EVENT & TIME MANAGEMENT WITH ESPEAKERS

John Beede (SpeakerCareer.com) interviews Joe Heaps (eSpeakers.com)

John Beede: Hello, everybody. John Beede here with another speakercareer.com expert interview series. On the line with me I have Joe Heaps. He is the vice-president of eSpeakers, which is where a lot of online business is done for the speaking industry. Let's say hello to Joe. Thanks for being on the call with us. Joe, can you start by giving us an overview of what eSpeakers is and an evolution of it; how it came to be, what it is, and a story or two of people who have used the service?

Joe Heaps: You bet, John, thanks for having me. I'm privileged to be here. eSpeakers got started back in 1999 by a speaker named Art Berg. Art was really successful. At the time he was a quadriplegic in a wheelchair; [he] was in an accident and made a great success out of sharing that challenge that he had in life with others. He was very inspiring. Art was a great speaker and successful. I think he brought in somewhere around $15,000 or $17,000 a speech when he ended up passing away in 2002. When Art was here, he was slated to be NSA president and was really regarded as a frontiersman in regards to speaking.

One of the things he always talked about and had a strong passion for was technology. One day in his office he had this feeling like, "Hey, I can do something better with technology. I want to bring bureau reps and other meeting planners that are booking me into my office. There's got to be a way to do that." We joke here that we kind of developed the first cloud service in technology because he hired my business partner, Dave Reed, and Dave's just a wiz at technology. He put together a software package that Art gave out to his friends and said, "Hey, use this. This is what I'm using in my office." It eventually went into a business, but at the first stages of it, it was Art sharing it with his buddies and other speaking partners.

Basically, what it did was allowed those who are booking speakers to look into their calendars and see whether they're booked or held—whatever it might be—and to be able to place a hold on it while Art's on the plane or somebody somewhere around the world was sleeping and someone was awake. You know that whole schedule management problem speakers have. And so this software was born. It had great hopes and then Art ended up passing away in 2002. That's how it got started.

Since that point, eSpeakers has grown into this awesome service that provides speakers with a platform or a system for managing their events, managing their calendars. Sure, there are lots of other great calendaring systems out there, but eSpeakers is unique to speakers specifically, and their needs in regards to speaking. Of course, we still have that pathway that provides for speakers bureaus that are booking speakers to look at their calendars. Over the last two years we've actually opened that, created a new bridge for meeting planners to directly go into those schedules and book them as well. So over the past 15 years that's where it evolved from and where it is presently.

There are a couple of speakers who have had great success with this. One is a good friend of ours, Chad Hymas. Chad actually is a quadriplegic. About a year before Art died, he talked to Chad and Chad was in the wheelchair and trying to figure out what he was going to do. Chad took that opportunity and has

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made it a great, successful business, and uses our calendar to help keep his office in sync with him when he's on the road. It's a pretty big feat for somebody who's a quadriplegic to travel the world, so he uses our software to manage all the logistics. He has people helping him in every location around the world, and all that's coordinated through our system.

Another success story is a customer of ours, Marilyn Sherman. We do these profile updates; we have the event-management/calendar side of things and then we also have online profiles that go along with that to help promote speakers. We offer these profile tune-ups, to look over your profile and give you suggestions on ways you can improve it. Marilyn sat down with me one day over the phone and we screen-shared and went through some different things, how she could improve not only what she could add to it but also some of the messaging because we work with meeting planners all over the world. I go out and meet with them almost every month during meetings, so we hear what their needs and their strategies are and we can give them back to the speakers. Through these profile tune-ups, we're able to fine tune that to its best state and really help sell the speakers. Marilyn went through and tuned that up and within two weeks she had three new bookings. That was kind of a fun thing. She just told me that last summer at the NSA convention. So there's a couple of examples of how our system's used.

JB: This is exciting. You've got a platform that can arrange the travel of the most complicated and busy speaker, a person with those complicated needs, all the way to a regular speaker who just wants to go out a dozen times a year or twenty times a year. This platform can help anyone.

JH: Right, yeah, it's really available for anyone. You don't have to be a seasoned speaker. Some software tools or some of the speaker tools that are out there are specifically for emerging speakers, people who are just getting into the business, or people who are more seasoned or successful at that stage of their life. Or maybe they're a college speaker, or whatever it might be. Our tools are for everybody. They're to get the emerging speaker, I refer to it as a stake in the ground, saying, "Hey, I'm a speaker and this says so." We're highly regarded as a tool and a directory service within the industry. We power so many directories, over 80 on the web, we're behind the scenes. We have our own as well. When you're in our system, you have a great opportunity to be seen and get additional exposure.

JB: I like how a few minutes ago you said that this solves the problems that you saw happening in the speaking world. If we were to take a step back from eSpeakers itself, what would you say were the biggest problems that you or Art saw in the speaking industry or with professional speakers? For the people listening, what are the biggest pitfalls that they should avoid, that eSpeakers can help shield them from?

