NSA's Professional Competencies

NSA is committed to helping its members achieve their highest levels of competence as professional speakers. To fulfill that commitment, the NSA Board of Directors has adopted Professional Competencies to be mastered by Association members. These competencies guide the selection of program topics for NSA's educational meetings and publications and form the core curriculum for NSA's Certified Speaking Professional (CSP) program.

In July of 2005, NSA's Professional Development Council recommended that NSA's eight competencies be re-formatted into four areas to make them easier to remember and manage. These four areas are: Expertise, Eloquence, Enterprise and Ethics. The PDC also recommended the addition of new sub-competencies to stay current with the times.

The NSA Board of Directors approved this re-arrangement to assist members as they work toward mastering each of these areas in their development as professional speakers.

NSA Past President Jim Cathcart, CSP, CPAE deserves special recognition for his initial work in creating the Professional Competencies and his continuous support of the professional development activities of NSA.

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Expertise—This competency refers to knowledge or skills in a particular area, with a particular emphasis on the application of this knowledge or these skills. It entails knowing the best topics for you, as well as researching and developing the content of your speaking presentations/performances. This competency area also includes techniques for staying on the cutting-edge of topic selection and development skills. The set of competencies for this area include:

- Selecting and developing topics
- Building topic expertise
- Staying on the cutting-edge of topic development
- Tailoring/customizing topics and presentation/performance content
- Developing products
- Developing writing skills
- Protecting intellectual property

Eloquence—This competency refers to the speaking skill or power of using persuasive and powerful expression. It embodies the knowledge and skills of presenting and performing in order to communicate with audiences. It also encompasses theatrical and stage techniques. Embodied in this competency are the elements involved in creating the setting for the presentation/performance. The set of competencies for this area include:

- Identifying and developing unique communication styles
- Mastering the craft of presenting/performing
- Creating the setting (e.g., introductions, room setup, proper staging, appropriate knowledge of and use of audio or visual equipment)
- Learning techniques to engage audiences
- Understanding and connecting with diverse audiences
- Acquiring the skills for different speaking roles (e.g., keynote speaker, workshop presenter, seminar leader, emcee, after-dinner speaker, panelist)

Enterprise—This competency refers to the skills needed in the purposeful or industrious undertaking of a speaking business venture. It involves running a business, sales and marketing knowledge, as well as skills and techniques to generate speaking engagements and income. The set of competencies for this area include:

- Organizing and operating a profitable speaking business (e.g., purchasing supplies, managing inventory, use and knowledge of office equipment and technology, cost control, maintaining financial records)
- Selecting and working with staff
- Developing a brand/image
- Managing financial aspects of the business
- Negotiating contracts, fees, and royalties
- Scheduling/tracking speaking engagements
- Planning business travel
- Developing effective sales strategies
- Developing productive marketing strategies
- Developing and successfully marketing products
- Designing brochures/promotional materials
- Developing profitable market penetration
- Developing relationships with bureaus, agents, and other distributor options/channels
- Developing productive sales and marketing contacts
- Learning about other associations in the meeting and convention industry
- Expanding one's speaking market (e.g., speaking internationally)
- Earning client loyalty and providing customer service

Ethics—This competency refers to the rules or standards governing the conduct of a person or the members of the speaking profession. This competency provides an overview of the National Speakers Association, the speaking industry, and related professional associations. It relates to the knowledge and skills needed to behave ethically with individuals and groups with whom speakers often interact. It helps speakers and their staffs deal professionally and ethically with several types of industry associates, other speakers, those who hire speakers, and those who support speakers with products and services. The set of competencies for this area include:

- Becoming knowledgeable about the National Speakers Association
- Adhering to the NSA Code of Professional Ethics
- Staying current on what is state-of-the-art in professional speaking
- Working with other speakers
- Working with agents, bureaus, and other distributor options/channels
- Working with program/meeting planners
- Working with professionals serving speakers
- Interacting with the media