

[BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES]

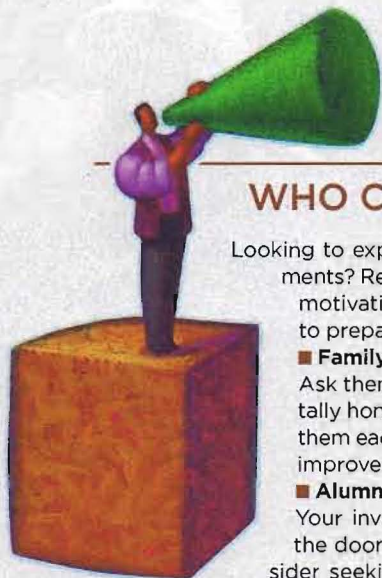
SPEAKING OF SUCCESS

Introduce your business to a new audience—literally

For business owners, public speaking can provide a boost to their image, their company's brand, and potentially, their revenues. But the trick is making sure such a strategic opportunity carries the power to bolster your business rather than bust it.

Janet Cormier, a registered representative for the World Financial Group, a Duluth, Georgia-based financial planning firm, was looking for a way to grow her business. After ample practice and training with an experienced mentor, the 43-year-old says she now tackles business-related speaking engagements with ease and was surprised to see her speaking efforts translate into nearly 75% revenue growth from the extra customers it brought her way. Cormier says business owners and entrepreneurs must think beyond turning a sales pitch into a speech or delivering a tutorial on a product or service, but rather delivering a presentation that offers added value and speaks directly to that specific audience.

"You have to be passionate about your subject, so they feel passionate about you," says Cormier, who has spoken in front of a crowd as large as 300. "It's about having knowledge and how well you can share it."



WHO CAN HELP AND HOW?

Looking to expand your business repertoire with speaking engagements? Rene Godefroy, founder of Village Hero, an Atlanta-based motivational speaking company, offers some inexpensive ways to prepare.

■ **Family and friends**

Ask them to listen to you practice, but make sure they are brutally honest about your technique, flow, and presentation. Have them each list three things you did well and three things you can improve upon.

■ **Alumni**

Your involvement in college and university events may open the door to opportunities to speak to small groups. Also, consider seeking pointers from other alumni and business professionals who are active public speakers.

■ **Toastmasters (www.toastmasters.org)**

This nonprofit organization for beginning speakers (with local chapters worldwide) can help members familiarize themselves with public speaking. Many of the speeches are given in front of fellow members, and the organization also provides mentors for those looking to overcome presentation anxieties.

■ **National Speakers Association (www.nsaspeaker.org)**

As one of the leading professional associations for speakers, its Website offers a section featuring tips and resources dedicated to "Aspiring Speakers."

■ **Speakers bureau or agent**

If you are unable to manage the process yourself, a professional organization or independent contractor can do it for you by booking engagements, negotiating fees, and handling travel (among other details) for a per project or monthly fee. And you would be listed in the speaker database.

■ **Books**

How to Win Friends and Influence People (Simon & Schuster Pocket; \$14) by Dale Carnegie

Public Speaking For Dummies (For Dummies; \$16.99) by Malcolm Kushner

—Eric Butterman



For more information about public speaking for your business, visit www.blackenterprise.com.



[SAVVY SOLUTIONS]

THE RIGHT TOUCH

QA I would like to own a business in the massage industry. Where do I start and how do I contact the right people?

—E. Lightfoot Gaithersburg, MD

Not everyone has the right touch when it comes to finding their way in this industry, but with the right assistance and knowledge, you can work out the kinks (puns intended).

First, decide what area you'd like to focus on: there are nearly 100 different modalities or techniques to choose from. *Massage Register* (www.massageregister.com) is a solid resource for identifying schools throughout the U.S. and Canada. And there's information on the site about license and certification requirements and career opportunities.

There are myriad ways to strike out on your own—from owning a private practice that caters to a specific technique to working as an independent contractor who travels as needed. So decide which option is best for you. And be sure to research your state's massage practice laws and certification requirements.

Seek out industry organizations such as the American Massage Therapy Association (www.amtamassage.org), the Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals (www.abmp.com), and the International Massage Association (www.imagroup.com). All serve their members by offering a network of resources, guidance, and contacts. Read *Breaking Through as a Professional Massage Therapist: Uncovering Your Inner Tools For Success* (iUniverse Inc.; \$9.95) by Greg Spindler and *Marketing Massage: How to Build Your Dream Practice* (Thomson Delmar Learning; \$36) by Monica Roseberry.

—Tennille M. Robinson

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