JH: Yeah, no problem. I think over the years that need has changed. I think that 15 years ago when the company started, the need for connection was huge. The way you used to connect with people was to call them or email them, and even email at that time wasn't as widespread as it is now. People were faxing, you know? What in the world is that? Anyway, I was at a presentation the other day. Actually,

this is really crazy because he's one of the gurus of the industry, Dan Kennedy—awesome content, that guy is amazing, but he still uses an overhead projector. He said, "This is what I use," and that works for him because he's within a few years of retiring, I'm sure.

My point is that the things that were problems then I don't think are the things now. I think the things we're seeing now, it's not connection in regards to being able to reach out and talk to somebody. I mean, social media is so ridiculous in the sense that you can reach out and talk to somebody and not even have their email address, not have their phone number. You can message them. You can do that through so many different social media platforms. Email them, call them, videoconference with them. There are so many ways to connect with people, so I don't think that's a problem now.

I think the biggest problem people have right now is that there's just so much information. When you type "John Beede" into Google, you're going to get your own website, your social media sites, other sites, articles, all different types of sites. Then add in that you're a speaker on leadership and all of a sudden you get a bunch more information. It's just so much to filter through, and that's one of the things that our directories provide, kind of an easier way to filter through that.

The best example I have for it is Amazon. Amazon gives you this really great ability to have thousands, or hundreds of thousands, of products on there that you can filter down quickly to just one—what the best product for your event is. That's really one of the biggest problems we're solving right now: being able to filter through all the noise to find the right speaker for a meeting planner's event. That's one of the big things right now.

And then there is still the same problem that we've seen over the years: how to manage your schedule and your time and keep on top of things. It's just productivity and management of your time. Our calendar and event management tool does a great job of that, tracking things like what speech you're giving and what the audience size is and the things you need to do before, during, or after the event. Things like that, I think, are a problem because speakers tend to focus on their content, what they're delivering. The administration of their office and their company is a second thought. I think that's one of the main pitfalls right now as well.

The other thing I think that speakers tend to do is talk a lot about themselves. This is a big pitfall. It's what you do as a speaker. You're set up to say, "This is what I talk about, this is who I talk to, these are the books I've written, these are the wonderful things I've done." You know, if you're Captain Sully and you land a plane on the Hudson, you're going to talk about that stuff, right? That's what it is, right? That's why you're all of a sudden a speaker, which he is now. But for most speakers, they need to lead with the benefits of what they're providing the audience, and that's a big pitfall that we're seeing in speakers. We're hearing this from meeting planners, actually, the buyers. They don't want to have all the information about the speakers themselves; they want it about the content they deliver, how is that going to benefit their audience? If I hire you, great, you're a leadership speaker and you've written six

books and you've served on these company boards, and that's all great, that's supporting material that helps me put you into a small shortlist of people. But what is it that you're going to present to my group that will help them either improve company morale or whatever the desire of the meeting is?

JB: Those are great things that give you credibility, but now what are you going to do for us based on the credibility that you have to speak?

JH: Right.

JB: Got it.

JH: Typically, that's information you're going to find in the very first paragraph of your bio or in your one-line bio or the first couple lines of your programs, the presentation that you provide. That's the right spot for that type of benefit-driven content. You're going to say, "Hey, my name's Joe and I speak on leadership and when I come and speak to your group I'm going to explain these three things and they'll walk away knowing how to do these three things." It's that type of approach that's much more successful. Then the following paragraphs in the bio or whatever content you're providing would be all about you and how you can say, "Hey, I'm going to change the world, they're never going to think about leadership the same." You go into things that support that after. That's one of the pitfalls I think people fall into; they lead with information about themselves.

JB: Great stuff, cool. I think for anybody listening, they really perked up when you mentioned that there are 80 different directories that speakers can get listed in through eSpeakers. I think the most compelling aspect to me is that you can get your speech, your product essentially, in front of the right people that are the right fit for you. If somebody signs up for your trial today or becomes a full-fledged member, how many meeting planners can they expect to be in front of and what associations or agencies will a speaker be positioned in front of when they sign up?

JH: The way our system is set up is that each speaker is given a single profile, and with that profile, you continually maintain it, manage it, update photos and pricing, and put your video on there, and update your bio and your new speech programs, or whatever it might be. So you have one thing to manage. This is something that came about around eight years ago when we saw a problem in the industry. Everybody managed an individual profile for a speaker—all the bureaus, all the associations, the speakers themselves—and the speaker was sending this information out to all these different locations to update their directory. It's just a huge amount of time to do that with the bureaus and associations or the membership sites, for the speaker and for them.

So we created this technology that each speaker has their own profile in the directory, and from that profile these publishers of our directories can reach in and say, "I want all the speakers on leadership," or, "I want all the speakers on diversity," or "I want speakers between $5,000 and $10,000," or "I want speakers only from Arkansas," or "I want all of them," which a lot do as well. So with these 80

directories, there are different things from speaker associations, which you would have to belong to, right, to speakers bureaus to independent sites. Smart Meetings magazine is a good example of that. They are an industry site where meeting planners congregate and get tips and tricks on how to do their job better. So that's a great resource. We've partnered with MPI, Meeting Professionals International, which is one of the largest meeting planner associations, or organizations, in North American for sure, but worldwide. Those are the types of organizations we're involved with.

