

All I Want Out of Life Is An Unfair Advantage

By Michael Aun, CSP, CPAE Speaker Hall of Fame

Web: <http://www.aunline.com>

Toll Free: 1-(800)-356-0567

One of my favorite expressions is "all I want out of life is an unfair advantage!" The National Speakers Association gives its members a clear advantage when it comes to marketing our speaking, consulting services and products.

Case in point: Last year, my friend Jeff Slutsky called to let me know that Dearborn Publishing wanted him to write a book on speaking. He said that he knew there were plenty of good books out on that subject already, and in order for this one to be successful it needed a special hook. Slutsky thought, for example, that if the book was officially associated with a group such as Toastmasters it would have an "unfair advantage" in the marketplace.

Slutsky knew nothing about Toastmasters, but his salesperson, Ron Specht, was aware that I had won Toastmasters' World Championship of Public Speaking in 1978. Because of my intimate involvement with Toastmasters over the years, I know the staff very well and maintain close relationships with many of its members.

So Slutsky calls and tells me his idea for the book. He wants to know if I could bring Toastmasters International into the project as well as co-write it. I am still very close to Toastmasters and have wanted to give something back for some time, so I jumped at the opportunity. I have written three self-published books. This would be my first book through a publisher who would take an active role in book distribution. It would be in bookstores and sold through direct response advertising and, possibly, book clubs. These are all distribution methods that were not used for my self-published books and certainly could not hurt my business.

However, I had a condition that has been a tremendous win-win-win marketing move for all of us. I wanted Toastmasters to get a portion of royalties and I wanted to promote membership in the organization as we marketed the book. The essence of any self-help organization

is continuing flow of membership into the group. Those two reasons became a backdrop to our efforts.

Terry McCann, the executive director of Toastmasters International, found the idea intriguing and agreed to license the use of the Toastmasters name. We are donating a portion of our advance as well as future royalties to the Ralph Smeadly Foundation, named in honor of the founder of Toastmasters.

Dearborn Publishing loves it because we now have more than just a passive involvement with an organization that is nearly 160,000 members strong in 55 countries around the world. More than 3 million people have gone through Toastmasters. Our goal is to make this an official part of the membership when you join the Toastmasters organization, which will give they book a tremendous shelf life.

Then late last year, Slutsky called me in a panic. His calendar was filling up with other commitments and projects and he was afraid he would not have time to write the book. So he offered to step out of the picture completely to give me solo authorship of the entire project. Slutsky had worked hard in helping to get the project off the ground, and provided the contacts with Dearborn and Jeff Herman as my literary agent. So I offered a compromise. I told him that I would write the original manuscript. Then, Slutsky would edit my work and add some of his own unique perspective as well.

Altogether, the project should take less than six months to complete and appear on the shelves sometimes in late 1996 or early 1997. The point here is that none of this would have happened if not for NSA. The National Speakers Association gave us the "unfair advantage" in completing this win-win-win deal.

There are countless opportunities that unfold in NSA. I recall how many people chuckled when Mark Victor Hansen, CSP, and Jack Canfield, CSP, floated an idea about a book called *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. They are the one who are chuckling now as they count their millions from product sales. The bulk of their ideas and stories are from fellow NSA members. The member gets exposure through the story and Hansen and Canfield sell tons of books. Win-win? You bet.

I contend that their project would not have happened if not for the networking process afforded each of us by NSA. Do you take advantage of it? If not, you are clearly surrendering the "unfair advantage" provided by your membership in the National Speakers Association.

What made these projects work was that the parties did not "take away" from the relationship. The next time you had someone a business card and make some innocuous statement like "let's work together," remember the prayer to St. Francis: "It is in giving that we receive.."

What do you bring to the party? The more you bring, the bigger the "unfair advantage."

CONTACT DATA:

MICHAEL A. AUN, FIC, LUTCF, CSP, CPAE Speaker Hall of Fame
2901 East Irlo Bronson Memorial Highway, The Aun Plaza, Suite D
Kissimmee, Florida 34744-5600

Phone: (407)-870-0030 <> Fax: (407)-870-2088

Toll Free: 1-(800)-356-0567 <> International: 1-(888)-356-0567

E-mail: aunline@mpinet.net

Web: <http://www.aunline.com> <http://www.aunlineinfo.com>

(bureau friendly)

<http://www.aunagency.com> (Michael A. Aun Agency)

880 WORDS