

SPECIAL REPORT



The 7 Biggest Mistakes Event Planners Make When Hiring Speakers And Entertainers... And How To Avoid Them!

by Lee Cornell

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“The 7 Biggest Mistakes Event Planners Make When Hiring Speakers And Entertainers... And How To Avoid Them!”

It is very, very, rare for a professional speaker or entertainer to write this kind of report. Many other entertainers, speakers, and entertainment agencies do NOT want you know this information. Please take the time to read it carefully. In fact, if you are - as I hope - very interested in making sure that your company's events are successful, then **I urge you to get comfortable, ask not to be disturbed, and STUDY this report - it IS that important! It reveals vital information that you NEED to know!**

Dear Friend,

It's shocking but true.

Every day, businesses hire entertainers and speakers that they should not be hiring. Speakers, entertainers, and entertainment agencies often lie about their qualifications, charge you a LOT more than they should, end up turning your important event into an embarrassment and put your reputation on the line by presenting sub-par performances.

Organizing a corporate event is a DIFFICULT and STRESSFUL job. There are so many details that must be attended to. But here is the undeniable truth:

THE OVERALL SUCCESS OF YOUR EVENT HINGES ON YOU HIRING THE RIGHT ENTERTAINER OR SPEAKER

I realize that you might not believe that right now but think about it for a minute. When was the last time you remembered the dinner you had at a corporate event? Did the centerpieces make the event memorable and successful? When was the last time you attended a corporate event when the band or the DJ made it successful?

Probably never.

The speaker or entertainer is the “key” to a successful event, but here's the problem:

Hire the wrong person and your event will be a flop. Hire someone who offends members of your audience and it is your reputation on the line. Overpay for an entertainer who delivers a sub-par performance and all eyes will be looking at you.

This report is going to give you the inside scoop on what some entertainers, speakers, and agencies do to unsuspecting event planners. You'll be armed with the knowledge you need so you won't be "taken" by these people.

In just a minute, I'm going to reveal what the 7 Biggest Mistakes are and how you can avoid them, but first let me answer a couple of questions that are probably on your mind:

Who Are You And Why Are You Revealing This Information?

My name is Lee Cornell. I'm a corporate and special event entertainer. For the past 30 years my unique show consisting of magic, ventriloquism, music, comedy and audience participation has helped event planners at companies including IBM, Purdue University, The United States Air Force, The Indiana Pharmacists Association, American Drug Stores and the Izaak Walton League make their events unforgettable, successful and fun.

I'm revealing information that the corporate entertainment industry doesn't want you to know for two main reasons:

REASON #1: If you end up hiring a lousy entertainer or speaker, this closes the field not only to me but other competent professionals. Odds are, if the person you hire stinks, you'll be very reluctant to hire a similar type of performer in the future.

REASON #2: I HATE to see bad performers rip people off and make event planners look bad. It puts a black eye on my profession.

Okay, now that you know who I am and why I'm doing this, let's talk about the *7 Biggest Mistakes Event Planners Make When Hiring Entertainers and Speakers...And How To Avoid Them!*

BIG MISTAKE #1: Assuming That Going Through An Entertainment Agency Or Speakers Bureau Is The Best Way To Go

Many event planners feel that they are better off hiring performers from a "reputable" agency or production house as opposed to hiring performers on their own.

While it is true that making one phone call to an agency and letting them do the work is a lot easier than doing it yourself, there is no assurance that you are going to get the performer or speaker that is the right fit for your event.

Dirty little secret #1 agencies don't want you to know:

Agencies have a list of performers and speakers in different price ranges. Their first concern is booking the highest priced performer so they'll get a nice fat commission. It's for this reason that they always ask you what your budget is.

If you tell them that you have a \$5,000 budget, they will look to book a speaker in that price range. This may not be the best person for your event, but because they can use up every dollar you have to spend, the agency books them.

Dirty little secret #2 agencies don't want you to know:

If you have a very substantial budget, an agency will almost always book way more performers than are necessary.

For example, I performed at a very small corporate event where an agency had booked two magicians, a caricature artist, a juggler, and a D.J. This was OVERKILL to the maximum. The agency didn't care about what was best for the client, they only cared about spending every dime that company had available.

Dirty little secret #3 agencies don't want you to know:

This is going to blow you away and maybe even anger you. Did you know that many agencies mark up their talent by 100% to 300% or more?

That's right! If a performer normally charges \$2,500 for a show, an agency may charge you up to \$5,000 for the same performer! Are you getting a \$5,000 show? No! You're getting a \$2,500 performer but paying twice what you should!

The agency practice of charging you DOUBLE what you would have paid if you hired the performer on your own is quite common. In fact, in the best-selling training manual for entertainment agencies, "The Secret Agents Life", the author boasts about this practice and has charts to show agents the "obscene" amount of money they can make by doing this.