If you're a speaker and your profile is in our database, you will be automatically added to some of those. Some have to be chosen; you have to be selected to go onto them, but to have the potential to get onto these directories—and these directories are used by meeting planners. I think MPI has 20,000 members who are buyers. It's just different. Smart Meetings, I think, has 40,000 or 50,000 monthly subscribers or followers. One of our new bureaus that just came on is Washington Speakers Bureau. They're the largest bureau, I think, worldwide, and they created a new brand for speakers who are $10,000 and below, speakers who would have to have a video and their programs on there. They have criteria that would put speakers into a pool where they would then hand-select those speakers. So it's not just one type of situation. There are lots of different scenarios where you can get picked up and put on directories. That exposure is really priceless.

When you think about creating better SEO and Google for yourself, which I would recommend and encourage everyone to do, when you do that, you're amongst all the other noise of the Internet. The great thing about directories is that there's no articles, there's no additional social media. I mean, there is on the profiles, but when you're searching for speakers on leadership or team-building, you're going to find profiles on those. It's just easier for the meeting planners to sift through that and find the speakers they're looking for. This is a great opportunity to get a bunch of exposure, and you may or may not get a booking. We do have people who get bookings; like I was just telling you, Marilyn Sherman increased her profile, which made her profile more visible within the industry on our different directories, and she got booked. That's a great example of the benefits of that.

JB: Can we talk about what the effective profile is? What did you tell her and what tips do you have for creating a great profile other than what you mentioned at the very beginning, to talk about what you'll do for them? What are some of the other elements to include?

JH: Yeah, no problem. If you go to the eSpeakers website and go under "Support and Downloads," there's a document there called the "eSpeakers SEO Ranking Chart." These are some things we have identified as—from talking to meeting planners—keys to a successful presence on the Internet, successfully selling yourself. Of course, we provide the ability to add these to your profile. Most speakers get our profiles for free because they're a member of the associations or they work with a bureau or whatever. Then they can obviously upgrade that to a profile that gives you more power, more punch. The things that we've identified, a lot of them are included in that upgraded package.

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Video is the number-one sales tool on the web right now. It's a way for meeting planners to watch you, see your stage presence, how you interact with the crowd. They don't particularly need 30 minutes of raw video of you speaking. You can do that, but that's not really what's effective. The most effective video right now is a three- to five-minute video. It can be a promo video, even, but something that showed you onstage, show[s] you and how you interact with the crowd, things like that, some live cuts.

Then the other thing we're seeing a big rise in demand for are personal topic videos. Let's say I spoke on leadership and team building and diversity in business. I would create a small 45-second to two-minute video on each one of those topics. It could be me just sitting at my desk with my computer camera or my phone camera. You can be a little more professional with a Handicam or whatever, but they don't really want it to be this big staged thing in front of a green screen and everything. They just want it to be you talking, like if you ran into them in the elevator type of thing. It would basically be, "Hey, my name is Joe Heaps and I speak on team building. When I come speak to your group, I identify these three things that are important in team building and they'll walk away knowing how to do these four or five things and how to implement them into their day, their life, their family, or whatever it might be that they're trying to work with." That's what it is, it's just a short little clip. Those little clips added to your profile give a lot more power to your marketing. We've seen speakers add those to their social media, to their blogs, the v-logging, and to keep them up to date and accurate.

So, if I was a leadership speaker and I thought Nelson Mandela was a great leader, I may, right after he passed, add in, "I'm a leadership speaker and this is what I speak on and I take a lot of my principles from Nelson Mandela, bless his soul, he just passed, but we can carry a lot of his principles on." You kind of go into it, you mark it with the timestamp and show that it's relevant. We recommend that you visit those at least once a year if you do them and make sure they're up to date. Videos are the number-one sales tool. If you don't have video, go and mock it up like I just talked about on your computer.

We get two questions most often. "I don't have video" and "I don't have any gigs, so I don't want to show my calendar." The solution to your video is [to] go make your own. Of course, the prize possession video is you onstage, showing how you interact with the crowd and how you deliver your content. Start with these little shorter videos on your own and then work toward getting that other one. But there's no reason anybody shouldn't have video.

The second thing that carries the most weight in our system is recommendations, testimonials. Most everybody's purchased something on Amazon; I just don't buy anything that doesn't have any reviews.

JB: [laughter] You go straight to the stars and if there aren't any stars for it, I'm like, yeah, I'll find something else.

JH: It could be a great product, right? You just skip right over it and go to the one with reviews. It's one of those things that's kind of tricky, but we do have the ability to add the recommendations to your

profile. Then we actually verify them. We give you the opportunity as a speaker to enter in the email address of the buyer, the meeting planner, and then we send them a note saying, "Hey, we're eSpeakers, we're a third-party verification. We just want to make sure you did say this about John; if you did, just hit 'reply' on your email." They don't even have to type anything; they just hit "reply" and it verifies it. It's pretty low-level, but it does show a verified recommendation status on that, so that's kind of nice.

