



SIZZLE Reel That Sizzles



A booking agent has read your one sheet, and they like what they read. Now they want to see you in action. Your reel is your first opportunity to make a lasting impression on booking agents, event organizers, and that person in XYZ company that drew the short straw of choosing a speaker for the next company managers' meeting. Do you have a speaker reel that is a showcase for your expertise, personality, and ability to captivate an audience? Is it up to date? Does it sizzle? If not, here are some tips for crafting a reel that WOWS:

1. **The 10 second Rule.** You have 10 seconds to hook them with a strong opening. The first 10 seconds should feature you speaking not just images of you speaking edited to some up-tempo music. Use multiple clips to showcase your personality and what makes you unique as a speaker. Keep them short and engaging.
2. **Keep it concise.** Aim for a 2–3-minute demo reel – longer is not better. The viewer generally looks at the length video. More than 3 minutes they may move along. Even if they do decide to watch, Tip #1 will ensure they continue.
3. **Show and tell.** Introducing yourself and expertise is a good way to establish rapport. Consider inserting bridge clips to lead into clips. For example, If topic is about sales, use part of the next clip and then let the clip finish the thought. Or introduce it with a question.
4. **ABR. Always Be Recording.** Each time you speak, record it or if the host is recording it get a copy. Creating a video library helps you improve (game tape) and provides assets for your reel.
5. **The audience is all that matters.** Show your connection with an audience. Your reel should show how your act in front of an audience. How you interact with the audience. And finally, how they react to your presentation. Choose clips that make them laugh, think, or feel inspired. Include those special moments with the audience. Emotions add sizzle to your reel.
6. **Add B-roll footage.** B-roll scenes are used to liven up and underscore your reel. Intersperse audience shots laughing, listening intently, taking notes, clapping, or anything that underscores your presentation and delivery, **NEVER** include your PowerPoint slides. **NEVER** use stock audience video or sound effects.
7. **Use high-quality production values.** Your demo reel should reflect your professionalism, quality, and style.
 - a. **Recording:** Viewers may forgive bad video, but they will never forgive bad audio. When recording you should have a microphone connected to the camera. Do not expect the room audio to be enough. It never is.
 - b. **Editing:** The editing should be smooth, no flash frames of other videos or bad edits. Avoid using any special effects or flashy scene transitions. There should not be any clipped words or ends on odd inflection. And the sound level MUST be consistent throughout the reel. Avoid edits where it appears your head is snapping back and forth. That type of editing may work on social media, it's not a good style for a demo reel. Editing should be fast and tight. If you don't understand any of this terminology, that is okay, a professional editor will understand them and will be better prepared to meet your expectations.
 - c. **Existing Footage:** If you have recordings. Watch them from a booking agents' perspective. Choose segments that demonstrate the traits I mentioned earlier. Note which video (title) the time you want the segment to begin (in time) and include a phrase to identify the beginning of the clip (i.e. "I want to tell..."). Next, choose the ending noting the time (out time) and the phrase



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ending the clip (i.e. “and that’s it.”). Make a list noting the video file name, in time, phrase, and out time. If you choose to use a professional editor, this will save you time and money.

8. **Call me today!** Your closing message should be a personal summation and a request for them to contact. As you are speaking and until the end of the video, show a QR code, website, and/or phone number. Don’t assume they have your one sheet at their fingertips.

Here are some additional tips you should know.

- **Keep it current.** As you gain new experience and speaking engagements, be sure to update your demo reel accordingly.
- **Record each time you talk.** Don’t be concerned about the size of the venue or the type of audience. Any recording is better than none. (If you need to know how to record presentations using a phone, send an email to [phil@pwerhardt](mailto:phil@pwerhardt.com) for a free Video Production Resource).
- **Get permission before recording.** While it may be your material, remember it is their event, and you are their guest. If you are using a video production crew to record your presentation, share the event point of contact information with the video producer. This is so they can know more about the venue and if there are any special conditions the event contact may have. For example, they may permit recording your presentation but not allow any recording of the audience. Or they may want to know if you would need a platform so the camera can be above the audience. This is not the time to test the adage “It is better to ask forgiveness than ask for permission.”
- **Testimonials.** Record audience comments after your presentation. **PRODUCTION TIP:** Begin each recording by asking the person you are recording to say and spell their first and last name, company, and title. Having this information on the screen while the person is talking validates the testimonial and adds professionalism to the reel. Try to record them in a quiet location. Using your phone is great and if you can put it on a tripod, even better.

Follow these tips, you will have a demo reel that will captivate booking agents and land you the speaking gigs you deserve.

Now get that great demo out there! Share it on your website, social media channels, online speaker directories, and most importantly your agent.

Your demo reel is a valuable tool that will help you achieve your speaking goals. So, take the time to create a reel that you're proud of, and start getting those booking agents excited about you!