

Publish or Die? The product problem...

By Bob 'Idea Man' Hooey, AS

As professional speakers and service providers, many of us struggle with the 'product problem.' Many of us have been told we need a book, or that a book will supercharge our careers and get the phone to ring off the wall. The challenge and mixed results can leave us confused and at times disillusioned. But, product can be a valued added to our business.

I would like to offer a few ideas on my experiences, challenges and challenges overcome in this area. I feel there are three areas to cover: The concept, the creation and the completion of the sale of our product. This article is primarily focused on ideas nudging my fellow professional trainers, facilitators and keynote speakers but has **relevance for any profession seeking to add or enhance their value to potential clients. What do I know, what can I do, what can I provide that would add additional value?** Valid questions to evaluate and enhance your career and business. Works for non-profits too!

Let me ask you some questions. **Why would you want to have product available?**

- a) I believe in my topic and want to help reinforce my sessions with helpful tools?
- b) I want to build another stream of income to augment my speaking income.
- c) I want to establish and expand my credibility as an expert in my area of study?
- d) I want to have something that will provide cash flow at my non-paid presentations.
- e) I want to have something I can use as a promotional tool to define what I do and differentiate myself from my competition? Branding and top of mind awareness!
- f) I want to sharpen my thinking, focus my efforts and deepen my expertise?
- g) All of the above?

If you answered YES to any of these, you are on the right track. Each of these is a valid reason for putting effort into developing product in your business. Ask CSP Harold Taylor about his commitment to develop at least one new product every 6 months. But how do I do that you ask? And where do I start?

Here are just a few suggestions on products, or as I now call them Bob's **B.E.S.T. (Business Enhancing Success Tools TM)**:

- ◆ Tip sheets and paper forms
- ◆ Booklets and pamphlets
- ◆ Manuals and workbooks
- ◆ Books and anthologies
- ◆ Special reports and monographs
- ◆ Resource guides
- ◆ Motivational posters and buttons
- ◆ Collections of articles – in book or e-book form
- ◆ Sales, speech, time and management planners

- ◆ Audio tapes and tape albums
- ◆ Video tapes
- ◆ CD-ROM training programs
- ◆ Paid subscription newsletters
- ◆ Software
- ◆ Co-op with other speakers and business providers
- ◆ Others?

Here are a few ideas to kick-start your back of room and passive income sales. If you check you might get a free video. Past CAPS-BC President Greg Gerrie spoke for a special fee last year and received a full professional video recording of the event. Rent a small digital tape recorder and record all your presentations. Put together a collection of some of your motivational sayings and other quotes. (E.g., Sell a series of 12 done on parchment for \$10 - your cost - approximately \$2).

Take your 'learning guides' and turn them into monographs, pamphlets or workbooks. Four years back I did some work for a local college. They offered to 'print' my manual and '**pay me \$10 for each student**' for the privilege. **Wow!** This motivated me to get off my butt and start converting my 'free' handouts into licensable work and to produce workbooks that I now sell – 6 to date.

Past National CAPS President, Jeff Mowatt has put together a series of articles for sale that also generate sales for his tape series. Add sales of individual articles in your catalogue or convert into monographs or pamphlets. Alice Wheaton has recently taken her course material on cold calling and is developing a series of smaller booklets for sale.

Flesh out your product line by referencing other books (especially fellow CAPS/NSA members) in your talks and having some of them available as point of purchase and on your product list or catalogue. Most speakers and publishers will give you anywhere from 25% - 50% off retail for your own sales.

Ok, so now I've developed some product, but I'm not comfortable selling for the platform. How can I entice my audiences to purchase these 'treasures'?

I struggle with this but let me share a few ideas I am finding valuable.

- 1) Have a display table at the front of the room located in plain sight of your audience when you are speaking. Let your audience become visually familiar with it. Bonus, this adds to your platform credibility too.
- 2) While presenting, subtly pick up a workbook or relevant product and quote directly from it. This increases their visibility and acts as a subliminal enticement to look at, and often purchase the book or product you shared.
- 3) I give away at least one of my workbooks to a member of the audience. As the person is coming up, I tell them about their choice (from 4 or so). This is a subtle commercial without being obvious.
- 4) If speaking for an association or non-profit group, I will ask them to handle sales and donate a portion of each sale to them. Often, they become better salespeople than my own efforts, and tell the audience about the donation, which spurs on sales.

- 5) If speaking for a corporate or professional group, I have been following a tip from CSP Kit Grant of having some of my products at the table and allowing people to simply pick them up and drop a cheque or cash in the box. Surprisingly it has worked well for me. For example: 4 out of 6 of my workbooks are only \$20 each or any 3 for \$50.00
- 6) Now that I have 6 plus workbooks, an equal number of resource guides and special reports, (and more on the way) I am doing some packaging deals (Success systems) for my audiences. And it is working! **Challenge your creativity and make it easy for them to buy.**
- 7) Develop an order form or catalogue with your products. Have it available on the product table, or better yet as part of your learning guide or handouts for distribution to everyone who attends. I have my own Business Enhancement Success Tools mini catalogue. It will also be available on-line for information and ordering from my website.
- 8) Send the order form or catalogue along with any order or enquiry you get from potential clients. **Don't be afraid to show your proficiency in print!**
- 9) Have some product information listed on your evaluation form. CSP Dottie Walters taught me this one. You'd be surprised at how this can generate interest and post-presentation sales.
- 10) Mention your product in your interviews, articles and other promotional materials such as speaker bio or bylines. Don't be afraid to include copies of relevant product with your promo package. Recently, I had a call from a Montreal based firm about some Customer Service training and sent along my C/S CD and workbook. We're now exploring some long-term work together across North America.

In this past year I have been re-evaluating what I am doing in my speaking business. More effective use of product as both a promotional and profit generation tool is starting to play a valuable part in my ongoing growth in this industry. **My challenge to you is – what is your next step? If I can do it, why can't you?**

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Bob 'Idea Man' Hooley, DTM, PRA, CKD-Emeritus, Accredited Speaker, 2011 Spirit of CAPS recipient is an inspirational leader, speaker, and a prolific author whose works include 'Legacy of Leadership, Strive for significance – lead on purpose!', 'Speaking for Success' and 'The Courage to Lead!' His articles have been featured in a multitude of North American trade and global consumer publications. He is a respected leader who has been honored by CAPS, NSA, Toastmasters, and the United Nations for his leadership contributions. His creative Ideas At Work have allowed him to travel the globe sharing insights, encouragement in 61 countries, so far. With Covid-19 he has been zooming around the globe to share his ideas. His innovative Ideas At Work! have been successfully applied by global leaders as well as Canada's 50 Best Managed Companies.