JB: This is actually good because I have to admit, you need to slap me on the hand, I haven't completed a full profile because I've spoken for close to a thousand audiences, but if I put my profile up on eSpeakers in total, I'm not going to have any reviews, so it's going to look like I'm a total beginner and haven't spoken to anyone…

JH: Right.

JB: …so I can have those past clients come in and verify me or give stars for me?

JH: Yeah, well, what you do is you actually go in and enter the quote in and then you can put their email address in and our system will, it's not actually a person, our system technology sends them an email to say, "Hey, this is what John said and you can verify it" and so forth.

JB: Got it.

JH: You've got to be able to put them in first.

JB: So, if I have those testimonials, which I do, I have pages of them, I can just have them go verify that I've got ratings and rankings.

JH: Yeah. Yup. And that's kind of where we're at right now. We have already built the technology to have all these positive and negative reviews. A lot of the systems are out there, like Amazon, but this industry just isn't quite ready for that. We talked, we did some testing of the market and a lot of speakers just felt like, you know, the negative reviews, you could give a speech to 500 people and because of one negative review it makes the whole thing sour. It's not quite ready for that. I think at some point we will be ready for that, but what I guess I'm saying is that these are all reviews that you put in.

JB: Got it, okay.

JH: So, obviously they're going to be all positive. You're not going to put a negative review in there, right?

JB: [laughter] Got it, okay.

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JH: Some of the other things that are important with your profile, these are all things you should have on your website, so if you don't upgrade your eSpeakers account or you don't even have an eSpeakers account, you all should have an eSpeakers account. John, I'm sure you'll give some information on how to contact me after, but you can go to our eSpeakers website or email support@espeakers.com and say, "Hey, I was on a call with Joe and he was talking with John and said I could have a free starter account" and we'll get you set up. These are all the things you should have on your eSpeakers profile and then also on your website because these are things identified by meeting planners as valuable.

The third thing is the calendar. A lot of speakers will say, "I don't have anything on my calendar. I don't want to show it." For years we've asked bureaus and meeting planners, "What do you think about that? This is what speakers are saying. What do we say to them?" And they keep telling us, "You know, we don't really care if they're not booked. We don't care if they have a wide-open schedule. Just because they have a wide-open schedule doesn't show that they're not a good speaker."

JB: Got it

JH: They would rather have access to your calendar because when they're on a call with a meeting planner, trying to get something determined, everything about the event, they're going to look in their system to see who's available. If they can't see your calendar, that's just another hurdle they have to jump through. The calendar above "Coming Events," and then keeping it fresh, I think, is important. A lot of people will get in their calendar every so often. That's something that we're trying to do as an industry, within an industry, to keep that information as fresh as possible so that people are looking at real data and it's valuable. Some of the things that I've worked with speakers on are, think about your calendar. If you're a speaker or you want to be a speaker, it doesn't have to be time on a stage. There are other things in your business, in your life, that are taking time as well. Those things could be things that you can't get out of. They could be webinars, they could be coaching or another job.

JB: Or you don't want to work weekends, so you block out all your weekends.

JH: Right.

JB: You want Sundays as a family day. Anything like that you can block out as unavailable.

JH: Yup. I have a friend who played in the NFL for, I don't know, 10 or 12 years and was a liaison for the NFL. He's to a point where he doesn't really have to work, but he loves speaking. And so that's what he did. He just said, "Look, I'm going to be available Tuesday and Thursday each week in the month and every other day is blocked out." That's what he did, he just blocked out those other days, so he's just available to work on those days. So, however it works for you as a speaker. When you explain it that way, people are like, "Yeah, I do some consulting, I coach some people, you know, I have a webinar here and there." You put those things on your calendar, it doesn't look as bare.

JB: "I've got all of April blocked out to write a book," anything like that.

JH: Whatever it might be, even a vacation for heaven's sakes, you know. You're just not available, you're not going to drop—Now some people say, "I will drop anything…"

JB: [laughter]

JH: "…for a speaking gig," right? So that's one thing, too, but the other part of this is that you've got to really think about keeping in mind that the meeting planners want access to your calendar but you don't want to expose everything. Our system is the best of both worlds because we actually don't show them your whole calendar. So, John, you could have one more job between now and the end of the year and maybe two next year, and you may not want to show that you only have three events in the next 12 months. Our system doesn't show that. When a meeting planner goes and looks for December 1st, it just says, "Is he available or is he not?" You could be available, but it also doesn't say that you're available 365 days in the future. It just says he's available that day, so it's just the date they're enquiring about, which is a nice middle ground. Speakers feel really confident and good about that. That's where we're at with the calendar. That's the third most important thing.

The next thing on the list is programs. These are the speech programs, the presentations you give. These are super important to outline exactly what you'll present to the audience, what the benefits are, what they're going to walk away knowing how to do. You should have a couple of these. I've heard people say, "I have one main one." Well, do you ever speak for anything else? Most speakers could have four or five, easy. Four or five different things they could talk about.

JB: For my audience, we call those "learning points," so for anybody listening, this is what he's talking about. Your three to five learning points that you're saying, "This is what your audience will walk away having."

