Want to Be a Professional Speaker and Trainer?

Smart Questions	Your Answer
Do some people consider you a “high-maintenance” personality? Do you require a lot of praise? Do you need feedback from others to determine your self-worth?	
Do you accept that extreme physicality can be a big part of this job? Are you up for it?	
Are you a low-maintenance traveler, or do you require a lot of things to be comfy when away from home?	
Do you require lots of sleep to catch up when you’re in different time zones? Do you suffer from severe jet lag on a cross-country flight?	
Do you expect to be treated “special” because you are the speaker or trainer?	
Are you doing this to be famous and make a lot of money?	
Are you doing this to enrich the lives of others, first and foremost? What makes you think you can do this and make a living at it?	
On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest rating, what is your energy level?	
How long have you been talking about doing this kind of work? What will prompt you to actually do something about it?	
Do you think your speaking practice will impress your friends? (Trust us, they won’t understand what you do for a living. Everyone will think it’s a hobby.)	
Do you have the financial resources it’s going to take to invest in this venture? How will you financially swing it?	
Are you fearful of traveling internationally? Are you afraid of travel in general?	
Are you comfortable around other cultures? Do you feel at ease among people of different ethnicities and engage in the cultures of others?	
How can you bring a universal approach to your speaking or training topics?	
What’s your usual mood? How will you overcome feeling out of sorts and never let your downside show? (No whiners or martyrs allowed in this profession.)	

**Figure I-1. So You Want to Be a Professional Speaker and Trainer?**

<b>Smart Questions</b>	<b>Your Answer</b>
Are you a risk taker?	
Do you display self-defeating behavior when you launch a new idea? How can you prevent this from recurring?	
<b>Confidence and Self-Esteem</b>	
Are you thick skinned? Can you handle blunt criticism from strangers? (Because you're going to get plenty!)	
Are you easily offended? Are you easily embarrassed? Are you highly sensitive to how others respond to you?	
How will you handle hecklers, drunken slurs, insults, Internet trolls, and other indiscretions thrown at you? How will you keep your composure in front of an audience?	
If you accidentally stick your foot in your mouth, what's your damage control strategy? How will you prevent future mishaps?	
On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest rating, how do you rate your level of self-esteem?	
Do you believe in yourself and your amazing talents? What are your amazing talents?	
Do you believe you've got what it takes to match up to the pros on the circuit?	
Who intimidates you? Why? Will that type of attitude or personality get in the way of your presentation if your client possesses those same traits?	
How do you feel about your appearance? Can you cut loose and feel good about how you look?	
How would you describe the impression you make on others when you walk into a room for the first time? Dynamic? Regal? Confident? Secure? Knowledgeable? Timid? Self-conscious? Boring? Arrogant? Friendly and approachable?	
What one-word description would you use regarding your persona?	

Figure I-1. So You Want to Be a Professional Speaker and Trainer?

Smart Questions	Your Answer
Are you a nervous person? How does it show? Does your neck, face, or chest area get red and blotchy when you speak publicly? Do you fidget? Do your hands shake? Does your voice crack?	
How do you transform jittery feelings into positive energy to propel you forward and make you more powerful onstage?	
What are you spectacular at? Name one thing you do extraordinarily well. (You can't be all things to all people.)	
What do you stand for?	
What's your credibility in the subject matter you plan to speak about or train on? How will your clients and audiences view your credibility? How can you pump up your credible status? Continuing education? Certification? Degree? Experience?	
Will you have something else to sell beside yourself at your presentations? Books? Thumb drives? Online subscriptions? Other collateral material?	
Do you constantly compare yourself with other speakers or trainers and then come away feeling small and insignificant?	
Do you look at other speakers and trainers and genuinely praise the great ones and try to learn lessons from the best in the business?	
How will you measure your success? How will you know when you've "got what it takes"? What's your plan for continuous improvement?	
Are you confident enough to test the waters and ask for feedback from others about your style and effectiveness onstage? What will you do when you don't like what you are told?	
<b>Your Talents and Professional Side</b>	
What's stopping you from becoming a paid speaker?	
What's the most exciting revenue-generating idea you've ever had? What did you do with that idea? What was the outcome?	
What strategies and tools will you be using to develop your practice?	

