

## **James Taylor**

Hi, it's James Taylor, founder of [SpeakersU](https://speakersu.com). Today's episode was first aired as part of International Speakers Summit the world's largest online event for professional speakers. And if you'd like to access the full video version, as well as in depth sessions with over 150 top speakers, then I've got a very special offer for you. Just go to [InternationalSpeakersSummit.com](https://InternationalSpeakersSummit.com), where you'll be able to register for a free pass for the summit. Yep, that's right 150 of the world's top speakers sharing their insights, strategies and tactics on how to launch grow and build a successful speaking business. So just go to [InternationalSpeakersSummit.com](https://InternationalSpeakersSummit.com) but not before you listen to today's episode.

Hey, there's James Taylor, and I'm delighted today to be joined by Tom Abbott. Tom Abbott is an author and speaker on sales optimization. He has delivered hundreds of motivational sales, keynotes, kickoffs, presentations, and workshops to audiences over 10,000 people in over 10 countries throughout Asia Pacific UAE, and North America. And as an authority in evolving the sales processes of organizations worldwide. Tom is the author of the Soho solution 21 selling strategies for growing your small business, and social selling 10 essential strategies to prospect position, and present. So using social media. Tom is also the president of Asia, professional speakers, Singapore, and he is an amazing guy, and I'm so delighted to have him on the summit today. So welcome, Tom.

## **Tom Abbott**

Hey, James, good to be here, man.

## **James Taylor**

So share with everyone what's going on in your world just now what projects currently have your focus?

## **Tom Abbott**

Wow. Well, most of my business is spent in one of two ways. And then we've added a third recently, which is very exciting. So companies engaged me around Asia Pacific, and the Middle East, all over the world, actually, to speak on motivation and sales motivation. So I do a lot of work doing keynotes. We're also very busy with sales training. So companies would engage me to come in and deliver either a one or two or three day sales training program covering any one or several of the stages in the funnel or sales pipeline, which is what we're going to be talking about here today. And then something new and exciting. We're just about to launch in a few short weeks time, our sales Academy, which is our online program, our E learning program, where we're taking everything that we deliver offline, online, so sales teams around the world can improve their sales skills, anywhere, any place anytime. Anyhow, we're super excited about this.

## **James Taylor**

And tell us I mean, how long is that process taken to get what you currently do in the training the live trainings into an online version and only course that you were really happy with? We're getting much How long did that process take for you?

## **Tom Abbott**

Oh, give or take about 20 years. So I'm half joking. But the you know, the exciting thing, James is this online program, this E learning platform is the culmination of the 20 years that I've been delivering sales training programs. And we just put it all together. So you know, you'll know how it is, you know, you you train, you speak for a number of years, and then you decide, okay, I'm now going to take what I've written, I've done and write a book, or you write a book and say now I'm going to train on this topic. So it's kind of a cat and mouse situation. So we've just taken everything that I've done in terms of the books that I've written, the workshops that I've delivered the keynotes that I've that I've that I've shared, and put it together in an online program. So I mean, it's been 20 years in the making, but it's really been about six months to a year from, you know, ideation to launch.

## **James Taylor**

Yeah. And now the fun stuff. Now the real fun starts because you get it out, and you can get tweaking and improving and you get feedback, and then looking at marketing channels, and sales channels are very exciting. So how did you get started in the world of professional speaking? Where did it begin for you?

## **Tom Abbott**

Well, that's a great question, James. I mean, for me, I think as many speakers out there listening right now, you know, I've always felt that I had a message that I needed to share. I always felt that there was a message I need to share. I felt like I knew something that I was passionate about something. And I just wanted the world to know and I wanted to help people. So I've got a background in sales. So I've been in business all my life. I've been in sales all my life. So I've always known what are the challenges of being a sales professional. So you know, for me, I always wanted to learn and improve, how can I be better as a sales professional, and that always that just kind of led me naturally to wanting to to train and to speak on that topic and to really help empower and motivate sales professionals around the world. So it's just kind of a calling for me, I guess.

## **James Taylor**

And in the early days of becoming a professional speaker, who were those early mentors or role models here?

## **Tom Abbott**

You know, I'll date myself a little bit here, maybe James, but for me, I remember being, you know, a young pup and, you know, listening to, you know, audio tapes, okay, I don't know if you guys will remember audio tapes, I don't know, you know, depending on who

## **James Taylor**

I'm with you, I'm an audio tape guy.

## **Tom Abbott**

depending on who's listening, and what Gen we got going on here, I used to get cassette tapes, and I would have these things from Nightingale Conant and, and, and take out these cassettes and put them in my in my tape player, my radio shack tape player, I'd be listening to Les Brown, I'd be listening to Robert G. Allen, multiple streams of income, I'd be listening to Tony Robbins, obviously, I mean, man, just the giants, the giants. Brian Tracy, I mean, you name it, just the giants of personal professional development. I mean, those were my early mentors, whether they knew

## **James Taylor**

it or not. So now you're speaking all over the world, in the training of the online course we are getting launched. And a big thing that a lot of speakers aspiring and professional speakers struggle with is the selling bit, many of them find the marketing but relatively comfortable, because it's like an extension of, you know, spreading their message that way. But the selling bit is challenging for many. So can you talk to us about First of all, what when we talk about selling a salesperson as it relates to speak of what is it? What is this? What is a sales process?