JH: Yeah, yeah, exactly. I've even had some say, "I only have one learning point, but I'm also a coach." Or "I'm also a trainer." So you can put in another program that says, "Hey, this is my training program and I'll train on whatever you want me to." Or coaching. So there's lots of different things you can put in there, but that's valuable.

Your fee is another thing that is super important. Some speakers make them really difficult to find. It is the number-one thing in determining the speaker, even before topic. It's because meeting planners are stuck with a budget, and a lot of times they have a budget to hit. Now, they may have a ton of money; it may be a big convention and they want a big headliner/keynoter, and they may have a lot of money to spend to throw at it, but the reason they're bringing in that big speaker is to put…

JB: Butts in seats.

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JH: ...butts in seats. Exactly. So it's still a budget issue. The more people in the seats, the more people who attend, the more money they make. It's just a whole process. So fee is super important. Make sure it's visible on your website, Ranges are great. I don't encourage anything more than a $2,500 range. If it has to be $3,000; $5,000 is the very most.

JB: Of the spread, not the [inaudible, 34:22].

JH: Yeah, I've seen people, like, "$2,000 to $15,000." I'm like, "Whoa." If I'm a buyer, I want the $2,000.

JB: Yeah, of course.

JH: What we do, in our system, you can just have a solid $5,000 fee or $10,000 or whatever, just one number instead of a range. But the other thing you can do is, in our system we provide fee details. However, you want to do that on your own websites; I would encourage you to do so. What that means is that if you have a range or a flat fee, make available in your fee schedule things like if you're speaking internationally or if your travel is included or not. Or if you do a local event, a lot of people will do local events for cheap because they don't have to travel, they can get there on the same day. It's no big deal and they'd like to make some money. So make sure you outline those little pieces and parts of your fee, if you charge more for a leadership keynote than you do for a team-building one or vice versa.

JB: So, you could do a keynote being $5,000 and then $7,500 for a keynote and three breakout sessions.

JH: Right.

JB: Got it.

JH: Actually, right now the trend in the industry, and you might just think about this as speakers, the trend is that meeting planners are asking speakers to come and do a keynote and stay to do at least one session. The session is usually right after the keynote or shortly after, so, you know, it could be a book signing or an actual session. So, John, you could go speak on leadership and then the session could be on change or success, some of your other topics. And while you're already there, they'll say, "Look, I'll give you a keynote, but I need you to do a session as well." I mean, are you going to say no?

JB: [laughter]

JH: I mean, you might if you had another job on the exact same date that was paying you the same or more, but most speakers say, "Yeah, I'll do it." That's kind of the trend, so you might just be prepared for that as you move forward because, as I'm talking to meeting planners, they're starting to do that more often.

JB: Yeah, I highly recommend that. And I sell more products in those breakout sessions than I do during the keynotes because those are the people who really want to see you.

JH: Yeah. Yup, I agree. One of our customers told us that the keynote was more broad and when they got in the session they actually took a chapter or section of their book and presented something in there and said, "This is from my book." That just brought up all these discussion points about his book and, yeah, he sold a bunch of products. It's a little bit more personal.

JB: Anything else about the profile?

JH: Yeah, two other things. One is photos and articles and book jackets and PDFs and documents and all that; we call those our marketing materials. Everybody always has a media page on their speaker website, but easy access to all the articles you've written or that you're included in, access to room layouts and one-sheets and all of that, is really important.

Now last, on purpose, but just the last point I wanted to bring up is social media. Social media is a huge draw and it's a great way to get bookings. It's a great way to get exposure, and we're finding more meeting planners are actually checking social media to make buying decisions.

JB: Really? So they'll go to the Twitter or Facebook of the speaker.

JH: Yeah, right. As I've gotten more into the meeting planning side of things it's been interesting because I've only been dealing primarily with the speaking industry. For speakers, Facebook is huge because it gives you a platform to express your thoughts and content, things like that, a little bit better than some of the others. In the meeting planning industry, Twitter is huge, so if you want to get in front of meeting planners, get a Twitter account, start putting some content out there. And then LinkedIn is just an awesome tool. Everybody uses that kind of on a professional level. We're finding more and more speakers are getting booked through LinkedIn. Meeting planners are using it, so those are still kind of the big three in regards to social media. But that's about it.

JB: That's awesome, awesome stuff. Thanks for being so thorough with that, that's brilliant. Let's go through some of the little items that stuck out to me, the features of eSpeakers that maybe aren't as prominent. One of the first ones that I was really interested in was automated email marketing. How does this work and what can it do for a speaker?

JH: Well, everything in our system pivots on the event itself. So, John, you're speaking in Las Vegas on December 5th. Everything pivots on that date and that location. What the email marketing does is give you the ability to upload all of your contacts—past, future ones you want, people you're working with, or whatever it might be—into your account. Basically, that's the name of the client, the email address, and the state or province and country they live in. That information is just uploaded in a .CSV file. It's pretty easy to export that out of your contact database and import it in.