**Figure I-1. So You Want to Be a Professional Speaker and Trainer?**

Smart Questions	Your Answer
Are you willing to do whatever it takes to get started? Will you speak for no pay to get the experience? How many months or years are you willing to devote to breaking into the business? Set a goal, be specific.	
How will you develop your speaking skills? Are you willing to join Toastmasters International, the National Speakers Association, or ATD; take a public speaking course; read a lot; hire a speaking coach; or pursue professional certification? Do you feel above these efforts?	
Will it bother you when you discover other speakers and trainers are getting paid more money than you are at the same venue where you may be presenting?	
Are you willing to start out small and work your way up to larger engagements?	
Are you comfortable asking for money and negotiating fees?	
Are you comfortable with an agent or speaker bureau keeping 25-30 percent of your fees?	
Do you have an established online following or social media platform, like Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, or your own blog?	
What's your greatest asset as it relates to professional speaking and training?	
Do you feel the need to have an office space instead of just working from home?	
What do you do onstage that sets you apart from all the rest?	
Will you consider being an in-house trainer for an organization to gain experience?	
Do you consider yourself an original or a copycat in your industry? If you're an original, prove it.	
Do you do whatever it takes to get the job done? Or if it is acceptable, do you only do the bare minimum? When have you gone beyond the call of duty and loved every minute?	
What value-added components are you prepared to offer your clients and audiences?	
Do you get paralyzing stage fright? How do you handle it?	

Figure I-1. So You Want to Be a Professional Speaker and Trainer?

Smart Questions	Your Answer
What help will you require to set up a professional speaking and training practice? An accountant? A website designer? A ghost writer? Administrative support? A housekeeper? Childcare? Adult daycare for a parent? Boarding for animals? A house sitter?	
What is your greatest passion? What could you do seven days a week, day and night, and never tire of it?	
How does your passion come through in your work? Explain.	
Are you a great communicator? How do you tell the world who you are by how you communicate with others, audiences, and loved ones?	
Can you handle not knowing when the next gig will come along? How far out will you be comfortable booking engagements?	
Suppose there's a tragic event in the world? How will you rebound from loss of business if it affects the geographic locations where you work?	
How are you at riding roller coasters—in your professional life, that is?	
Is security a driving force for you to succeed?	
What are you willing to do to make speaking or training full time a reality?	
What is your story? What do you plan to tell the world?	
Are you a great storyteller? How do you know?	
How will you continue to upgrade yourself in this profession as time goes on?	
Have you ever been published on your subject of expertise?	
What speaker or trainer have you seen whom you admire most?	
Are you good at infusing humor into your presentations?	
Are you naturally funny onstage or do you feel awkward about being funny?	
What journey will you take your audience on? What will they love about it most?	

Figure I-1. So You Want to Be a Professional Speaker and Trainer?

Smart Questions	Your Answer
Are you creative by nature? What's your "wow" factor when you present?	
What's your voice sound like? Will you require a speaking coach?	
Are you articulate and compelling when you speak?	
How do you handle change? Do you welcome change in your life?	
How will you make this endeavor a lasting legacy?	
How do you plan to win your audience over and bring them to their feet when you are done speaking?	
<b>Family and Friends—Support and Encouragement</b>	
Do you have strong family support, or is there resistance to doing this job?	
Who are the people in your cheering gallery? Name names.	
Who are the people working against you or preventing you from entering this profession? Name names.	
What will it cost you and your family if you pursue this career full time?	
Can you be happy speaking only on occasion or do you have a stronger calling?	
Can you afford to not make any money in the first year or so?	
How many days a month is your family agreeable to you traveling?	
Is your family enthusiastic and excited for you to embark on this venture?	
If you are a trainer for an organization or seminar company, you may well be traveling more than in your own practice. Will that work for your family?	
Who needs you around most? Kids, spouse, parents, others?	
If it is just you and your spouse, will you want your spouse to accompany you on trips? If yes, why? If no, why?	



Figure I-1. So You Want to Be a Professional Speaker and Trainer?

Smart Questions	Your Answer
How will your family handle you being gone so often?	
Is your desire to do this kind of work a plan to “escape” your life at home?	
How will you handle friends who resent your new profession and your success? (Trust us, this happens.)	
From whom will you get your support and encouragement?	
Can you put the “what ifs” behind you? What if I fail? What if I can’t get my old job back? What if I run out of money?	

*Adapted from Anne’s Speaker Trainer Seminar’s Self-Assessment Toolkit*

We created this assessment so you could honestly and thoughtfully evaluate your intentions for entering this business. You may not be able to complete it in one sitting. Take your time, think carefully about your motivations, and answer all the questions to the best of your ability. We asked difficult, personal, and intimate questions because putting yourself in front of an audience is a powerful thing, yet it may put you in a vulnerable place. You must be mentally prepared for accolades as well as abuse when you step in front of an audience. By completing this assessment, you will become aware of what this industry potentially holds for you. As you continue to read the rest of this book, reflect on your answers—especially the ones you struggled with—and what your internal motivations are for proceeding. If any of these questions made you change your mind about entering the business, then you’ve just saved yourself a lot of time. Remember, it’s just as valuable to discover something is *not* right for you as it is to discover you have hit on the perfect match. So, what’s it going to be? We suspect you’ll go forward and with gusto, or you would not have purchased this book and read this far in the first place.

