

Publish or Die? The product problem...

Bob 'Idea Man' Hooy

I have been in the field of professional speaking, coaching, and training for close to 21 years now. 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 addition to our business and our audiences.

I would like to offer a few ideas on my experiences, challenges and challenges overcome in this area. There are three areas to cover: **The concept, the creation, and the completion of the sale of our product.**

This section was originally an article primarily focused on ideas nudging my fellow professional trainers, facilitators, and keynote speakers. However, it has **direct relevance for any professional seeking to add or enhance their value to potential clients.**

This concept works well in the development of training tools to assist or equip your team and organization to succeed. **But first you must ask:**

- **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. They work for non-profit organizations as well as governmental and corporate ventures.

Let me ask you: **Why would you want to have a publication or product available?** Here were some of my answers when I asked myself that question. Perhaps they will offer some hints in your own quest.

DO:

- I believe in my topic and want to help reinforce my sessions with helpful take-home-tools?
- I want to build another stream of income to augment my speaking and training (or business) income?
- I want to establish and expand my credibility as an expert in my areas of study? This applies in many arenas.
- I want to have something that will provide cash flow at my non-paid presentations?
- 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 can be enhanced in any business when you are 'in print'!

- I want to sharpen my thinking, focus my efforts, and deepen my expertise?
- 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 my CAPS colleague, Harold Taylor, CSP 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 some 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
- E-books and publications
- Pocket Wisdom books
- Books and anthologies (co-authored with others)
- Special reports and monographs (sometimes called mini-books – I've done a whole series)
- Resource guides
- Motivational posters and buttons
- Collections of articles – in book or e-Book format
- Sales, speech, time, and management planners or tools
- Audio tapes and tape albums
- Video tapes
- CD-ROM audios and training programs
- DVD videos and training programs
- Paid subscription newsletters or e-zines
- Software and apps
- Co-op product with other speakers and business providers
- Others?

Some of these ideas are tools in any business arena! Where can you create these to help yourself?

Check out these ideas to kick-start your back of room and passive income sales.

- If you ask you might get a free video shoot. My close friend and fellow past CAPS-Vancouver President Greg Gerrie spoke for a special fee a few years ago and received a full professional video recording of the event.
- Starting in 2006, while doing work for a large Canadian Retailer I was able to access their studio and crew to produce a series of short videos, which I was then able to use for other purposes.
- Invest in a small digital tape and/or video recorder and record all your presentations. At the very least, you can capture video clips for YouTube and your website.
- Put together a collection of some of your motivational sayings and other quotes. (*E.g. Sell a series of 12 done on parchment.*) We did that with our Secret Selling Tips series.
- Take your handouts or **'learning guides'** and turn them into monographs, pamphlets, manuals, or workbooks. That is how I got launched in writing and publishing.

Early in my speaking and training career, I did some work for a local Vancouver, BC college. They offered to 'print' my manual and **'pay me \$15 for each student'** for the privilege. **Wow!**

This printing fee motivated me to get off my butt and start converting my **'free'** handouts into licensable work and to produce workbooks and manuals that I continue to sell. Remember the folks who used to ask me if I had a book; well now I did and they started buying them.

My friend and 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.

A speaker friend from Calgary, Alice Wheaton has recently taken her course material on cold calling, broken it down into smaller pieces and is developing a series of smaller booklets. Very similar idea to my mini-book series.

Flesh out your product line by referencing other books (*especially fellow CAPS/NSA/GSF 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 products, but I'm not comfortable selling for the platform. How can I entice my audiences to purchase these 'treasures'?

I still struggle with selling from the platform, but let me share these ten ideas I have found 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. For some reason authors who speak generate more credibility.

2. While presenting, subtly pick up a manual, book, or relevant product and quote or read **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 frequently give away at least one of my manuals or books 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 this self serve, honour system has worked well for me too.
6. Now that I have quite a few manuals, a Pocket Wisdom series, 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. **I include a listing of all of my current publications at the end of each one.** It is also available on line for information and ordering from my main web site. Visit www.ideaman.net We are working on an online store to cover print and e-copy publications as well: www.SuccessPublications.ca
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 and on-line! This can generate repeat business!
9. Have some product information listed on your evaluation form. The late, Dottie Walters, CSP taught me this one. You'd be surprised at how this can generate interest and post-presentation sales.
10. Mention your publications and products in your interviews, articles and other promotional materials such as speaker bio or by-lines. 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 manual. We're now exploring some long-term work together across North America.

Following 9-11, and again since the recent economic meltdown, I have been re-evaluating what I am doing in my speaking and training 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? It may be essential for you and your team to grow. Some of these ideas may be a nice fit to expand or enhance your business.

If I can do it, why can't you?

What kind of *product* can you design and deliver that will help your audiences, team members, or your organization?

Bob's Note: It is too easy for those around you, who are hopelessly mired in their own mediocrity, to criticize you for trying to follow your dream, write your great novel, become a more effective writer, or acting to implement your great idea.

Theodore Roosevelt, who was often criticized wrote, "...it is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. **The CREDIT belongs to the man (or woman) who is actually in the arena, who strives valiantly - who knows the great enthusiasm, the great devotion ... and spends himself (or herself) in a worthy cause.** Who at best, knows the triumph of high achievement; and at the worst, if he (or she) fails ... at least fails while daring greatly, so that his (or her) place shall never be with those cold and timid souls ... who know neither victory nor defeat."

"Remember, they don't build monuments to critics"

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