



ASSESSING SPEAKING OPPORTUNITIES

EXPERTS IN ANY FIELD WILL ATTRACT REQUESTS TO SPEAK ABOUT THEIR EXPERTISE AT EVENTS.

As predatory for-profit conferences and international scammers become more prevalent, it's important for time-poor professionals to consider each of these offers carefully.

This How-To Guide will provide a checklist for you and your staff and members to follow, to help determine whether speaking at an event is going to lead to benefits for your organisation, your career, your discipline and the STEM sector.

WHAT TO ASK

So you have received an offer to speak an event. Consider asking the following questions as a first step:

What do they want you to speak about? What do they wish to achieve with the event?

The more vague they are, the more likely it is they have not thought about the event in any great detail – this is a concern. At STA we will usually have a topic and specific area of expertise we want speakers to elaborate on, and will often provide a vision as to how the speaker's presentation will build on the event as a whole.

Is the program gender balanced and diverse?

STA encourages all our members to take the panel pledge and vow to speak only on panels and event programs that are gender balanced and seek to incorporate cultural and other diversity. Saying 'no' on the basis of a lack of diversity can be a powerful tool for change.

Who else is speaking, and what sort of audience will you be speaking to?

Ensure you understand who the other confirmed speakers are, don't be fooled by them being listed on the program as they themselves might be unaware they are. Also find out who's in the audience, as this informs what value it will be to your organisation and your career, and how you can pitch your presentation. Is this audience of value to your organisation? Is it a group of core stakeholders, or are there people there who you've been keen to connect with? Or are they people who you're not likely to come across again?

Do speakers pay registration? Is there a budget to assist with speakers' travel?

If you are required to pay for registration as a speaker, we would advise turning down the opportunity. If you speak, the least the organiser can do is arrange complimentary registration.

Funding for travel is not always provided, so it is important that you get confirmation early on. Not-for-profit or charity organisations will probably not have budget to help you travel, but may still deserve your support and attendance. Business or events run by for-profit organisations are different however, and it should be expected that they have built your speakers' travel expenses in to their ticket price.

Do they pay a speakers fee?

If they cover travel, they may also pay a speakers fee. If your expertise is valuable enough to warrant a fee, ask for one. If you are early in your speaking career, be sure to evaluate whether asking for a fee would be appropriate or beneficial. Two days' pay is a reasonable fee to request, and covers the time you spend preparing for, travelling to, and presenting at the event.

Beware of quick turn-around time

If an organisation is pressuring you to confirm your attendance as speaker in a day or two, it is a warning sign that something is not quite right. It may be that a speaker has pulled out late, but if you see lots of "TBCs" on the event program, it signals a lack of organisation. Most events will be planning their programs months, even years out from the event.

WHAT TO ASK YOURSELF**Is this of benefit to me? What can I achieve by speaking?**

Will attending help you further your organisation's reputation or your own work, meet interesting people, spark discussions with decision makers, or provide access to networking and other events? Depending on your career stage, the need to answer one or more of these will vary.

Is there a colleague who's female or from a cultural minority who might benefit from this opportunity more than I can?

If it's a good opportunity but you're finding yourself trying to work out how to fit this in, perhaps you should consider instead asking the event organisers to consider adding your colleague to the program – giving somebody from an under-represented group a valuable opportunity.

Is this company/organiser known to you and if so do you want to associate with it?

Search for the organiser's or event's website and see whether the content is useful and well written. It may also be useful to search for previous events run by the organisation to see if they were successful.

Finally, it's important to remember that even if the event ticks all of the boxes, it's okay to say no. It is a good idea to take up as many opportunities as possible when you're early in your career, but be sure that you can deliver a quality presentation every time.

If you are stretched, your presentation may suffer – remember that the high quality of your presentations will speak much louder than the quantity.

As we mentioned above, if you're planning to say no because you're overloaded, we recommend instead asking the event organiser to give the opportunity to a colleague from an under-represented group.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- [How To Know If You Should Accept A Speaking Invitation](#)
- [Should you speak for free?](#)
- [Predatory publishers criticised for 'unethical, unprincipled' tactics](#)
- [Dubious conferences put the 'pose' in 'symposium'](#)
- [Predatory Conferences Defined and Examples](#)

WOULD YOU LIKE MORE ASSISTANCE WITH THIS TOPIC OR ANY OTHER TOPICS IN OUR 'HOW TO' SERIES?

IF SO, PLEASE REACH OUT AND WE WILL PUT YOU IN TOUCH WITH THE RELEVANT STA TEAM MEMBER.

EMAIL: INFO@STA.ORG.AU

TEL: 02 6257 2891.