## Don't Ask Me Why

Did you notice in the questionnaire you just completed that we did not ask you one single *why* question? That is because why questions are deadly for speakers. They create victims out of otherwise professional people. If you ask questions such as, “Why didn’t I get that booking? Why does he get all the good speaking engagements? Why didn’t I get hired as a trainer in our training department at work? Why hasn’t the client asked me back? Why didn’t the audience look more engaged in what I had to say?” you are victimizing yourself and you will not see the bigger picture.

When a speaker or trainer asks why questions, they remain stuck. Asking why weakens your power to move forward in this dynamic and fast-paced career. It also fills your mind with emotions and blame—a lot of generic noise—not a lot of wisdom. Wisdom is what you’ll need in this business. The objective is to unearth your inner answers to questions that you already possess. You do this by asking *smart* questions, not why questions.

For example, in the seminars we conduct on speaking and training effectively, if we ask, “Why are you taking this workshop?” almost everyone will reply with their inability to have launched a successful speaking and training practice up to this point. Their answers almost always have them looking backward, bringing more problems and frustrations about starting a speaking and training practice bubbling to the surface.

But when we ask, “What do you hope to gain by attending this workshop?” we see faces light up. Questions like this force people to look forward and anticipate the future. Seminar attendees often reply with, “To improve my presentation style and get more engagements next year. To be onstage helping others and to live my dream as a successful public speaker. To realize my greater potential as a trainer and then start my own training company.” What a difference in perception from *why* to *what*.

Now here’s a tip for you: How much more powerful would your presentations become if you stopped asking your audience why questions? We think a lot more powerful, don’t you?

## Inside This Edition

We've updated every chapter—and even added two new ones—to reflect the changes in the speaking and training industry since the first *Speak for a Living* was released. Part I opens by diving a little deeper into your motivations of becoming a speaker in the first place. In chapter 1, we share our humble beginnings and some of the good and not-so-good aspects of the job. Chapter 2 continues your journey with how and why you should define your niche and why establishing relationships is vital to your success. In chapter 3, we talk about the different speaker profiles, demographics, and affiliated fees, as well as why speaking and training combinations are vital to your higher earning potential.

Part II opens with chapter 4, which discusses why some speakers return to the 9-to-5 world and outlines a five-step strategy to increase your income. Chapter 5 highlights the importance of building a great website to sell your services, and how to decide which method of building a website is right for you. Chapter 6 stresses why establishing a social media following is critical to your visibility and success.

In Part III, we dive deeper into the tools and methods of the trade, and the professionals who can help boost your career. In chapter 7, we discuss the value of bringing a speech writer, presentation skills trainer, and coach to your career. Chapter 8 emphasizes why becoming a media go-to source and why creating positive public relations are good for business. Chapter 9 shows you how publishing can boost your credentials as a subject matter expert, and how to choose the publishing method that's right for you. In chapter 10, we explain the differences between speaker bureaus and speaker management companies, and how each can lift your career to the next level.

Part IV talks about settling into a speaking and training career and keeping yourself visible and relevant. Chapter 11 explains how to travel the world for free as a speaker, and how to do it safely. Chapter 12 explains how to expand on the success you've built as a speaker and trainer. In chapter 13, Sardék explains his own amazing journey to becoming a

speaker, and how he used the first edition of *Speak for a Living* as a guide. In the final chapter, chapter 14, we explain why defining expectations is so important to delivering a great speech.

Throughout the book, we included personal stories and situations, which we're calling "When Bad Things Happen to Good Speakers," where we detail how we handled or witnessed situations that didn't go exactly as planned. Some are funny, others sad, but all teach valuable lessons. We also added spotlights on some of today's popular speakers to show the diversity of talent, skill, branding, moxie, and wisdom needed to survive on the circuit today.

## **Speaker, Know Thyself**

Becoming a great speaker and trainer starts with self-awareness. Business colossus Steven R. Covey (1995) knew a thing or two about this subject: "Self-awareness is our capacity to stand apart from ourselves and examine our thinking, our motives, our history, our scripts, our actions, and our habits and our tendencies." These words underscore the lesson to be learned from this introduction.



# **PART I**

---

Understanding the Business of  
Professional Speaking:  
The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly





## CHAPTER 1

---

# Speaking and Training for a Living: Is This Roller Coaster Ride for You?

### **In This Chapter**

- Examining why you want to become a public speaker
- The good, bad, and ugly things about professional speaking
- Creating your own cycle of abundance

Professional speaking and training is a phenomenal business to be in and an exciting industry to be a part of. We have loved it from day one and we think you will, too. That said, it is imperative that you understand just what you are getting yourself into. We've been insiders in the professional speaking and training world for many years, and we can tell you that the more you know going into this field, the better your chances of experiencing financial success, personal satisfaction, and overall happiness.

This career can be simultaneously rewarding and disappointing. It's a roller coaster, pure and simple, and if you don't have the stomach for the sudden drops and sharp turns that are sure to happen on this crazy ride, then you may not be cut out for the speaking and training profession.