Let's say there are three people in Vegas whom you've spoken to in the past and let's say there are three more you'd like to in the future. When you or somebody in your office gets a call in August that

says, "Hey, we'd like John to come and speak on December 5th in Las Vegas," you say, "Oh, great," and you put in the system that the event's in Las Vegas on this date. Our system recognizes that and goes through and finds those six contacts and 30 days prior to you going there, the system sends them an email with a photo of you with contact information on how to get in contact with you. It says, "Hey, John's coming to town on December 5th. Take some time to preview his event or book him while he's in town." We get a really great response on this, people are getting piggyback bookings off of this. "Hey, while you're in town come talk to my group," that type of thing. They're getting networking opportunities to speak with people who maybe didn't have an event at that time, but they could go visit them while they're there.

JB: This is awesome, actually, I teach to do both these things, that when you have an event, let's say it's in Atlanta, to contact other meeting planners and invite them to your event and say, "Hey, come and watch me speak." So this will do it for you automatically?

JH: It does, yeah.

JB: Oh my gosh.

JH: Once you upload that list, the list just sits there, right, because we know the email address and the state or province and country they live in. Then everything pivots on that event date. The thing about our system is that you can put the event in the system, but one of the key things with our calendar is we actually have a status toggle so you can have the event in a "held" status, in a "lead" status, or in a "confirmed" status or a "cancelled" [status]. Each one of those statuses triggers different things. Those "speaker tracks" we call them, that email marketing, they don't go out unless it's in "confirmed" status.

JB: Got it, okay.

JH: So that's one of the things.

JB: That's great, so it's not like, "Hey, show up at the event" and you're not there. [laughter]

JH: Right.

JB: Got it. That's actually a good transition into the next question that I had, or the feature. There's an item that refers to "thousands of local leads." Two-part question on this one. If somebody's not interested in traveling to speak, how do they get in front of their local leads in their city? And then back to the Atlanta example, if you're going there and you don't know who are the meeting planners, can you reach out to those local leads to try to create those piggyback bookings?

JH: You bet. What this particular feature came from was our speaker track system where speakers were going to town and having so much success creating new business by having that email go out. They said, "You know, who else is out there whom we could contact?" You go out to a city, Atlanta, and you fly in

and you speak and you fly out and you come home and you're like, "Well, I just spent all that time getting there and speaking there and I left and I didn't generate new business." So we created what's called the local lead pool. THE LLP is set up, again, based on the location of the event. So you're going to Atlanta. When you put that event in the system, you can generate a local lead pool report that will bring up all of your own contacts in that area, in Atlanta, that you might want to reach out to. It'll bring up all the chambers of commerce, it'll bring up all the media, all the corporate meeting planners and association meeting planners. It comes up with their contact information, everything except for their email. We leave email off just because email is a whole different thing to tackle, with spam and all that.

Actually, we found since that speakers like doing it a little bit differently. Let me tell you how they're doing it different in a second. Essentially, you would generate a report for each of the locations you're going to and you can start making calls or contact them and just say, "Hey, I'm going to be in town and would love to meet with you." Speakers are using this to generate new business. They're also using it to get networking time with people, key industry people, bureaus, or media. They're getting interviews or meeting with meeting planner clients who maybe don't have an event at that time, but they're getting to know them for their next event, that type of thing. This has been a really great success.

One of the speakers who uses this in a different way, his name is Steve Gilliland. Steve created a postcard, I don't know how many thousand he printed, but he printed a bunch of them. He printed one side that was all color and a picture of him and, "Hey, Steve's coming to town," that type of thing on the front. On the back it was blank. Then he created a formatted sheet—a page in Word, I guess, or Works or whatever he was using—with the information about the event itself. "I'm speaking at this particular conference and would love to speak with you while I'm in town or speak for your group while I'm in town, here's how to contact me," and then the addresses of all the contacts in the local lead pool. Then his office, they go through and they download the local lead list and merge that together with this template. It puts all the addresses in there and they print that on the back of the postcards and send them out. I haven't checked with him this year, but last year, in 2014, he got six jobs just off of that.

JB: That is awesome. [laughter]

JH: He's a $15,000 speaker, so that's considerable.

JB: [laughter] Of course. That's awesome.

JH: Six jobs, that's pretty good.

JB: Anybody listening, this is stuff that I've been doing manually in the past and I'm just getting, like, a combination of slapping myself in the forehead and chills about how easy it's going to be moving forward. This is awesome. And it does the media as well? So you can get the local radio stations and print and all their contact information as well so you can send them press releases?

JH: Yup

JB: Awesome.

JH: So that's one way to do that. The other way is, we do have a service internally here at eSpeakers, a way for you to go in and mark the boxes of the people you want to contact, and then we have an inside sales staff that will call on your behalf if you don't have the bandwidth to do it. We just call and say, "Hey, I'm calling on behalf of John Beede, or whoever's office, and he's going to be in town on this date and would love to get to meet with you or see if you're interested in booking him while he's there."

JB: You guys will do that?

JH: We'll do that, yeah. We have an internal sales staff that does that.

JB: [laughter] Awesome.

