

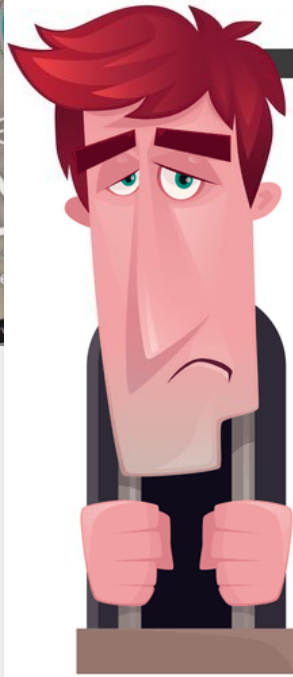


How to Stay Out of Speaker Theft Jail

By Kordell Norton
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BY KORDELL NORTON, CSP



WAS I GUILTY? HAD I COMMITTED THE ULTIMATE SPEAKERS' CRIME?

I had my chance to "give back" to the profession with a break-out presentation at the 2013 NSA Convention. As I stood shaking hands and distributing handouts to those entering the room, one veteran NSA member approached me and pointed to some words on my handout. He implied that perhaps I had stolen his material.

After a 30-year business career in sales and marketing, promoting names like IBM, Hewlett Packard, Apple, Microsoft with tens of millions of dollars in budget, did I claim someone else's material as my own?

I returned to my office racked with concern about doing the right thing. After some serious introspection and research, I drafted some rules for staying out of Speaker Theft Jail.

DON'T STEAL SOMEONE ELSE'S STORIES.

You will be found out. It makes you a fraud, and promotes the other person. (To my relief, I discovered that I did not steal the speaker's material.) Learn how to make your own stories applicable at the next NSA event.

DON'T STEAL SOMEONE ELSE'S STUFF.

Well-known taglines and phrases identified with other speakers are off limits. "See you at the top" belongs to Zig Ziglar, CPAE, and "Success comes in cans" belongs to Joel Weldon, CPAE. Or as Larry Winget, CPAE, said from the NSA main stage at the 2011 NSA Convention, "You can't use anything with 'Fred.'" It belongs to Mark Sanborn, CSP, CPAE, who wrote the best-selling book, *The Fred Factor*.

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COVER ANY SUSPICIOUS PATHS WITH POSSIBLE STAKE HOLDERS. Some years ago, I put together a sales course titled *Say Less . . . Sell More*. A year later, I learned that NSA member Connie Dieken, CSP, had a program titled *Talk Less, Say More*. I called her to explain that it looked like we may be carving out similar program names. She thanked me for the call and said she was good with the situation.

GIVE CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE.

It's easy to check origins of work on the Internet. Give credit where it is due. It protects the originator and makes you look more professional and knowledgeable. What the heck, double check. And when in doubt, leave it out.

CASE THE JOINT. CASE stands for *copy and steal everything*. Although you should not steal other speaker's stuff, you can—and should—steal great

ideas from your environment. When you see an interesting catalog in your mail box, ask, "Why does it grab my attention?" When you have a fabulous restaurant experience, think, "How could I adapt what they did to my speaking business?" How does Disney engage guests and how could you adapt those practices to your business? What about Apple, Five Guys Hamburgers, the Blue Man Group, and their great customer engagement events and messages?

There is no need to steal someone else's stuff. Build speaking around your own life experiences. Carry a notebook to capture day-to-day moments that may later become powerful nuggets when they are adapted for your audiences. The bon mot, "Do you have to use humor to be a professional speaker? . . . Only if you want to get paid," has a sister saying of "Tragedy plus time equals humor." What happened to you

today, you can use tomorrow.

You also can start or join a mastermind group to connect with other speakers and try out your new material. I know of one such group that follows this rule: "When we share a personal story we want to build on, the other members share ideas on how to make it funnier and more engaging. Those ideas are a gift to you. The other mastermind members can't take credit for those ideas anymore."



Kordell Norton, CSP, is The Revenue Mechanic. He works with organizations who want marketing that connects, and want to prospect and get more sales at the executive level. Norton is past president of the Ohio Chapter and the author of five books. He can be reached at (440) 744-4864 or Kordell@KordellNorton.com.