As we get started, we want to point out the good, the bad, and the ugly of building a profitable speaking and training business in the 21st century. In the introduction of this book, you began assessing your desires and the talents required of someone in this career. Now it is time to review—or if

you skipped that part, complete—the questions in the self-assessment, “So You Want to Be a Professional Speaker and Trainer?”

Remember, your assignment was not to have all the answers, or even the right ones. The goal was to use the assessment to start revealing your individual strengths and weaknesses, the hurdles you may be facing, and the real-world issues you could encounter along the way as a paid presenter. We included the self-assessment in the introduction to help you establish a mindset for tackling the rest of the information in this book, so you can begin planning and building a profitable speaking and training business. You examined and provided answers related to the four critical parts of what it takes to succeed as a professional speaker and trainer:

- Attitude, Ego, Self-Motivation, and Your Personality
- Confidence and Self-Esteem
- Your Talents and Professional Side
- Family and Friends—Support and Encouragement

Completing this assessment is a good start. We ask that you be completely honest with yourself when reviewing the questions; there is no shortcut to self-awareness in this business. Truthful answers will help you decide if you are up for the challenges of a career in speaking and training. Just like any other field, speaking and training at the professional level has its share of the good, the bad, and the ugly.

## **The Good**

This business is fun and that’s good! We’ve both worked at exciting events and with even more exciting celebs and superstar keynoters. Anne’s done a fair share in the entertainment industry, speaking and coaching on location for Hollywood stars, presidential running mates, astronauts, and music icons. Now that’s fun—and a lot of professions are not fun. However, when you’re first starting out, you’ll find that most speaking engagements are pretty standard events. You’ll likely have to work your way up to the glitz and glamour.

It is good to have fun in our careers because having fun is good for you. Whether you are onstage speaking before an audience of 1,000 people

at a sales meeting in Dallas, or facilitating a small group retreat for a dozen or fewer business executives in Palm Springs, standing before an audience really gets your adrenaline flowing, which heightens your awareness of your body and sharpens your senses. Having a good time while speaking and training also stimulates your pituitary gland, which produces endorphins and enkephalins. These are painkiller equivalents that can be more powerful than morphine. The deep-down good feelings you will get from speaking and training can have great physiological benefits that can make you healthier and keep you that way. And you pass that to your audiences. What career path could be better than that?

Another good part about this kind of work is that you get to touch others' lives and influence people from all over the world. If you're really good at what you do, you'll travel for free—free!—anywhere your clients require you to be. You'll meet interesting people and learn from cultures you never dreamed you'd experience.

Yet another exciting thing about being a speaker and trainer is you may get a book deal. As a paid speaker or trainer, you are the subject matter expert on your topic, whatever that might be. Your speech or training program may well be the catalyst to becoming a bestselling author. And then guess what happens? From those published books, you get more speaking and training engagements—and revenue. There are a lot of moving parts to this business, as you will soon discover, and they all work with one another to create the synergy required to catapult you to speaker and trainer stardom.

Seldom in this business does boredom seep in, because there's nothing to be bored by. Every gig is different, every audience unique, every client and industry a learning experience.

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## **Building a Portfolio Speaking Career**

Professional speaking and training opportunities often come about organically, meaning that they will evolve over time. Evolving into a speaking career is based upon a cumulative repertoire of your competencies, skills, experience, and education, which is then applied to a collection of speaker's

programs over time. The term used for this is called a *portfolio speaking career*.

Sardék's career is a great example of a portfolio speaking career. As we mentioned earlier in the book, Sardék came to be a speaker after leaving what he thought at the time was his dream job. Progressing from insurance underwriting training to managing quality assurance to corporate training, Sardék used the skills and knowledge he learned in his jobs and in his life to prepare himself for a career he didn't know he'd love *and* be good at! Today, Sardék speaks and trains professionals on how to become better versions of themselves by growing, developing, and learning.

Another example of evolving into a speaking and training career is Caroline Adams Miller, an expert on goal setting, grit, happiness, and success. Her success as an author was the driving factor behind her present speaking career. Caroline's first book, *My Name Is Caroline*, details her struggle with bulimia. It was the first major book on bulimia recovery, and was published at a time when treatment options and hope for recovery were practically nonexistent. Caroline's recent bestseller, *Getting Grit*, reports on behavior change and practical ways to add grit to your life. Her presentations and workshops combine positive psychology with her experiences and research to empower her audiences to set and accomplish goals by using their grit.

Similarly, speaker Anne Grady has built her career on helping people find their inner strength and become victorious no matter what life throws at them. A corporate trainer specializing in change management, Anne's keynotes often share candid stories about her personal struggles as the mother of a child with severe mental illness. Her skills in the corporate setting, paired with her ability to parent a high-needs child, positioned Anne to inspire corporate and other audiences to understand and overcome any struggle they may face. She is a two-time TEDx speaker and has written two top-selling books.