## **Tom Abbott**

Or that so that? That's a great question, James, because you're asking that question. And this is something that I feel like a lot of speakers, for some reason, they don't talk about it. It's not a sexy topic, what sexy is talking about, you know, what social media platform Are you on, you know, marketing, that that seems to be more comfortable for people than sales, oh, I don't do sales, I'm not a salesperson, well, if you're trying to influence people to take action, you're in sales. So when you run your own business, when you run your own speaking business, you are a salesperson, because you have no one else, especially when you're just starting out, there's no one there to sell on your behalf. So you have to sell. So the sales process, if we just kind of break it down, you have two parts in a business. One is lead generation. And then one is lead conversion. So lead generation would be typically, you know, marketing, and lead conversion would be that conversion, the sales. And a lot of us spend a lot of time on the marketing, which is lead generation, but now that you have a lead, what do you do with it? How do you nurture it? And how do you convert it?

## **James Taylor**

Because they're very, they're very different things going on there as well. I mean, a lot of people when they talk about, they can a bunch marketing and sales in together. Because obviously, you know, there's isn't there's a natural flow from those things when they feed feed into each other. But but they're different. They're not the same thing.

## **Tom Abbott**

Lead Generation and lead conversion, they're two very, very different functions. But at the end of the day, they're supposed to lead you down to the same end result. So I like to say that marketing gets people into your store. Sales has them leaving as a paying customer. So let's think about that for a minute. I've seen some great marketers, which basically stimulates interest and desire gets you excited, gets people to come into your shop to look around. But you need that conversion, you need someone to say, so what would you like to do? Now, let me tell you more about this. You know, what do you plan on using this for? How can it help you let me let me share more. So you need someone to actually close the sale, we can't just assume that you build it and they will come. You can't just assume that just because you have a great website. People were gonna buy.

## **James Taylor**

It reminds me and a lot of time when people talk about sales, you mentioned that the rate the status on a sales person, I don't I don't like the sales thing. And it often makes me think as someone that was spent a lot of time working it in place like Silicon Valley, there was I always sold there was like these different tribes. There was the tribe, the marketing tribe, like the cool kids, let's see, I'm gonna call them the cool kids. And so the cool kids were like, what was the what was the latest thing? What was the latest app? So they were all it was all about marketing, but they actually weren't doing any numbers don't do any selling. There wasn't any there was no money being made. It was just puff. It was just there was nothing there really were going into it. And then the other side, there was all the guys that were talking about buying the latest Lamborghini or the selling and it was and it was just very hard to kind of type of selling. And I never as you know, as a speaker as entrepreneur, I never felt comfortable either of those camps. They always just felt like neither of them had. So I think you know what You do. And I see a lot of the great speakers, you're in this, I mean, a third tribe almost. And I can a middle way of doing it. So you're using great marketing really, you know, in terms of from a branding positioning from, from looking at, there's lots of ways of creating that lead gen that you mentioned. But also you're selling in a very ethical, very natural way that feels a flow from your brand.

## **Tom Abbott**

Yeah, you know, James, I feel like anyone who doesn't feel comfortable selling, their interpretation of selling is trying to convince someone to do something that they don't want to

do. So if that's what you're trying to do, then I'm with you. I don't, I don't like selling either. So you really have to believe in yourself. I mean, as a speaker, you are the product. So you have to believe in yourself, do you believe that you positively impact your market? Your audience? If the answer is yes, then you got to trumpet that and let people know that you're the right choice. And the reasons why. And there's actually you know, sales is not just about personality, a lot of people think sales is about personality. Sales is really about process. And that's something that we'll probably talk about on this interview.

### **James Taylor**

So let's talk about the the kind of classic, like funnel like sales or sales process, or might you know, him call different things, you know, marketing, sales funnels or processes. You mentioned that the word you said that would read the stock, you said like interest, interest and attention, which can comes like the marketing world. what point does it do? What is stage unless even a typical keynote speaker? what point does it move from Do you feel from being the marketing sales side, in to now we're in very much in a sales process?

