

It's an honor to meet you. I'm delighted that you're here and curious to learn more about professional speaking. If you've written a book or are considering writing one, incorporating speaking engagements into your plan of action is a game changer.

I've been doing it successfully for thirty years, and I've helped others do it, too, and by getting out there and speaking, not only were some of us able to propel our books onto *The New York Times* Best-Seller List, it changed our lives.

You can read more about that here (include link <https://www.thejodeeblancogroup.com/jodee-blanco-speaking-expert>). Right now, I want to concentrate on *you*, what you need to know to decide if speaking would work for you too, and why it's such a powerful choice.

Whether you've written a book to build your business, reach new clients, fulfill a dream, or share your expertise on a subject that interests and excites you, relying on traditional methods alone to generate sales isn't enough. It's not like customer loyalty when someone is attached to a particular make of car, or the impulse purchase of a traveler grabbing a magazine at the airport because the cover caught their attention. When you're an author, selling books is so much more than moving product. It's about the intimate, personal bond between author and reader, that intangible element that only books inspire.

Developing a speaking platform is an efficient, practical and simple way to connect with the public and increase your visibility. It doesn't cost anything to try, and in fact can *produce* significant income in speaker's fees, not to mention open some amazing doors. Many authors that add professional speaking to their arsenal are able to leverage the results into subsequent books and lucrative second careers.

It doesn't matter the genre of book. The opportunity to address potential readers live in-person, to interact with them on a human level, exchange ideas, let them feel your energy and sincerity, and earn their trust, there is no substitute for that. It could be a how-to manual, a self-help book, a financial guide, memoir, biography, history book or novel—like the quote inspired by the film “Field of Dreams” if you build it, they will come. A professional speaking platform is to an author what that baseball field was to Kevin Costner's character.

Imagine a room, or let's think bigger for a moment, an *auditorium* full of people, who've come to hear *you*, and afterward, line up to buy your book, then go on their Facebook pages, Twitter feeds, Instagram, Pinterest, you name it, to tell everyone about it.

I see every day how significant a catalyst speaking has been in my own life. From a business perspective, it's driven book sales, heightened my media exposure, led to consulting projects, helped me test and launch new products and services, and been a consistent, reliable vehicle for engaging my target market. On a personal level, it's given me the privilege of turning something deeply painful from my past into purpose.

When many people think professional speaking, they envision an expert standing at a podium giving a lecture. There's a difference between that and someone with passion and conviction, commanding a stage and turning their audience into a word of mouth machine.

Even if you see yourself as shy or quiet, there's a dynamic speaker inside all of us. You connect with audiences every day in hundreds of small yet meaningful ways without even realizing it. Maybe you define an audience as a group of people sitting in a theater, but an audience can be one person or many, and the venue is often real life.

Whether you're chatting with the barista at Starbucks while she's taking your order, talking with a bank manager about a loan, or telling a story at a family party, you are engaging an audience each and every time you make a point, join a conversation, persuade someone to do something, or share a thought with others. We *all* possess the skills and techniques that professional speakers use. They simply learn how to identify, hone and funnel those abilities on a grander scale. You'd be surprised how many speakers started out stiff, uncomfortable and terrified, and now when they present to a room full of people, you can hear a pin drop.

The first step is the most important and it's okay to start out slowly. You could keynote a PTA luncheon or a chamber of commerce annual dinner, present at the local rotary club or give a talk at a neighborhood place of worship.

Have I piqued your interest yet? If speaking is something you're considering, here are some guidelines to get you rolling:

- **What Do I Want to Achieve Long-term?**

I always like to think of every book that I write not just as an end in and of itself, but as a means to something else. Each book and the speaking platform that supports it are part of a larger strategy. I'm always building on the previous success. Back when I was a publicist many years ago, I wrote a book on the nuts and bolts of how to implement a campaign, because I wanted to start presenting at conferences and conventions, and generate clients. When I shifted gears, and started writing about school bullying and my own experiences as a survivor, I was already envisioning speaking at schools and educational symposiums. I never imagined that would take me as far as it did, and I'm still going strong. I put myself out there and you can, too. Whatever your topic and motivation for putting pen to paper, you can transform it into a compelling speaking platform. You just have to be a little creative. Here's what I'd like you to think about:

Above and beyond sales, what are you hoping that your book will accomplish for you long-term? Where do you want it to lead? And don't govern yourself! Let your mind be open to all the possibilities! Would you want it to generate customers for your business, launch a career as a novelist or perhaps a writer of genre fiction? Maybe you've got a cookbook and dream of eventually opening your own restaurant. Or perhaps your goal is to have a career as a motivational speaker. Whatever your inspiration to become an author, if I were a genie and offered to grant you three wishes of what you'd love your book to help you achieve, what would those three wishes be?

