

# Be An Expert

## *By Will Turner*

There are many characteristics that differentiate average or even good speakers from great ones. One of those characteristics is that great speakers learn the value of becoming experts in their fields. So what makes someone an expert and why should you care to be one?

Let's start with why you should want to become an expert? The simple answer is that experts are sought out. That means they can choose who to work with, they can eliminate their competition and they can charge what they want. In other words, being an expert gives you the freedom to do the work that you love (assuming that you build expertise in an area that you have passion) and according to your terms.

We all know of highly regarded experts in different fields. They're admired and respected. Their counsel and advice is requested and valued. Think of the last industry conference you attended. Who was the keynote speaker? Chances are you had an industry expert sharing valuable insights. After the speech, audience members probably flocked to the front of the room to talk with the speaker. Why? Because the speaker was perceived as an expert. Expertise enhances your credibility and attracts others to you.

So now for the \$64,000 question; how do you become an expert? To answer this question, it's important to first note that expertise goes beyond competence. Most people that have any experience in a particular field have some level of competence. Experts have a depth of understanding that goes beyond content information and overall knowledge.

A special committee of the National Speakers Association tackled the question of what makes an expert an expert in a well-researched White Paper. The White Paper, *The Expertise Imperative*, outlines different dimensions of expertise. A few of these include:

***A perceived authority*** – An expert can relate the topic to real needs and answer questions extemporaneously. In addition, an expert's opinion is cited with esteem and respect.

***A contributor in the field*** – An expert publishes periodic literature and contributes original ideas that are recognized positively by others.

***Longevity in field*** – To be an expert, you need to be in the forefront of your field for a number of years.

If you're not an expert yet, here are some specific things you can do to continue your journey:

- Make sure that you are in a field that you want to stay in for 10 years or longer.
- Join professional associations in your field and become involved at the local, regional and national level.
- Attend professional development seminars/workshops in your field.
- Seek the counsel of other experts for advice on ongoing development.
- Read publications and journals related to your field.
- Read at least six books in your field per year.
- Write articles in your field.
- Be a mentor in your field.
- Find opportunities to engage others in discussions about pertinent topics (forums, mastermind groups, debates, panels, etc.)
- Contribute ideas of original thought in your field.

You won't become an expert overnight. It's going to take hard work. But with the right focus, effort and discipline, you can rise to the true elite of your profession.

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