

PRESENT INFLUENCE · KNOWN, BOOKED & PAID

The Email Playbook

A working sequence for finding the right person, starting the conversation, and following up without becoming background noise. Built for speakers targeting businesses, corporates and associations, not conference organisers.

BEFORE YOU SEND A SINGLE EMAIL

Where the budget actually is

Conferences are probably the wrong play for most speakers starting out, not because they're off limits, but because the maths rarely works in your favour. Conference organisers tend to book established names for the paid main-stage slots, and any breakout session you can realistically land as a newcomer is usually unpaid. Businesses, corporates and associations running their own internal events, sales kick-offs, leadership days, annual conferences for their own people, is where the budget actually sits. That's where this playbook is aimed.

There's still a smart way to use conferences even so. **Offer to be the backup keynoter.** Organisers often want a name on standby in case the headline speaker falls through, and here's the part worth understanding properly: you probably won't get the call. That's not really the point. The point is they'll remember you were the one who showed up prepared to be useful, on standby, no fuss, when it mattered. That's a far stronger impression on a booker than a cold pitch ever makes. It's a reputation play, not a booking play, and it costs you almost nothing to offer.

One more thing before the templates. Not getting booked consistently and paid what you're worth is a business problem, not a speaking problem. These templates fix the outreach mechanics. They won't fix a weak offer, a vague topic, or a keynote that isn't ready to sell. That's a different conversation.

THE GROUND RULES

Ten habits worth keeping

- **Keep subject lines short and human.** Something a friend would send you, not something a marketer would. "Quick question" beats anything with a colon in it.
 - **Send mid-week.** Monday mornings and Friday afternoons are dead zones, people are either catching up or checking out. Tuesday to Thursday, late morning to early afternoon, is your window.
 - **Make it personal, briefly.** A first name and one genuine, specific line beats a templated paragraph every time. This is a relationship business before it's a sales one.
 - **Don't send everything at once.** This is the mistake that kills more first emails than a weak subject line ever will. You think professional means comprehensive, so you attach the abstract, the reel, three topic options and a full bio in message one. That's not professional, that's overwhelming. Nobody books you off a first email, they decide whether to reply to it.
 - **Outreach is a numbers game, so know your numbers.** Take your revenue target, divide by your average fee, that's the bookings you need. Multiply by roughly five for the inquiries you need, since not every inquiry converts. Work backwards from there to a weekly outreach target.
 - **One specific, low-friction question per email.** Not an open-ended "let me know if you're interested." Something they can answer in one line.
 - **Keep it short.** The longer the email, the lower the reply rate. If they're interested, they'll ask for more.
 - **Always include your website, never insist on it.** Put it in the signature. If they're interested, they'll click it.
 - **Follow up on a 70/30 split.** Once someone's shown interest, most of what you send after that should build the relationship, not sell into it.
 - **Never quote a fixed fee on a first inquiry.** Give a range instead, in the client's currency, until you know the brief.
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WHO YOU'RE ACTUALLY EMAILING

There's rarely a job title that says "books speakers"

The people who do it usually sit under one of these. If you don't know which one it is inside a given organisation, that's exactly what Email 1 is for.

- Conference or event organiser
- Meeting planner / professional
- HR (often smaller budgets)
- Department heads (internal events)
- Communications (often best budgets)
- Marketing
- Learning and development
- Talent management (board-adjacent)
- PA / Executive Assistant to CEO or MD
- Procurement

THE SEQUENCE

From cold to booked

Email 1 — Find the booker

Use when you don't yet know who handles speakers inside the organisation.

Subject: Quick question

Hi [First Name],

Quick question, who's responsible for booking speakers for your [event / conference / team offsite]?

Thanks,
[Your name + website]

Why this works: it asks nothing of them except information they already know off the top of their head. There's no pitch to evaluate, no decision to make, just a name to hand over. That's why it gets replies from people who'd never respond to an actual pitch.

Email 2 — The introduction

Only send once you have a name. This is the one people overload. Don't.

Subject: Quick question

Hi [First Name],

[Name who pointed you here] suggested you'd be the right person to speak to about [team, leadership, your audience] and [topic]. I work with organisations on [the outcome, not the topic].

Worth a fifteen minute call to see if it's a fit?

Thanks,
[Your name + website]

Why this works: the referral line does the credibility work a bio would otherwise do, and naming the outcome instead of the topic answers the question the planner actually has, which is "what happens in my room afterwards," not "what's your subject." Everything you didn't attach is doing more for you than everything you did.