Of course, there are some agencies that do NOT do this. Instead, they require that their talent discount their fees to them so that they can charge their clients the same amount they would have paid if they hired the performer directly.

Three Ways To Avoid Being Scammed By Agencies

1. Try booking your entertainers and speakers directly. This isn't as difficult or time consuming as it sounds. In fact, you'll learn exactly how to do it in this report.

2. If you are going to book through an agency, do NOT tell them what your exact budget is. Give them a general price range and ask them to give you options within that range. (Example: “Well, Mr. Agent, I’m not exactly sure what our budget will be. Please send me information on entertainers within the \$2,500 to \$6,500 price range.”) This way you can decide which person is best for you (based on the guidelines in this report!) regardless of price.
3. Call up a number of the entertainers the agency recommends directly. Do NOT tell them that you have spoken to the agency. Ask them what they charge. If it is the same or very close to the fee the agent quoted you, you are dealing with a reputable agent and YOU SHOULD HIRE THE ENTERTAINER THROUGH THE AGENCY. Do NOT circumvent the agent and hire the performer directly. This isn’t fair to the agency. However, if you discover that the agent has grossly marked-up the entertainer, drop that agency like a bad habit!

Bottom Line: Remember that an agency’s first concern is about the amount of money they can make. Your needs come in a distant second. Take charge and be in control!

BIG MISTAKE #2: BASING YOUR DECISION PRIMARILY ON PRICE

Wow! This is a biggie.

Of course, price *is* a factor when hiring a performer. If you only have a \$1,000 budget, you’re not going to be able to hire Jeff Dunham or David Copperfield to come and entertain your group! However, many event planners place too much emphasis on price and not enough emphasis on the overall impact the entertainer or speaker will have on their event.

Is the highest priced performer always the best? Absolutely not! In fact, in a marketing course put out for entertainers, the author tells his readers to dramatically raise their fees because a lot of event planners equate the value of a performer by how much they charge. He says that it is all “perception”.

Well, it certainly won’t be just “perception” if you hire someone who charges you thousands of dollars for a show that is, in reality, only worth a few hundred dollars and they “bomb”!

On the other hand, hiring the least expensive entertainer is not always the best way to go either.

Magicians, motivational speakers, and other performers are perceived as a dime a dozen- a commodity- by many event planners, and because of this they try to find the lowest priced performer.

The fact is that each performer is unique and, like in any other profession, there are entertainers who are great, some who are good, some mediocre, and some who should never be allowed on stage!

You need to base your decision on the performer who will best fulfill your needs and help you to achieve your desired outcomes.

One way you can know whether an entertainer is going to meet your needs is by whether or not he or she asks you what your needs are and what outcomes you want to achieve with your event. When you call them, do they just tell you how great their show is without finding out what you want and need?

How would you feel if you went to a doctor because you weren't feeling well and the doctor instantly prescribed some medicine without first finding out what was wrong with you? It's the same with entertainers and speakers. They should find out what you want and need first and see if they have a program that can fulfill those needs.

BEWARE!

Many performers are so desperate for work that they will say anything to get hired. They will tell you that they do things that they don't, won't, or can't do. We'll be talking about how to spot these individuals and avoid them like the plague in just a few minutes.

Bottom line: Decide what your budget *range* is, check out a number of performers in that budget range, and choose the best person regardless of price. If your budget is so small that you cannot find an excellent performer, DO NOT HIRE ANYONE. It is far, far better to have no entertainer or speaker than it is to hire someone who is not good. Save your money and wait until you can afford someone who is outstanding.

BIG MISTAKE #3: BELIEVING TESTIMONIAL CLAIMS

Testimonials are of the utmost importance when hiring any entertainer/speaker. In fact, they are of paramount importance. If a performer does not have great testimonials, it means one of two things.

First, the performer is inexperienced and hasn't worked professionally long enough to get testimonials. Second, the performer isn't very good and can't *get* any testimonials from his customers. In either case, this is a performer you probably don't want to hire.

Yes, testimonials are critical. In fact, I have many that I use in my marketing. What people say about a performer is infinitely more important than what a performer says about him or herself.

The sad fact is that many entertainers and speakers make up their testimonials and totally lie about their credentials. In fact, in a best-selling video program for magicians a budding

entertainer asks the “expert” what to do if you don’t have any testimonials. The answer was, “Oh, just make them up. Do what ever it takes.” As disgusting as this sounds, it is unfortunately common practice.

