

# How To Generate Standout Returns From Speaking at Industry Events



Discover **AccuScreen.com's** Secrets For Finding Great Opportunities, Delivering Successful Presentations and Maximizing Results



Many HR solution providers are reducing the number of conferences they participate in.

Not AccuScreen.com.

And here's the thing: exhibiting and sponsorships aren't part of the Florida-based background screening company's marketing.

Rather, CEO Kevin Connell focuses entirely on speaking, and he's generated such good results that he now gives 12-15 presentations each year.

Read on to discover Connell's secrets for making speaking an effective marketing strategy.

## Why Speak?

Once upon a time—the 1990s—AccuScreen exhibited at conferences. The results, however, were far from the stuff of fairy tales. The problem, Connell says, was the company was in a position of weakness, having to resort to giveaways and other tactics to entice people to pay booth visits that were often unproductive. When you combine that with the many associated costs (booth fee, travel, hotel, shipping, staffing, etc.), and AccuScreen not having the budget to go head-to-head in marketing with larger firms, Connell decided to go in a different direction.

He turned to seeking speaking opportunities. Not only were they much less expensive, but over time they have proved to generate far better results. In addition to generating immeasurable benefits such as brand visibility and thought leadership, speaking has produced measurable benefits in the form of leads. In fact, today, Connell's presentations are his best source of quality leads.

Why does speaking work for AccuScreen? Connell has a simple explanation. Instead of having to try to entice decision-makers to seek out the company's booth, he places himself in front of them. While he can't give a sales pitch, he gets the entirety of their attention for an extended period of time, empowering him to establish himself as an expert on background screening-related topics. Instead of being in a position of weakness, speaking, he says, puts him in a position of strength. And when people decide they want to pursue screening services, they know just whom to call!

## Finding Opportunities

Crucial to the success of any speaker is finding the right events to speak at. For Connell, that means he needs to be standing behind a podium speaking before people who make decisions about purchasing background screening—HR executives.

Connell's go-to resource for finding these events is HRmarketer software. The software's conference database includes hundreds of events in the HR marketplace and provides a wide variety of functionality and conference details, including expected number of attendees, types of attendees, topics covered and instructions on how to apply to be a speaker.

### HRMARKETER'S CONFERENCE DATABASE

HRmarketer's conference database is the most comprehensive and up-to-date listing of HR-related conferences and open speaking opportunities.

The software features a variety of highly valuable tools, and users can segment events by myriad categories, including subject and location.

*"HRmarketer does a great job of providing a capsule summary of everything I need to know as a speaker,"* AccuScreen.com CEO Kevin Connell says. *"It does all the legwork for me, which saves me a great deal of time."*

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## Finding Opportunities Continued

Connell uses the software to find speaking opportunities in two primary ways. First, he filters the continually updated database to discover conferences that make sense for him. Second, he takes advantage of the automatic email notifications that are sent when new speaking opportunities become available.

“HRmarketer does a great job of providing a capsule summary of everything I need to know as a speaker,” Connell says. “It does all the legwork for me, which saves me a great deal of time.”

He finds the email notifications particularly valuable given the importance of timing in securing speaking slots. Many conferences only accept proposals for a short time—as little as a few months or even a few weeks—so the alerts keep him from missing important deadlines.

“The concise email alerts I can select to have HRmarketer send me provide incredibly valuable information,” he says. “Usually I can tell within two to three seconds if an event is relevant to me or not.”

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## Creating Winning Speaking Applications

Once he decides to pursue an opportunity, Connell’s next step is creating and submitting the speaking application.

Key to getting accepted is having a standout proposal. Such a proposal addresses pain points the audience is facing, has a memorable title, and includes clear and useful takeaways.

But even great proposals often go unaccepted if they don’t include speaking experience and speaking references. In fact, Connell says that even if a proposal doesn’t ask for it, he makes sure to always include testimonials with his submissions.

“A third-party reference to your speaking ability is 100 times more valuable than you saying it,” he says.

### CONNELL’S TIPS FOR GETTING SPEAKING EXPERIENCE

If you have little or no speaking experience, how can you get started? Here are Connell’s tips.

1. Offer your speaking services to one of your best clients. Since it’s one of your clients, you’ll be comfortable speaking with them.
2. Take advantage of the small associations that are always looking for speakers. These can be small HR groups, but they can even be chambers of commerce or homeowners associations.
3. If your presentation goes well, ask for a testimonial!