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## The Bad

You may have heard about the bestselling book *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. Well, in this business, like any other, *bad* things do happen and they can happen to anyone, even excellent, well-prepared speakers and trainers. Having the ability to power on through discomfort or disaster is

vital in a career like ours. Because of this, throughout this book you'll find sidebars titled "When Bad Things Happen to Good Speakers."

No matter how good a speaker you are, your best tool is sometimes to plan to be spontaneous, expect the unexpected, and not rely on anything—even technology. Life happens. Special events, worldwide conferences, conventions, and Fortune 500 retreats can be wrought with disaster, the unexpected, and unleashed attendees experiencing their first time away from home on business in a decade and letting lose. Just be ready and don't get shaken when things happen that are not planned.

Professional speakers and trainers are free agents. We work for ourselves and we depend on being able to do the job in order to get paid. Frankly, no one cares if we're sick or our spouse is sick or we're stuck in a blizzard in Chicago. The client has 900 delegates flying into this venue and they expect their keynote speaker or workshop leader to be there—no matter what. Remember, first and foremost, that this is a business and in many cases a lot of money is at stake at each event.

## The Show Must Go On

We often think this is the hardest part of this work. There simply is no calling in sick—or let's just say, it is rare. It's not like holding down a salaried job, where you often have paid sick days, bereavement time, or holidays. If something comes up, usually you will still collect a paycheck, even if you missed one or two days of work.

If you don't speak, you don't get paid. If you don't conduct the training, you don't get paid. We rarely see anyone talk about this in books on the same topic. But it's the truth, and we are talking about it here and now.

In more than 25 years, Anne had only two times when she was simply too ill to work. Having those illnesses, each time, cost her thousands of dollars, plus knowing she disappointed her clients and a lot of attendees at both events.

Years ago, at the National Speakers' Association (NSA) conference, speaker Tony Alessandra presented to up-and-coming speakers. His speech was awe-inspiring on every level. He referred to how the show must go on,

even when a speaker is ill. He shared his own story of having a 105-degree fever and chills and still presenting as the headliner. He delivered the program and nearly collapsed when he left the stage. No one ever knew how ill he was. But he knew he couldn't let his audience down, no matter what.

As professional speakers, we also know how to refocus on the spot when called for, even in the toughest times. Anne once went onstage before hundreds of people to do an all-day workshop on one of her books after receiving word that her husband was admitted to the hospital. Talk about being distracted! She had to quickly decide what to do next: Because her husband assured her he was going to be OK and was in the best of hands, she did the job and then took the redeye home that night.

The pressure can be bad in this business. That's why successful professional speakers have an amazing amount of fortitude and the ability to rise above their own crisis. However, speakers should know how far they can push themselves if they are truly not feeling well. Nobody wants to get onstage and faint or vomit. All good speakers know their limits when it comes to putting on a good appearance, even in the face of feeling lousy as hell.

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## **When Bad Things Happen to Good Speakers**

Good speakers must deliver the performance of a lifetime even while experiencing the loss of a lifetime.

On Sunday, January 21, 2018, Sardék was preparing to fly to Chicago to deliver an ATD Master Trainer course. As one of only 14 experts globally who facilitate this elite program, he must bring his A game every time. Before his flight, Sardék got a call from the mother of his best friend, George Munn.

"Sardék, they pronounced him dead. They just pronounced my son dead," she tearfully told him. George was closer to Sardék than a brother. They met as freshmen at Virginia Tech in 1986 the first weekend on campus and instantly became friends. They became roommates, and after graduation, their families vacationed together annually. George's mother's words slammed into Sardék's chest, spiraling him into unimaginable grief.

Faced with a choice no loved one should ever have to make, Sardék now had to decide—be with the family or honor the contract of delivering

the ATD Master Trainer course. He knew ATD would do its best if he requested a replacement facilitator, but he also knew that would be nearly impossible given the limited number of experts who teach the course. He made the painful choice to honor his contract, knowing that he would best serve George's family after they had time to prepare an unbelievably touching service for George.

While in Chicago, Sardék cried continuously when he was alone in the hotel. He slept and ate very little. Exhausted beyond imagination, he had a performance to deliver. What got him through that week? He called on a lifeline of support from people very close to him—his co-author, Anne; Betty Garrett, President of Garrett Speakers International; and family and friends. Collectively, they helped Sardék deal with his grief, and as a result, he delivered the performance of a lifetime.

The moral of the story: As a good speaker, there will be times you will experience the unthinkable, and it is during these moments that you will find the strength to achieve the impossible.

*In loving memory of George Purnell Munn*

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## Plan B: When Preparation Meets Opportunity

A big part of sustainability is always having a plan B for when bad things happen. That means being prepared for anything. Anne's plan B includes having backup trainers whom she can call in a heartbeat to take over training sessions in the event of an extreme emergency. These people know her programs, style, and what her clients want. They are the perfect pinch hitters. Every professional presenter needs a backup plan for every event.