Another scam that entertainers pull on unsuspecting event planners is to claim that they have performed for people and at places they never really have. For example, one entertainer, who will remain anonymous, claims on his website that he has performed on the Tonight Show and The Late Show. He then shows a picture of himself *outside* the Tonight Show Studio and one of him inside the Late Show studio. Please note that the hosts of the shows are nowhere to be seen!

Bottom Line: You should put a lot weight on performer’s testimonials when making your decision. Just make sure you are dealing with someone who is honest and ethical.

BIG MISTAKE #4: RELYING SOLELY ON A DEMO VIDEO

A performer’s testimonials are more important than their demo video, much more important. The problem with basing your decision solely on someone’s demo video is the fact that anyone can make themselves look good on video through editing and retake after retake.

Three quick, true stories that will graphically illustrate this point:

HORROR STORY # 1

I did a show for a major pharmacy association. The event planner told me the year before she had hired a comedy juggler. She said his demo video was great and that he did some amazing things on the video. But when he did his show live he, “Couldn’t do anything...Dropped everything on the floor...Was totally embarrassing.”

HORROR STORY # 2

A Fortune 500 company paid a fairly famous magician to perform strolling magic at the tune of \$50,000 for the evening. The president of the company saw this magician make himself float on television in front of a crowd of people on the street and asked him to make himself float for his group. “I can’t do that here,” the magician informed the very disgruntled client.

HORROR STORY #3:

A local teacher’s association hired a hypnotist based on the great demo video he sent them. In the words of the event planner, “It was a disaster. He literally couldn’t hypnotize anyone. People started leaving the event. Other’s starting talking amongst themselves. And the hypnotist started yelling at all of us.” Yikes!

So what should you look out for in a demo video? If the video is over-produced and too slick, beware. The performer may be trying to hide behind special effects. The video should give you a feel for what the performer does, how he interacts with the audience, and what the

audience response is. (The audience's response to the performer is in reality more important than what the performer actually does.) Ideally, the video should consist of clips from more than one show.

Bottom line: A demo video can be a useful tool in helping you decide whether a performer is right for you but it should only be one of the factors that contributes to your decision.

BIG MISTAKE #5 Booking Too Long Of A Presentation

Scheduling too long of a program is a mistake many event planners make. It's important to remember that it is not like people are going to a theatre or to the movies and want to see a two-hour program. In many cases, attendees will have been in meetings all day and will be tired.

Even if your event is "dinner only", your guests will have been sitting for at least 45 minutes before the show starts. If you add a cocktail hour, an awards presentation, and/or a speech from the company president, the length of the event increases dramatically.

Bottom line: The ideal length for the entertainment portion of your program is 35-minutes with a maximum of 45 minutes. This will keep your event moving along at a nice pace and keep everyone energized.

BIG MISTAKE #6: Not Getting 100% Reassurance That The Presentation Is Clean

This is so important, especially in today's day and age when people are offended by the least little thing. It is vital that you make sure that the performer's material is clean or trouble brews for you on the horizon.

I recently did a stage show for a company who had also hired a comedian. The comedian was hilarious and the audience loved him but then he let a few *very minor* swear words slip out. In fact, I didn't even catch them... but the wife of one of the company's big-wigs did. She stormed out of the program and dragged her husband with her. The executive shot an extremely upset look at the poor event planner.

The event planner came up to me afterwards and said, "Oh great, now I have to spend tomorrow smoothing all this out. That's just what I need." He had asked the comedian if his material was clean and the comedian told him that it was. It wasn't.

Bottom line: You need to not only ask whether the performer's material is clean, you have to *insist* and *emphasize* that it **MUST** be clean. If possible, get some type of proof, in the form of a testimonial letter that the material is clean.

BIG MISTAKE #7: Not Getting A Money Back Guarantee

In most cases, you can avoid falling prey to a bad speaker, entertainer, or entertainment agency by insisting that they give you a 100% money back guarantee if you are not satisfied with their presentation.

This is the ultimate test as to whether someone really believes in what they are offering or if they are just full of hot air. If a performer really believes in the quality of their program, they shouldn't hesitate to guarantee it.

Bottom line: Some performers may argue that people will take advantage of them if they offer a guarantee. This is a bunch of bunk. In the years that I have offered a guarantee and over many performances, no one has EVER requested their money back. In fact many organizations have me back multiple times.

If the performer you're considering for your event won't back up their presentation with a guarantee...WATCH OUT!

Well, there you have it. Obviously, if you're a seasoned event planner you may have already known some of the secrets revealed in this report. But I hope you found a few gems that you can use to ensure that your next event turns out exactly as you want it so you get the applause, accolades, and acknowledgement that you so richly deserve.

If I can help you or you want to contact me, please call **317-752-2651**.

Best,

Lee Cornell
Comedy Magician and Ventriloquist

P.S. For more details about my show go to **www.theleecornellshow.com**