JH: It does cost you.

JB: Uh-huh.

JH: But…

JB: But if you're going to get a $10,000, $15,000 gig or even a $5,000 gig, that's going to pay for itself.

JH: So that's a pretty good deal. That's tough, I mean, it's tough for us to, we don't have some magic wand that makes people want to— It's still tough for us. We can call about 10 or 11 people an hour and talk to them. We've had some good success off that, people have gotten booked and people have gotten interviews, but it's tough. It's just as tough for us as it is for you. But if you don't have the time to do it, then we can do that. People are doing one, two hours per city, and it's some marketing, some exposure to trying to get some new jobs that way.

The other thing I was going to mention in regards to the local lead pool is that Marilyn Sherman, she wanted to speak in Dallas because she was going there for a wedding, I believe, and was already going to be there. She said, "I want to speak while I'm there if I can, I want to make some money." So she put the wedding in her business calendar—and you can do that without showing who you're speaking to. In that case she's just going to a wedding.

JB: [laughter] She's speaking to Grandma at the wedding.

JH: Yeah, she generated a report for it and started calling and got a job off of it.

JB: That's awesome.

JH: So, that's great too. Or if you didn't even have a wedding, you just wanted to speak in Seattle, Washington, you just create a fake event in Seattle, Washington and start calling on it. Generate the report and call. That's a way for some of you who may not have the events, if you want to speak in an area or if the job's near you, that's a way to find out how to— The purpose of this was to give you a shortcut. It's not anything you can't find on the web. If you wanted to find some media contacts and planners, you can find all that. It's just a shortcut. Saves you time.

JB: Absolutely. Can this replace a CRM?

JH: No, that's actually a good point. We encourage speakers to have three tools in our office. One's a CRM, one's an event manager, which we provide, and then a financial manager, some type of financial software. We think that with those three tools you can pretty much do all of the administration of your speaking business. It's important that the CRM is contact-centric so that it focuses on the contact and then everything revolves around that. Our event manager, you put the event in and everything revolves around the event. It could be a different contact every year, but that's how we've chosen to do it. We don't store a lot of the contact details; we store event details.

JB: Got it

JH: We do integrate with lots of contact managers and that's great, but we encourage you to have a good CRM. Some people say, "Oh, I don't know which CRM." It depends on what you want to do. If you're really into email marketing, then you ought to get something that's capable of doing something like that. But if you're just looking for some type of contact manager to manage basic contact information, I mean, Google Contacts is great and it integrates with most software out there

JB: You offer one-click contracts in documents as well. In the past I've used Adobe's DocuSign, which allows the meeting planner to sign on their iPad and send it right back over to me. Or they can just digitally sign. Is this similar functionality?

JH: It's not particularly a signing element to it. What the one-click contracts and documents is, is kind of like a mail merge. If you've ever mail merged in Word or Excel for labels or letters, you take the spreadsheet of information and you merge it into a document. That's what our one-click contracts and documents does. You create a contract that you have your clients sign—or it could be a thank-you letter or the details of the event, some people have a one-sheet on that—and you put all the different little codes in the template. So you have your contract and you put in a code for the date of the event, the price of the event, location, 50 percent's due on this date, all those different pieces and parts of the contract. You save it and upload it to your account. Then once you put all the information about the event in, you go over to the contract and click "Contract" and our system will merge all the data you just put into eSpeakers into your contract so you don't have to retype it. That's an easy way to save you some time by putting all that information together manually.

John Beede (SpeakerCareer.com) interviews Joe Heaps (eSpeakers.com)

JB: That's awesome. I really like it. Cool. Let's keep moving on. I'm interested in bureaus; your bureau-blast feature, and that's the last of the features I think I'd like to ask about. What is that? I think it's a big question for speakers. "What do bureaus do? Why can't I just do it on my own?" How does this help?

JH: Sure. You know, I get asked this a lot about bureaus. Bureaus are a great resource for you as a speaker. Some speakers say, "I'm not ever going to work with bureaus, they take a 25 percent commission. Why would I do that?" Some people work only with bureaus and some people are in the middle. My answer is always, "Why not?" If you're going to get additional business, why not? So you lost 25 percent; they bought you a job. So I don't have any problems with bureaus. I think bureaus are a great resource for speakers.

Really, what it comes down to is bureaus serve a different type of client. Bureaus serve kind of a full-service client, where they can take somebody and they can serve them from step one to step 25 in the process of hiring a speaker to having them speak on the stage. Then you have other types of meeting planners who are self-service, they like to do it on their own. Just like when you go to the gas station. I don't even know if there are any full-service gas stations anymore, but for those of you who remember or know about that, you drive up and you can go to the full-service tanks or self-service. And self-service, you get out and do it on your own, and that's okay for those who want to do it. Full service, you just go and they do it all for you. You sit in the car and you pay them through the window and you're done. It's no different in the speaking industry. Bureaus provide a great pathway for those who want to work with them.