We've read hundreds of speaker horror stories about tech fails, too. From missing laptops to faulty WiFi to flaky AV techs, tech fails are going to happen to you at some point. We swear by the Scout motto: Be prepared. Have your backup plan in place. Or two or three. Some speakers, in addition to having their presentations on their hard drives, keep their presentations on thumb drives, Google docs, PDFs, or all the above. In a pinch, you'll have your materials to refer to and won't have to wing it.



## The Cardinal Rule of Travel

Weather conditions and other unforeseen situations can play a very bad part in your speaking career. So why take chances? We never fly to the city where we are speaking on the actual day of the presentation. Never. It's a cardinal rule. Even if we are speaking that afternoon, we won't fly in that morning or drive in that morning or take the train in that morning. There simply are too many factors out of our control that can delay our arrival: a transit strike, severe weather, an accident on the highway, a bomb scare at the airport, the evacuation of a train terminal, or any one of a multitude of life's odd occurrences.

We've learned this lesson the hard way. Therefore, we recommend always arriving the night before a presentation. That way, the next morning you are right in the hotel where you are speaking, or in the city near the event ready to be picked up at the hotel by a car service or client. One way or another, we all need to get to where our audience is waiting.

When Anne lived on the East Coast, she had many speaking engagements in the Winston-Salem and Asheville areas of North Carolina. Both locations were only a four-hour drive from her home in Charleston, South Carolina, but she always arrived the night before her gig, never on the day of. Her clients always appreciated that she was there and ready to go the evening before the big event. And remember, even a small event is a big event for every client.

Bad things really do happen to good speakers and trainers. And they can and eventually will happen to you, too. If you have a backup plan, however, for your work and for your clients, you will have a much better chance of keeping a solid reputation for showing up and you will be able to keep your momentum, even in tough times. And that's what the best of the best speakers and trainers do—they keep moving forward and build momentum to carry them through the most difficult times.

## The Ugly

The ugly part of this industry is that there is fierce competition. You must be an extremely competitive person to survive and thrive. Remember the

“So You Want to Be a Professional Speaker and Trainer?” self-assessment from the introduction? There is truth in the questions, and it’s smart to revisit your motivations and capacities for becoming a speaker. Are you willing to do whatever it takes to get started? Are you willing to start out small and work your way up to larger engagements? If you think you are the most compelling, entertaining, or humorous trainer out there, think again. Just look around you. There are probably dozens, maybe hundreds, of trainers and presenters out there on the circuit; they all do what you do, and probably better, and maybe even cheaper.

The person who gets the booking survives. That’s the bottom line. This is a business first, not a hobby or a game.

An ugly part of this business is seeing people go out of business. Getting one paid engagement is not enough to sustain you and pay the bills. All sorts of unexpected things can happen that can quickly change the course of your entire career. For example, after the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center on 9/11, every speaker, meeting planner, and speakers’ bureau owner was greatly affected, and not just for a week or two, but for several years.

We watched several meeting planners and speakers’ bureaus go out of business within months, not to mention all the speakers and trainers who lost so much work that it forced them out of the business, too. This was ugly indeed. It took Anne nearly two years to recover financially and to build back the speaking and training business she had lost in a flash. Thankfully she had other work and several published books as backup, which helped greatly. But it still stung, and badly.

When work is slow or hard to come by, it’s smart business to make a plan on how to keep yourself going when times are lean, like creating a six-month savings surplus. So keep feeding the pipeline!

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### **Never Take Your Business for Granted**

In the six weeks following that fateful day in September 2001, Anne lost about \$50,000 in speaking jobs, which was a significant amount of money for a speaker to lose in such a short time. One of her scheduled

engagements was at a major financial institution one block off Wall Street in New York City in late September. She had a room reserved at the Marriott Hotel connected to the World Trade Center. By September 12, that building was no longer standing.

Anne saved her hotel confirmation number to remind her of how life and business can change so profoundly and suddenly. It was also a good reminder to never take bookings or professional speaking and training practice for granted—not ever. A business that takes you years to create can all be gone in the blink of an eye. Anne's almost was.

Back then, if you didn't have a lot of work in the pipeline, then you were slammed, and slammed hard, by the horrific events of 9/11. Of course, 9/11 affected the nation as well as the international economy and businesses too numerous to list, but it was a particularly ugly time for professional speakers and trainers. It hit our industry hard because so much fear had set in for the clients who pay us and pay our agents worldwide. People were afraid to fly; some refused. And this business is all about getting to wherever the engagement is, and that is seldom within driving distance of your own backyard.

