

## Speak to Boost Your Business and Career by Lillian D. Bjorseth, president Duoforce Enterprises, Inc.

Forget that speaking in front of others is the Number One Fear. Instead, look at it as an opportunity to get your message to many people simultaneously and sell yourself within your organization and to clients and customers. It can be one of your most effective marketing tools when you have honed your message and know your target market. It can also be a good way to grow your network and your database, with permission, of course.

- **Become a subject matter expert.** Your first task is to define your areas of expertise. What do you do? How do you do it differently? If self-employed, what service or product do you sell? If employed by someone else, do people seek you out as a resource or for advice on a topic? When I was at AT&T (the first one!), my name became synonymous with public relations. Today, my areas of expertise are business networking and communication skills. What's your area?
- **Describe your topic.** Choose a title or titles (use your creativity!) and write a short overview and learner benefits. Show people you are for real. Look as if you are an expert on the topic and a seasoned presenter. Never say, “*I am thinking of speaking on thus and such topic.*” Instead, “*I speak on thus and such topic.*” While employed at Bell Labs, a friend challenged me to develop my first class in communication. It was his opinion that I knew a lot; however, I didn't have a beginning, middle or end. I picked up the gauntlet and developed an internal 10-week communication course for employees. And one thing led to another ...
- **Determine your target market.** This is a major marketing ingredient that takes forethought and time. Make sure the people in the audience can use your services/products or refer you to people who can. Internally, choose audiences that can help further your career and enhance where you are and where you want to go.
- **Approach groups, organizations and internal entities that include your target market.** If you are willing to speak for free (and most beginners do), you will find infinite opportunities. Suggestions include:
  - **Chambers of Commerce.** Usually, you need to be a member to be considered, and you are a prime candidate since many chambers choose not to pay their presenters.
  - **Service Clubs.** There are a plethora of Rotary, Kiwanis and Lions clubs that meet frequently and are looking for pro bono presentations.
  - **Not-for-profits (and their boards!).** I cut a few teeth speaking on behalf of AT&T for the United Way in Chicago. These are eager audiences, and you also get satisfaction from giving as you get.
  - **Networking groups.** Seek out local groups that are not part of a national, multi-chapter organization. They frequently are looking for specific subject-matter presentations at no cost.

Lillian D. Bjorseth  
2221 Ridgewood Rd.  
Lisle, IL 60532

630-983-5308  
630-983-5312 (fax)

[www.duoforce.com](http://www.duoforce.com)  
[lillian@duoforce.com](mailto:lillian@duoforce.com)

- **Other industry/professional/sorority-fraternity/interest-specific groups that meet monthly.** Almost all of them offer programs to their members and most have a meager speaker budget, at best.
- **Internal opportunities.** Volunteer to head projects like the United Way, blood drive, and other outside activities your company supports. You'll gain valuable experience and exposure speaking in front of your team and, sometime, the entire company. Also, jump at every chance to do business presentations in front of peers, managers, vendors and customers.
- **Benefits are myriad.** First of all, it will help you conquer your fear of speaking. Secondly, it will increase your visibility and credibility as a subject matter expert. Thirdly, it will probably lead to more sales and more career success. It helps put you in the drivers' seat!

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*Lillian Bjorseth offers one-on-one or small group coaching in presentation, networking and business development skills. Her **Nothing Happens Until We Communicate CD and workbook series includes **Speak Easy: Overcome the Number One Fear.**** Contact her at [www.duoforce.com](http://www.duoforce.com), [lillianspeaks@duoforce.com](mailto:lillianspeaks@duoforce.com) or 630-983-5308.*

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