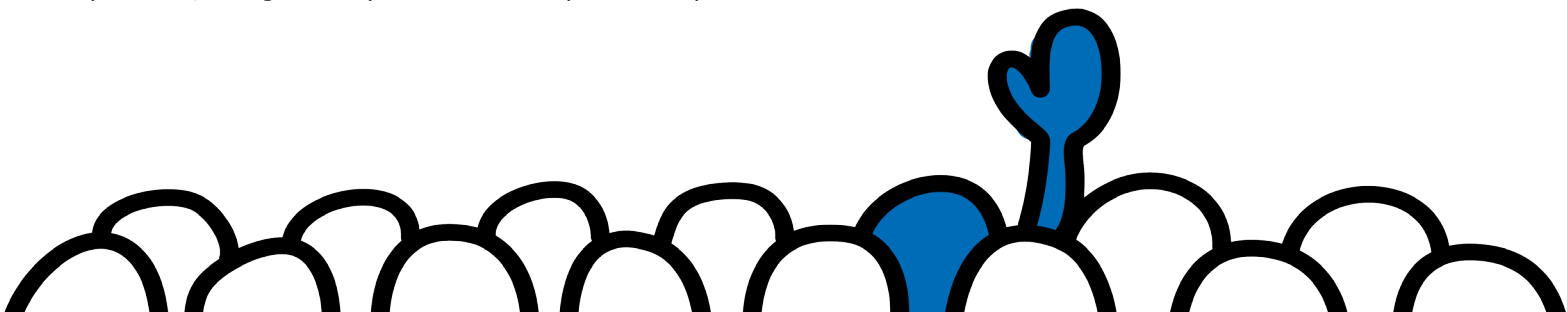
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## Standout Speaking

Once Connell is accepted as a speaker, he goes about promoting his appearance.

One way he does this is by leveraging social media. He tweets about the event, using relevant hashtags and Twitter IDs, and posts on the conference-hosting association’s LinkedIn group. He often includes a link to the event’s registration page, which builds goodwill with conference officials and helps encourage a good audience when he speaks.

But to truly differentiate himself from other speakers, Connell’s go-to tactic is to create a short video specific to the event at which he will be speaking. For example, the video might be him discussing the takeaways attendees will get from his presentation. He puts the video on YouTube and asks conference officials to post it on their website, noting that it is made solely for the event. The video works as a promo vehicle both for himself and for the conference. He says the great thing about creating these videos is doing so is relatively easy and fast, noting that they don’t have to be perfect and polished.



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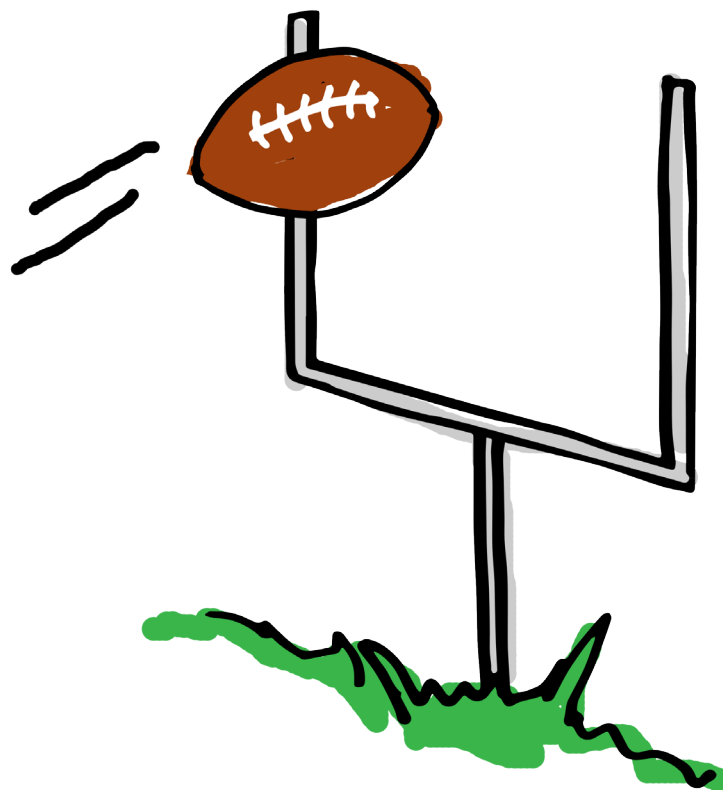
## Game Day—The Delivery

When it comes to the actual presentation, the goals are to demonstrate expertise and to provide value, not sell. In Connell's case, he tries to be educational and to be objective, above all. In fact, he generally mentions the AccuScreen brand only once or twice, as attendees are well aware of the company a speaker represents. And during his presentations Connell is even known to explain why some companies may not want to do background screening.

