

How to PROFIT

from Your Soft-Topic Expertise

BUILD YOUR LIST COMMUNITY IN **5** EASY STEPS

BY MARITZA PARRA

Do you speak on a soft topic, like emotional intelligence, team building, relationships or coaching? For experts who speak on soft topics, it can seem unfair. Speakers who deal with hard topics have the advantage. They're wielding numbers and measurable proof, making their products and services much easier to sell.

If you're a soft-topic expert, you must add some long-term strategic thinking when you step onto a speaking platform. Rather than trying to

sell from the stage, attract new customers or get another speaking gig, think about building your list community of ideal prospects. This is a database of ideal prospects who give you permission to contact them, after your speaking engagement. In other words, you can serve them from the stage now, and later as members of your list community. By using simple technologies and strategies, you can accomplish this in five easy steps.

WARNING: This is not a quick fix or a magic bullet to profiting more from your speaking efforts. It is a medium- to long-term fix that can add hundreds of thousands of dollars to your bottom line, if you do it right.

STEP 1:

Create your special offer of real value.

What products and services do you offer? Select one golden nugget from your paid products or services, such as a great tip, strategy or a fun self-assessment quiz that your ideal prospects would be interested in receiving. What can you offer to entice your audience to be part of your list community?

Some experts try to build their list communities by offering to “stay connected,” “stay in touch” or “receive my newsletter,” but none of these create a desire in your ideal prospect. No one wants more email.



Instead, you must frame the offer as a free gift that offers real value. To determine if the free gift you have in mind will work, contact a few of your best customers and ask them if it’s something they would want in exchange for their contact information.

STEP 2:

At each speaking engagement, offer your free gift in exchange for contact information.

It’s best to ask for only email address—and a first name if you want to personalize your communication. Anything more will dampen the response. People who are truly interested in your free gift will sign up, weeding out those who aren’t your ideal prospects. If possible, create and pass out an order form for your free gift to increase its perceived value. The word “free” should appear on the form, so prospects know they don’t have to purchase anything.

You’ll also want to include some “fine print” on your free gift order form, letting people know they’ll also receive additional information from you and they can unsubscribe at any time.

If you’re unable to distribute your order form, tell attendees where they can sign up for your free gift, such as a sign-up sheet at the front or back of the room, and a few places in between.

You can also collect business cards, asking them to write in their best email address to send the free gift (not always the one on their business card). Let them know approximately when they’ll receive the free gift via email. Your last resort is to direct attendees to your “ultimate option page,” specially

designed to build your list with your free gift in exchange for their email address. This page is free of distractions, such as blog posts, videos and articles that could create roadblocks to adding ideal prospects.

Add these new list community members to your database as soon as possible. If you don’t have a team, enter your new prospects manually, from your hotel room after your speaking event, if necessary. The sooner your new list community members receive your free gift from you, the better. If you have a team, you can overnight a file with the free gift order forms to an assistant who manually enters them into your system.

Never add anyone to your list community who did not give you permission. It’s shocking to see how many people still do this. Email inboxes are sacred for most people. You can end up in junk folders, annoying your ideal prospects, or get blacklisted for spamming. It’s also illegal to add someone to your list who did not specifically agree to it.

STEP 3:

Implement an automated and customized welcome for each new group of list community members.

Create a welcome email template for people who have opted to receive your free gift. This can be all automated using customer management systems, such as Infusionsoft, Aweber or Mailchimp. And why not add a little something extra to make the biggest impact with your new list community members? I have found that engagement increases when I add something personal to my welcome email, such as an interesting photo taken at the event with the organizer or with some of the attendees.



⚠ COMMON PITFALL

Often, speakers will complete Steps 1 and 2, which is a great start. But if you stop there, you’re wasting your time and breaking your promise to your new list community members. Yet, many people collect names and email addresses, and then take weeks to enter them into their database—or worse, never enter them at all.

5 TIPS

to Cash in on Soft Topics

- 1 Create your gift of real value.
- 2 Enter new subscribers into your list promptly.
- 3 Deliver your gift with automation, yet slightly customized for each audience.
- 4 Manage subscriber expectations, and then deliver on them.
- 5 Make offers often.



STEP 4:

Nurture your relationship with your list community.

Once your speaking attendees become members of your community, let them know what to expect from you. The ideal time to do this is when you're delivering the free gift you promised.

This is all about managing expectations. How often will you communicate with them? Do you have a monthly newsletter or a weekly video? If you don't have the systems to be sure you can communicate often, just send a helpful tip or article at least twice a month minimum. These can be created in chunks and pre-programmed within your customer management system for months at a time, so you can "set it and forget it."

Ideally, a short welcome video can convey this information. It doesn't have to be a full-scale video production; most smartphones take excellent videos. Tell your new list members three things they will discover by being part of your community, including case studies of past clients, and the great results you helped them achieve.

STEP 5:

Make offers to your list community.

This is where the big and lasting payoff comes. Be sure to make offers to your list community. So many speakers and authors get this wrong, they keep giving without making offers.

⚠ COMMON PITFALL

If you only give, your list community members will start seeing you as a nonprofit. You're in business, so act like it and make offers for your products and services. Some people may complain, but you're not in business to please everyone. Stay focused on those who want your information and choose to buy from you.

By following these five steps and nurturing your growing list community, you'll find it easier to sell your services and fill your programs. You may even decide to create digital products to serve your ready-made customers and clients.



Absolutely unemployable at one time, speaker, author and internationally syndicated columnist Maritza Parra successfully turned her passions into profits. She's built profitable list communities around her passions for Spanish horses, bath and beauty products, self-empowerment advice, and sells her books, DVDs, CDs, online courses, retreats and home-study courses to her subscribers. Check out her blog at MaritzaParra.com.

Maritza Parra will present "Transforming Your List into a Tribe" at the Platform Profits Lab in Tempe, Ariz., Jan. 3-5, 2014.

Register now at www.NSAspeaker.org or call (480) 968-2552.