- **Figuring Out My Platform**

Ask yourself these questions: *How* am I an expert on the topic of my book? What is my credibility in this subject area in general? What is my *connection* to the material? The answers usually fall into one of three categories or a combination:

1. Professional—you've worked in the particular field that you've written about
2. Personal—it's something you've gone through yourself, a personal experience, or you're motivated by an issue or cause and want your voice to be heard.
3. Academic—you have an advanced degree in the subject (Masters, Doctorate or other Post-Graduate degree)

The key to determining your platform is the narrative *behind* your relationship to the subject matter. It's your backstory. Why *this* book? Why *this* topic? A tip—it's best to go with your first instinct and not over-think. The most powerful answers aren't created; they're revealed.

- **What's the Take-Away for My Audience**

One of the hallmarks of a great speaker is that their impact lingers long after the lights have dimmed. No matter what your topic, you want your audience to leave that venue with specific knowledge that they can apply right now in their own lives, whether it's a life-lesson, your signature message, or a whole new way of approaching something. Here are some questions to help you think about what your take-aways might be.

What are the three most important things I want to communicate in my talk and why? What action do I want audience members to take in addition to purchasing my book? How will that action help them? How will it help me? If someone heard me speak and they were telling a friend how it benefitted them, what exactly would I want that to be and why?

- **Do I Need A Speaker's Bureau**

While I have great respect for speaker's bureaus and the important work they do, most will only take on clients who already have an established following in their respective fields. They work on commission, taking a percentage of your speaking fees that can range anywhere from fifteen-percent on the low end to thirty-three-and-a-third percent at the higher end of the spectrum. Some speakers prefer being represented by a bureau and not having to worry about pitching themselves for gigs or the backend logistics. Other speakers want a more hands-on approach with buyers and like having control. Whichever avenue ends up being best for you, unless you have an existing following or fan-base, a strong social media or online presence, or something has put you unexpectedly in the national spotlight, you are your own best lynch pin.

Being represented by a speaker's bureau, for most authors, is a goal they have to work towards. In the meantime, you can be your own speaker's bureau by starting in your hometown and branching out from there to regional events, conferences, and other opportunities. By booking yourself initially and handling your own logistics, you'll learn

what works, what doesn't, and why which is valuable intel for a speaker's bureau should you eventually go with one.

Some questions to ask yourself as you navigate potential speaking opportunities:

What is my topic? Who is the audience for it? Are there any local or regional organizations near me that serve that audience? What are those organizations? Do they host events that feature speakers? When and where are those events? Who is in charge of booking the speakers? What is the best way to pitch them? What local talks have I attended in the past few years that I could see myself keynoting? Does my place of worship have speakers on various topics and if so, who should I talk to about having me present?

You may be wondering, "how do I know if I'm ready?" You won't until you try. I can share this with you. I watched a woman so terrified of public speaking that her knees would lock, grow into a passionate presenter who was able to persuade lawmakers in her state to pass new legislation. She's currently finishing her second book and has dedicated her life full-time to professional speaking and activism. I worked with another author who had written a memoir chronicling his years as a victim of severe child abuse. This was his first book. He had no experience speaking and wasn't sure he could handle it, but his desire to help families made him push past his fears. Every speaker has something that's uniquely their own. For some it's a particular style or way of connecting to their audience. For others, it's a vulnerability they're not afraid to show that makes people relate to them more deeply. For this author, it was his ability to make people laugh and feel joy again, the way in which he encouraged them to find humor where no one else would think to look. He's given hope to millions and is still saving lives every day.

You are important. If you're still here, reading this, I promise, whether you know it or not, you have something to say, and there is someone whose future will be affected by what you have to tell them. What if hundreds of those people were gathered in one place, eager to listen? It's within your grasp. If you're interested in exploring more about professional speaking, please email me at jodee@jodeeblanco.com or call 312-961-3430. I offer consulting, training and coaching services one-on-one, phone and skype sessions, webinars, and have an online course, too <https://jodee-blanco.thinkific.com/courses/become-your-own-speakers-bureau!>