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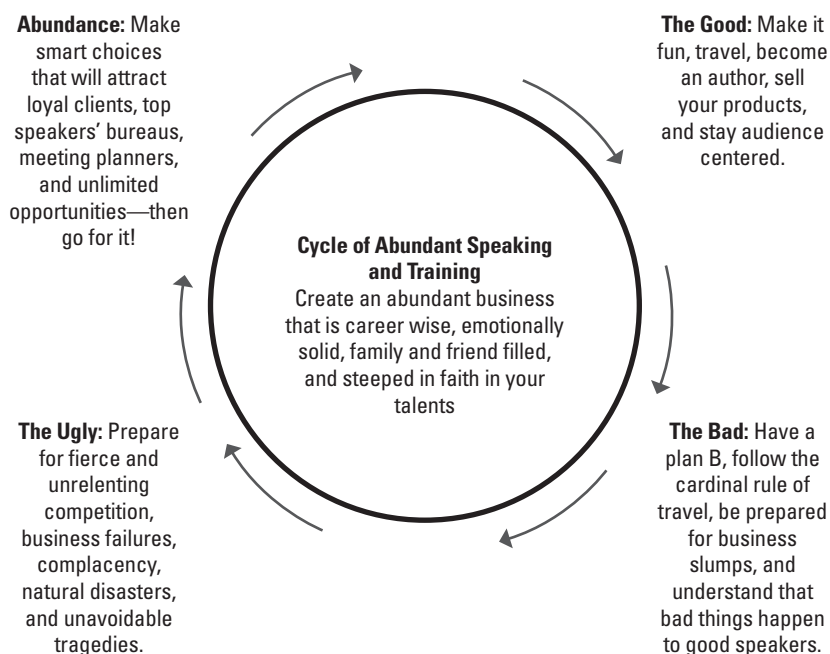
## **Create Your Own Abundance**

We have discovered through the years that for those speakers and trainers who are consistently successful at what they do, a cycle of abundance seems to surround them. It's not a cycle that happens accidentally. To the contrary: It's a cycle that is perpetuated by a speaker and trainer's own ability to generate synergy in their lives and businesses. This cooperation comes from several things, like their unstoppable energy; their consistent momentum when it comes to how they work; their genuine, audience-centered spirit; their magnetism when it comes to attracting loyal clients, meeting planners, and speakers' bureaus; and the never-ending support that comes from building relationships. What are some of your attributes that can contribute to your own cycle of abundance? Flip back to your answers in the Talents and Professional Side portion of the self-assessment, keeping in mind how you'll create your own abundance.

There is no magic word when it comes to being successful. There's no special pixie dust to sprinkle over your head before you go onstage that

will bring you good fortune, and there isn't a rabbit's foot big enough to ensure that your engagement will be the hit of the conference. We've yet to uncover a special formula for success that can be duplicated. What we have uncovered is a cycle of abundance, and it is within this cycle—which we ourselves create—that we find the greatest opportunities for ongoing success in our hard-knocks business environment. Our experience within this cycle of abundance is illustrated in Figure 1-1.

Figure 1-1. Cycle of Abundant Speaking and Training



Study this cycle of abundance. Make notes. Now ask yourself these questions:

- Where do I fit into this cycle of abundance?
- Do I attract abundance, or do I attract deprivation?

- With whom do I surround myself? Are they the people who can help move me forward and give me genuine feedback?
  - Have I balked from competition in the past? Do I always try for what I believe to be a sure thing?
  - Have I been using my most precious resources—time and energy—wisely?
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## **The Brilliance of Simon T. Bailey**

Simon T. Bailey was born with a special gift: He hugs people with his words. Not an easy thing to do unless you're an exceptional individual cut out to speak for a living. Here's what Simon says he's learned most about success: "As long as you are letting go of your failures and remaining open to what wants to emerge, there will always be something waiting for you."

Simon experienced a full cycle of life experiences before he made it to the top. Fifteen years ago, he left a high-level job as sales director for Disney Institute. He writes that he felt successful on the outside, but insignificant on the inside. That's when he took the leap of faith.

Simon cashed out of his entire retirement plan, which included significant Disney stock, then took out a line of credit on his house. With three years of savings to make it or break it as a speaker and author, Simon decided to speak for a living and has never looked back. He now refers to it as the best decision of his life.

Named one of *Success* magazine's 2018 Top 25—joining hard hitters including Oprah, Brené Brown, and Tony Robbins—Simon is an international tour de force of inspiring people to discover their inner brilliance. He's the creator of the Shift Your Brilliance System: Harness the Power of You Inc., and author of *Releasing Leadership Brilliance: Breaking Sound Barriers in Education*, *Brilliant Living: 31 Insights to Creating an Awesome Life*, and several other books. Additionally, Simon has worked with more than 1,600 organizations in 45 countries.

Simon passionately believes people need to create their future and that we must, first and foremost, shift our thinking to find our own brilliance. He told Anne, "Just because you've experienced something unique and unusual doesn't make it a book or a keynote." That's good advice for aspiring speakers who all too often rely on one life-changing event they believe will separate them from the pack and boost them to

celebrity speaker stardom in a hurry. His Building Business Relationships programs on Lynda.com have been seen by 750,000 viewers. Visit Simon online at [www.simontbailey.com](http://www.simontbailey.com) and on social media for his engaging and personalized videos.

