



Performing, Speaking, Appearing for Free!

By Robert Ing

Hardly a week goes by when I am not asked by someone to appear as a speaker somewhere or do a 30 minute performance. The good news is, about two-thirds of these requests are paying 'gigs' with the remaining third being offered under the assumption I and others like me do such things for free as a public service. Or at the very least something like that.

If this article has caught your attention, you may have found yourself in a similar situation. As a professional or at the very least a dedicated long time enthusiast of your craft; you have no doubt spent countless hours of study and practise to reach your current level of expertise. After all, no one would offer you an opportunity to perform or speak at their event whether paid or unpaid if they did not have confidence in what you are capable of delivering to their audience.

Unless you have only been in the business professionally for less than a year full time or less than three years part time, there really is no good reason to do any type of 'gig' out and out for free. Performers and speakers who do such events for free do a great disservice to their craft, those full and part time professionals who literally feed their families from performing fees, and to themselves as well when it comes to taking their 'act' to the next level.

Generally an organizer of an event or program may assume your participation is free unless you mention or discuss fees in the first but no later than the second contact. This is a common mistake, error of omission or assumption made by those with limited experience as an organizer of an event/venue and of performers and speakers. If it doesn't get mentioned, one of you must raise the subject. As well there are organizers who will ask a person to perform or present for free monetarily if they have an extremely small budget.



Dr. Robert Ing is a forensic scientist, magician of the mind, broadcaster and author. An internationally acclaimed forensic scientist, he has traveled the world on behalf of the interests of governments and major corporations. Dr. Ing has appeared on major North American broadcast news networks and is a syndicated author in both print and electronic media.

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However, as a performer or speaker you should seek other non-monetary forms of remuneration, and thus in the end derive some benefit for your participation, and most of all in exchange for all the time you have put in honing your craft to get to this point.

Most event organizers will not decline any reasonable consideration requested in lieu of monetary payment, as long as it is indeed reasonable and within the scope of the event organizers resources. Even when you perform for a non-profit, charity or local community group there is always some non-monetary benefit that can be bartered for your participation; if you know how to spot such an opportunity. The most common of these is your opportunity to try new material depending on the venue, obtain additional publicity, advertising and the potential of personally meeting with future paying clients.

I have a rule that I never perform nor speak anywhere unless I get something in return whether it be my full or a reduced fee, or at least three bartered benefits. To do otherwise would plant the wrong seed in my subconscious and the subconscious of those who would engage me; with that seed being what I have to offer is of negotiable mediocre value. Which in reality is far from the mark.

Whether you are a performer or speaker, or an event organizer if monetary remuneration is not on the table, at least three of the items from the following list should be on offer in barter. For a performer or speaker this means receiving something of value for years of perfecting your craft. For event organizers this means despite limited financial resources, your event will be viewed by other performers and speakers as professionally respectful of their craft and you will be able to attract more performers and speakers for upcoming events.



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Performers or speakers should receive or be offered in barter any three of the items below if monetary remuneration is not available:

- A link to the performer's or speaker's website on the official event website.
- Mention / credit of the performer/speaker in the official event program guide, all promotional ads and posters.
- Letter of appreciation/participation/review from the event organizer on official letterhead, which may be used for promotional purposes by the performer/speaker.
- Distribution of the performer's/speaker's brochure and business card to all event attendees (in event media kits, goodie bags, etc.).
- Table, booth or exhibit space for the exclusive use of the performer/speaker during the entire length of the event.
- Six general admission tickets to the event.
- Photos or video of the performer/speaker at the event with clearance for the performer/speaker to use these materials to publicly promote themselves.
- Payment of incidental expenses such as travel, lodging or meals.
- Permission to sell items associated with the performer/speaker prior to and after the presentation such as CDs, DVDs, lecture notes, back of room books, t-shirts, photographs, seminars, etc.



Ultimately it is the performer or speaker who must decide if they will accept the engagement without monetary remuneration. However, there are several non-monetary remuneration items that can be made available if both performer/speaker and event organizer reach a reasonable agreement. As with most things in life, if you don't ask – you don't get.

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