

THE SALES KICKOFF

SPEAKER SELECTION TOOLKIT

Everything you need to hire the right speaker, ask the right questions, and ensure your investment pays off.

Sales kickoff events can make or break the tone and momentum of the entire year. And yet, most organizations rush through this process, choosing based on reputation, name recognition, or an unfocused search through speaker bureau lists.

This toolkit is designed to help you take a more strategic approach — to clarify what you actually need, set a high bar, and confidently evaluate your options. Whether or not you choose to work with Matthew, this guide will ensure you're making a smart, informed decision.

SECTION 1: Before You Start Your Speaker Search

GET CLEAR ON YOUR GOALS BEFORE OPENING YOUR INBOX TO PITCHES.

Understanding Your Goals

- What are the primary objectives for your sales kickoff event?
- Are there specific themes or messages you want the keynote speaker to convey?
- What are the key takeaways you want attendees to leave with?

Knowing Your Audience

- Can you describe the typical attendee profile at your sales kickoff event?
- What are the common challenges your sales team faces that you would like the speaker to address?
- Are there recent achievements or changes within the team or company that the speaker should be aware of?

Logistics and Format

- Do you have a preference for a live speaker or would you consider a virtual presentation?
- What is the time allotment for the keynote address?
- Are there other events or speakers that the keynote should be aware of to complement or avoid redundancy in content?

Content and Engagement

- Do you prefer someone who can provide interactive sessions or workshops in addition to a keynote address?
- How important is it for the speaker to customize their content for your specific industry or company?
- Are there specific topics or areas you want to avoid?

Post-Event Engagement

- Are you looking for a speaker who can provide follow-up materials or sessions post-event?
- Is there a mechanism in place for measuring the impact of the keynote speech on the team's performance?
- How do you plan to incorporate the keynote's message into your team's strategy moving forward?

Budget and ROI

- What is the budget range for the keynote speaker?
- Are there specific metrics you'll use to measure the return on investment (ROI) for this speaker?
- Beyond the speaker's fee, what additional resources are you able to allocate for this event (e.g., travel accommodations, promotional materials, etc.)?

Your sales kickoff is a major investment of time, money, and opportunity. Taking a few minutes to work through these questions can help you avoid missteps, streamline your speaker search, and ensure you're setting your team up for measurable success.

SECTION 2: Tips for Hiring the Right Speaker

WHAT EXPERIENCED PLANNERS LOOK FOR —
AND WHAT MANY ORGANIZATIONS FORGET TO CONSIDER.

- Prioritize speakers with real-world sales experience, not just theory. You want someone who's faced the same challenges your team deals with daily, and can speak from lived expertise.
- Look for speakers who customize their content, such as addressing specific objections your sales team faces or sharing industry-specific best practices. Relevance drives retention; your salespeople will tune out anything that feels generic.
- Don't underestimate delivery. Yes, a great speaker shares powerful information; but they must also do so in a way that engages, energizes, and inspires real and lasting change. Look for someone who includes interactive elements in their presentation, offers opportunities for immediate practice of new skills, and provides training materials that the audience can refer to later.
- Choose someone who brings value to all levels of your team, not just the top performers. The goal is wide-scale impact, not a message that only clicks with your A-players.
- Ask about follow-through. A truly impactful speaker should support rollout and help you embed the strategies across your sales culture.
- Look for someone who can help you measure your event's success through post-event touchpoints and clear KPIs to track long-term ROI.

In short, focus on what actually works. Any self-respecting speaker can deliver a decent performance. The ones who make a real difference are those who understand your team, your goals, and the stakes of your event.

SECTION 3: Questions to Ask Speaker Candidates

THE QUESTIONS THAT SEPARATE THE PITCH-POLISHERS FROM THE TRULY PREPARED.

Experience and Expertise

- Have you worked as a sales trainer or keynote speaker for other companies in our industry?
- Can you share examples of real-world sales experience that shaped your approach?
- Have you led a sales team or organization before? How does that influence your work today?

Customization

- How would you tailor your keynote to match our kickoff goals and audience?
- Are you familiar with our industry's unique challenges? How would you address them in your talk?
- How do you make sure your message resonates with both senior reps and new hires?

Engagement and Impact

- How do you ensure your message sticks beyond the keynote?
- Do you use interactive elements or storytelling to engage the audience?
- Do you have testimonials from companies similar to ours?
- How do you adapt your strategies to fit different sales processes across organizations?

Sales Enablement and Growth

- What's your take on the role of enablement in sales success right now?
- Can you share examples of measurable results from previous events?
- How do you make sure your strategies can be integrated into our day-to-day sales processes?

Feedback and Ongoing Support

- Do you provide support after the event to help with rollout and implementation?
- How do you measure the effectiveness of your keynotes over time?
- What kind of feedback have you received from past sales kickoffs?

Relevance to Audiences

- How do you keep your message current with evolving trends and buyer behavior?
- How do you make your content relevant to a diverse, mixed-experience sales team?
- What makes you different from other speakers in this space?

The way a speaker answers these questions will tell you a lot. Are they prepared? Do they understand your business? Are they thinking about what happens after the keynote? Pay close attention to what they say (and what they don't).

FINAL TIP: TAKE YOUR TIME

No need to rush the decision. A little extra thought on the front end can save you from a keynote that misses the mark – or worse, a kickoff that falls flat. Take the time to get clear on what your team really needs, and choose a speaker who's thinking beyond the stage.

If you have questions, want to talk through ideas, or just want a sounding board as you plan your event, Matthew's team is happy to connect. Schedule a call to see if he's a fit, or to get pointed in the right direction.

BOOK A CALL



About Matthew Pollard

Named Selling Power Magazine's Sales Kickoff Speaker of the Year, Matthew Pollard is an internationally recognized sales speaker and business strategist. He's worked with thousands of professionals, from fast-scaling startups to Fortune 500s, helping them drive performance, tell powerful stories, and sell with confidence. Learn more at matthewpollard.com