Just to help you understand them, their primary center of business is their relationship with the meeting planners. The meeting planners call them up and say, "I have a job, this is what I need," and they do all the work. They're great for that. But like I said, there are two types of buyers: there's the self-serve and full-serve. With bureaus, I would definitely encourage you to work with them, and our Bureau Boss is a great way to do that. Once you have uploaded all your information into your profile and it really looks great, you can submit a bureau blast. It goes out to just under 500 bureau reps worldwide. It's an HTML email that goes out to them. We only send them every two business days, never on the holidays, so we don't inundate them. It's not spam. There's about a 30- to 45-day waiting period on it. There's a line to send them out. Once you send it, then it would go out to the bureau rep and they can add you to their directory, they can hire you. People have gotten hired, been added to directories, people saying, "Next time you're in town come look me up, I'd like to talk to you," or "You're not really my type of speaker, but I wish you well," all that type of thing. There's about a 20 percent open rate with it. It does cost $349, so what I usually tell people is that it would be pretty tough to put a postcard in the mail to more than 500 people—with the design, mailing, printing of it—for $350.

JB: Totally.

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JH: It's another way to reach out. Bureaus like it because they get inundated, they have rooms full of, well, DVDs now, but information about speakers to look through. This is a great way electronically that they can review you as a speaker, and if they're interested they can add you.

JB: That's awesome stuff. This is very, very compelling, I think, for anybody listening who— I don't know how they couldn't if they're a speaker be sold on eSpeakers and wanting to sign up. Or like you said, if they want to get in touch with you or get some more information, let's make it really clear. Where do they go, what do they do, and how do they move forward?

JH: If you have an eSpeakers account and you want help going over that profile, some of the benefits of it, definitely reach out to us. You can email support@espeakers.com and we have some really great people here at eSpeakers who will help answer your questions and be available for you nine to five Mountain time. We're really responsive, or you can call in as well.

For anybody who doesn't already have an eSpeakers account, definitely we can get you one. Email support@espeakers.com and say, "I was on a call with Joe and John, and Joe said I can get an account." We'll get you set up. Once you get your account set up, your goal is to fill out your profile, add your photo and your bio and your topics and your fees, similar to what John's done. If you want to see what this looks like, you can go to espeakers.com/marketplace, so forward slash marketplace, and just search for somebody. You can search by topics. This is actually a really great tool for anybody who is wondering, "Am I in the right topic matter? What should I speak on? What are other people saying who speak on 'women in business' or 'business growth' or whatever it might be?" Look up those topics and look at the profiles in there. Read what people are saying and how they're positioning themselves. It's very valuable.

JB: Mm-hmm. Got it. Study other successes and hopefully you'll follow and be successful as well.

JH: Yeah. So, anyway, we definitely want to get you on board. We are the largest database online of speakers, and our goal is to help get you as speakers more exposure. We've got directories in Asia and South Africa and Australia and Europe and Canada and the U.S. and even a couple down in South America, Brazil and stuff, so that's exposure [in] some places [where] you may never think about getting exposure. Your single profile could potentially be seen if somebody's looking for somebody on that particular topic in a price range and things like that. That's the best way. You can also go to our website at espeakers.com and go under "Speakers" and get quite a bit of information there on the different tools we provide. There's plans and pricing there as well; you can sign up there if you want. I can get you onboarded pretty easily and with no cost just by emailing us at support@espeakers.com.

JB: That's awesome, Joe. Thank you so much. So that's support@espeakers.com. And then it was espeakers.com forward slash marketplace for the directory. They're great. Feel free to be in touch, everybody on this call, I highly recommend it.

Last question for you, Joe. Somebody listens to this call and they say, a year later, "Joe, I heard that call with you and John and here's what I've done since then." What would make them a star customer to you? What would they have done in hindsight during that year period that would make you incredibly both proud of them and of your service?

JH: I think two things, and I've already said them in this call, so you already have all the information about it. One is you've got to have an online presence. It's got to stand out, it's got to be unique. You've got to have something that is compelling. My encouragement to you is, what's compelling is not— It could be if you landed a plane on the Hudson, that's compelling; for Captain Sully that's what makes him a speaker. But for most speakers, it's not the things they've done, it's more the content they've written. I guess it's probably a mixture, actually, of both, but whatever it is, you maximize that and make sure your profile really zings, really sells. That it's not just a biography, but a selling biography, a selling profile. It lists the things you're going to really do for audiences. That's one thing.

The second thing is get your calendar online. Our basic free service provides a basic profile and a basic calendar. So get your calendar in there and start that process of making sure it's easy to find you. By putting your calendar and your profile online with us, you're going to get greater exposure. Then do those things on your own website as well. If you have a website, it's probably going to cancel out the profile side of it, but put calendars on your website too. Those are two things that if you came back in a year, I would make sure to say, "Hey, look, where are you at on your profile? Do you have a calendar online?" And, of course, the basic profile does a great job, but the upgraded profile just sells you so much more, with video and testimonials and stuff. That would be the next encouragement, to at some point find a way to upgrade your profile so that you can help market yourself even better.

JB: Awesome. Joe Heaps with espeakers.com, thanks so much for your time. This has been fantastic information.

JH: Yup, thanks for having me, John.