Get on the phone, as early as you can

Email gets you a name and a first line of contact, but the moment you can move to the phone, do it. Emails are easy to ignore. A phone call is much harder to swat away, and once you're actually speaking to someone, you've stopped being a stranger vying for space in their inbox and become an actual person, a voice, someone real. That shift changes the whole dynamic.

This isn't cold calling, whatever it feels like. The person on the other end books speakers, or sits in one of the roles that does, even if they're not actively looking today. You're one of many conversations they'll have this year with people in exactly your position. It's a numbers game, and numbers games don't need pressure or urgency you don't actually feel. Respect their time, and mean it when you thank them for it.

When you catch them, treat that as a small win, not an inconvenience to apologise your way through. Give them an easy choice rather than an open-ended question.

Hi [Name], it's [Your name]. I know this might have caught you at a bad moment, have you got a couple of minutes now, or would it be easier if I called back at a better time?

Why this works: two options make it easy to say yes to something, and most people pick one or the other. Also worth remembering, they picked up the phone. Whatever's going on for them right now, it can't have been that bad a moment.

Not every call goes well, and that's fine. If someone's short or rude with you, it usually says more about their day than about you. Stay polite regardless, thank them for their time, and try again another time. If it happens again on a second attempt, that's worth noting, but don't let it put you off the organisation altogether, one bad conversation isn't the whole relationship.

Politeness matters more than almost anything else in this whole approach. It costs nothing and it's the single easiest way to be remembered well by someone who talks to a lot of speakers.

Follow-up 1 — no reply after 2–3 weeks

Forward the original rather than writing fresh, it jogs their memory instead of making them place you again.

Hi [First Name],

Sent you the note below a few weeks back and didn't hear anything, wasn't sure if it landed.

Still keen to learn more about [event/team/organisation] if the timing's right.

Thanks,
[Your name + website]

Follow-up 2 — over to you

Still no reply, one more week. After this, stop, chasing further reads as pressure, not interest.

Hi [First Name],

I've sent a couple of notes and haven't heard back, so I won't chase again after this one. Still very much interested if [organisation] ever needs someone on [topic], the door's open whenever suits.

Thanks for your time,
[Your name + website]

Re-engaging a stalled or lost inquiry

For anyone who inquired and went quiet, or went another direction. Go back roughly a month before the anniversary of their event.

Hi [First Name],

Have you given up on booking me for [event]?

Genuinely, if the timing's better this year I'd love to pick this back up. Here's a recent testimonial from a similar audience in case it's useful: [testimonial or link].

Thanks,
[Your name + website]

Why this works: that opening line does more than it looks like it should. People tend to reply fast when they feel they've left something unfinished.

Post-call email

Send straight after any call where interest was real.

Hi [First Name],

Great speaking earlier, thanks for the time.

As discussed, I've attached [fee range / overview / testimonials]. I've also pencilled [date] into my diary, that doesn't commit you to anything, it just means I'll come back to you first if someone else inquires about the same date.

I'll check back in on [specific date, then actually do it]. Any questions before then, just shout.

Thanks,
[Your name + website]

Ready to book

Hi [First Name],

Delighted this is moving forward. I've looped in [assistant/you] on this thread, they'll handle the agreement and logistics from here so you've got one point of contact for the details.

Thanks again for the opportunity, looking forward to it.

[Your name + website]

Pre-event check-in (2–3 weeks out)

Hi [First Name],

Looking forward to [event]. Could we grab five to ten minutes on a call to run through the details before the day?

I'm free [give two or three windows]. Let me know what suits and I'll call you.

Thanks,

[Your name + website]

Post-event follow-up

Send within a week. This does three jobs at once: closes the loop, gets a testimonial without making them write from scratch, and opens the door to more work.

Hi [First Name],

Thank you for having me speak to [team/audience], really enjoyed it, and thanks for making the logistics so easy on my end.

A couple of things if you've got a moment: I'd love a quick line or two on how it landed, happy to draft something from our chat if that's easier than starting from a blank page. And if anything else comes up, internally or with a connection elsewhere, I'd welcome the introduction.

Thanks again,

[Your name + website]

None of this is a script to recite, and if you use it as one, it'll read exactly like the fortieth pitch email that planner got this month. It's a structure for a normal, low-pressure conversation between two adults, one of whom has a room to fill and one of whom can fill it well. The templates get you a reply. Whether that reply turns into a booking, and a fee that reflects what you're actually worth, is a different problem, and usually the bigger one.