The reason for this strategy is decision-makers are more willing to be interested in finding out more about you if you provide useful information, he says.

In addition to providing a highly valuable presentation, he tries to make the value extend beyond just the presentation—both for attendees and for AccuScreen. He offers attendees a next step, such as a link they can visit to download his presentation slides. Or, alternatively, he might ask for their business card to get a copy of the slides. In the process, of course, they also become leads.

Another way to extend the value of a presentation for Connell is to record it, as he can snip it into short videos he can use in his marketing. Importantly, he gets permission from conference organizers first. He says he asks for permission well ahead of time, with the assurance that he will be the only person being taped or recorded.



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## After the Show

After the presentation, it's time for follow-up. This includes connecting on LinkedIn with people who provided business cards, as well as using a CRM to auto-respond to them and calling them on the phone.

Connell says using a variety of communication vehicles is essential. He says a lot of companies live and die by email alone, but many people prefer to be reached by other means.

Also of great importance, he says, is working to continue the interest of the leads generated at the conference. Providing free content, especially content that you sometimes charge for, is a great way to generate goodwill and pave the way for future business, he says.

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## Measuring ROI

For those who doubt the ROI on speaking, Connell responds, "They probably work for a company that doesn't have someone who can speak well."

In fact, he argues that speaking provides tremendous bang for his buck. For the same investment he would make exhibiting at just one conference, he can create a speaking strategy for the year that generates more engagement with decision-makers, as well as builds thought leadership that continues to pay dividends year after year.

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## Measuring ROI Continued

In addition to generating a strong supply of high-quality leads, the benefits Connell has seen from speaking include:

Speaking creates other speaking opportunities. As he has developed his thought leadership, he is asked by conferences or organizations to speak.

He's become a media source as a result of being considered an expert on background screening. He's been invited to New York, for example, to be interviewed on ABC News.

He's used TV interviews to create a video arrangement that gives conferences and attendees an introduction to him before he speaks—which reinforces his credibility and separates him from others in his field.

Ultimately, he says, everything works together and everything ties to together into his marketing. And most of it, he notes, requires little or no investment other than his time.

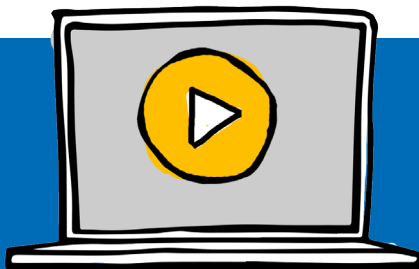
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## Speaking Lessons "To Go"

Clearly, Connell is a strong advocate of using speaking as a marketing tool. And during his years as a speaker he's come to some strong conclusions about the "right" events to pursue as a speaker.

1. Small- or mid-size events to be especially effective, as they generally are more laid back and provide him more time to speak individually with decision-makers. The problem with larger events, he says, is many attendees are distracted because they see them as vacations, and when people are distracted, it's not the best setting for getting business done.
2. The right event one year is not the right event the next year. In other words, it's important to vary events from year to year. "Speaking at the same events every year means you speak more or less to the same people," Connell says.

For Connell, these conclusions hammer home the importance of having a great resource for finding a variety of events that have speaking opportunities—year after year. For Connell, that great resource has been—and continues to be—HRmarketer.



**Do you want to see the powerful tools AccuScreen uses for its marketing success? Take a look at HRmarketer in action with a [live demo](#).**

### About AccuScreen.com

Established 20 years ago in 1994, AccuScreen.com has been an industry pioneer and leader in employment background screening, specializing in criminal background checks. Its reports are delivered to companies across the world accurate and quickly with turnaround times from instantly to 72 hours.

### About HRmarketer

For more than a decade, HRmarketer has helped companies improve their visibility and brand recognition. Developed exclusively for the human resource and employee benefits marketplace, HRmarketer software provides real-time data, rich industry insights and brand visibility tools to drive your marketing and media relations campaigns. HRmarketer software improves your vision of the HR marketplace so you can improve your brand's visibility.

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