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There's a booming world market of paid speakers and trainers out there. If you're ready to join it, then you're ready to read on.

### **Making It Happen**

- Heed your internal motivations for becoming a speaker, or you may not be cut out for this profession.
- Be aware of the successes and pitfalls of professional speaking.
- Think about the experiences in your life that you can use as a springboard for your speaking and training career.
- Make a plan B for the unforeseen circumstances that will eventually arise.
- Create your own cycle of abundance by being self-aware and learning from your missteps.

**Buy This Book**

# About the Authors



**Anne Bruce** doesn't just speak for a living, she's also a talent manager and an executive coach who helps speakers and authors—including celebrities, politicians, sports figures, and well-known business leaders—soar to the next level of their career. With a background in broadcast journalism and years of extensive television work, Anne has written for clients and projects in Hollywood and New York. Her clients have appeared on *Ellen*, *Shark Tank*, *Steve Harvey*, *Today Show*, *Good Morning America*, *Anderson Cooper 360*, and more. She's also carved a niche in coaching talent to write and deliver popular TEDx and TED Talks.

Anne has had the privilege of speaking, writing, and conducting talent projects worldwide for organizations like the American Red Cross, Baylor University Medical Center, Sony Entertainment, Sony International, Saks Fifth Avenue, GEICO, Ben & Jerry's, Accenture, Coca Cola, Southwest Airlines, JetBlue, the White House, the Pentagon, the FBI, Harvard Law

School, Stanford Law School, Columbia University School of Business, the Conference Board of Europe, and NASA, where she produced a documentary on the lives of women astronauts.

She is the author of dozens of e-books and more than 23 books, which have been translated into more than 36 languages worldwide. Some of Anne's books include *Speak for a Living: The Insider's Guide to Building a Speaking Career* (first edition); *Discover True North: A 4-Week Program to Ignite Your Passion and Activate Your Potential*; *Be Your Own Mentor*; *How to Motivate Every Employee*; *The Manager's Guide to Motivating Employees*; *Building a High Morale Workplace*; and *Leaders Start to Finish: A Roadmap for Developing Top Performers* (2nd edition). She's also been a featured author for *Perfect Phrases for Employee Development Planning*, part of McGraw-Hill's Perfect Phrases series. Anne also authored and acted as acquisition editor for the Pocket Tool Kit series. She has been interviewed by the *Wall Street Journal*, *London Times*, *San Jose Mercury News*, *Newsweek*, and *Inc.* magazine, among others.

Anne's home base is in the greater Los Angeles area at Channel Islands Beach—her favorite place to coach clients and film her popular weekly video blog, “30 Seconds at the Beach.” She has also partnered with her co-author Sardék Love to launch The Speak for a Living Success Academy, a program for aspiring and accomplished speakers. You can learn more about it at [www.speakforalivingsuccessacademy.com](http://www.speakforalivingsuccessacademy.com).

Anne wants to hear from you! Connect with her and share your stories of life on the speaker circuit on Twitter (@TrueNorthAuthor), Facebook (Fans of Anne Bruce), Instagram (annebruceauthor), and LinkedIn (Anne Bruce), as well as [www.AnneBruce.com](http://www.AnneBruce.com) or [Anne@AnneBruce.com](mailto:Anne@AnneBruce.com).





Sardék Love is a peak performance expert who teaches leaders, managers, trainers, and speakers how to ask questions that transform lives one soul at a time. As a Master Trainer, keynote speaker, and Master Performance Consultant, he has worked in more than 30 countries equipping individuals, teams, and organizations with the tools to maximize performance and results.

Sardék has had the honor of speaking, training, and consulting for leading organizations, including AstraZeneca, the Association for Talent Development, Audi of America, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, Chevron, Hilton, the Jamaica Customer Service Association, Omantel, Orangetheory Fitness, Ritz Carlton, Saudi Aramco, Tata Communications, and Universal Studios Orlando.

As a leading global expert in talent development, he has authored several blog articles published by ATD as well as co-authoring the *TD at Work* “Maintaining Cohesiveness in a Distributed Government Workforce.” Sardék is the author of a blog at [www.sardeklove.com](http://www.sardeklove.com) where he writes articles covering management, leadership, talent development, and personal growth and success.

As a popular international keynote speaker, Sardék frequently delivers his signature speeches “Facilitating With Impact!” and the “5 Qualities of Leaders Who Are Winning the War for Talent.” In partnering with Anne Bruce to write this updated edition of *Speak for a Living*, he will develop the next generation of thought leaders who will transform lives on a global scale.

Connect with and follow Sardék on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter to receive an endless supply of tools and techniques to take your performance and the performance of your team to the next level.