### **Tom Abbott**

Well, so if we use that metaphor that I shared, moments ago about marketing brings people into your store, and then sales has the leaving as a paying customer, then the minute you get someone is on your website, the minute someone's on your website, and they've inquired this, this is now moved from your marketing department, which is you, but it's moved from your marketing hat to your sales hat. So now, there's a sales function. So now your job is to now take that lead, take that inquiry, and now move them through the stages in your sales funnel, so that that becomes an engagement. So your number one job is how do you move from inquiry to engagement? So, you know, you've got some great interviews on here, James, which is awesome. And many speakers will talk about, even when they talk about sales, they're actually just talking about the marketing aspects of sales. Right? So they talk about how do you get leads? How do you get inquiries? Well, so I feel like that's covered. And that's really why I'm on here today. I feel like that's been done. What do you do? And how do you do it once you actually have that inquiry? What's next? So that's what sales is all about.

### **James Taylor**

So that stage like, I know, for me that in those, I always treat it like a, like a three act play with a prologue and epilogue. So the prologue is my research stage, is the act one is my stage of initial outreach, finding out turning someone from a contact into to a lead, you know, expose, and act to is getting them to do an active thing of actually the initial inquiry, you know, in some way, getting on the site doing doing things like that. And that point is that it feels me that switch starts to happen now to the, to the sales, the sales part. And so for me a lot of sales, it kind of feels like it starts at the disk, I caught a discovery call where I do a call with the the event planner, the organizer, CEO, just talking to them to find out whether there's a fit there or not. Right. And so I'm, I'm asking you a series of questions, I'm obviously taking a series of

questions around it as well. So that's for me, that's where I feel it starts to flip into the sales part for me, but I got it wrong. Should I be sales from an earlier point? Or is that right? And And if it is, at that stage, what should I be doing to ensure the success of taking assuming that they are the right type of customer? Taking that person to the point of actually selling them on my keynote or my talk?

### **Tom Abbott**

Yeah, so I think you're on the right track team. So I think for a lot of, you know, people on the call that are listening right now, they're going to be needing to think about their own sales process. And I think one of the biggest mistakes that speakers in particular make because they're great at speaking. But they struggle around the business side, sometimes the enterprise side of running a business run, it could be a great speaker, but you know, struggle with running a speaking business. So that's really what we're focusing on on here right now. So I think the biggest mistake speakers make They actually don't have, they don't have a sales process. Or if they do, it's not consistent. It's one thing to close deals and get bookings if if people are just basically throwing money at you, right, or they heard you speak, and they're like, you know, you're great, I'm going to recommend you to someone else. And then everything is easy, breezy, and you really didn't have to do anything. So sometimes you can close sales by accident, and feel like you're great at it. But how do you then reverse engineer that process, and make sure that it's something that can be replicated time and time again, to make sure that it's something that you could actually outsource that function to someone else, in your absence

### **James Taylor**

to scale is scalable in that way, it doesn't require just you because you can have the other person doing those natural calls.

### **Tom Abbott**

That's right. And you can either scale it and outsource it to another person. Or you can scale that in terms of using technology to automate some stages in that sales process for you. But the first key thing is you've got to document what are you doing now? What's working? And then how do we replicate that time and time again? So again, you know, so one of the biggest mistakes speakers make is that they don't have a system. Or it's an inconsistent system, or it's not that effective, and they haven't documented it. So one of the things that they need to do is to start thinking about, you know, zoom out big picture, well, what are the stages in a sales process? And for yourself as a speaker, what

### **James Taylor**

do you see as those those those classic stages? And what is the goal? What is the start of each of that stage? And then what is the goal at the end of it, so you know, that stage has been completed. And we're now on to the next stage?

## **Tom Abbott**

Yeah, so if I was listening to this, this interview right now, I'd have a pen and paper out. And I would just be drawing a funnel like this, I'd be drawing a funnel. Sometimes we call it a sales pipeline, sometimes you call it a funnel, basically, name. And I'll just be like very elementary, for those that are kind of new to sales are new to speaking or new to business. It's called a funnel, because it kind of looks like a funnel that you would use to pour oil when you're changing the oil in your car, right. So it basically takes stuff at the top and the funnels wide. And then it gets more narrow and thinner as you get towards the bottom, so that the oil goes where it needs to go. You're trying to get this prospect this lead to go where you want them to go. And where you want them to go is to say, James, you're booked for the 15th of July, right? Full fee engagement, that's where you're trying to get them to. And there are a few steps that you need to help them move through in order to get to that final one. So I'll just share with everyone here, just a few of the basic ones. All funnels are going to have their own little nuances, some subtleties of your industry, your business, your clientele, your market that you deal with, and your approach to sales. But essentially, everyone's going to have the same core group. So the first one at the top of the funnel, we would call that a new opportunity. appropriately named, you get an inquiry. Dear James, or or just, you know, to whom it may concern? Okay. That happens quite a bit, right? Dear sir. That's an you know that they're not looking for you. They're just putting the net out quite wide for anybody who speaks on your topic, even if they're that sophisticated to know that. That's your topic, but you'll get like a dear sir, to whom it may concern. Hello. You know, James, right. And the inquiry, so so that now is a new opportunity. And then within that opportunity, there are some tasks that you need to do in order to move that from a new opportunity to a working opportunity. Working opportunity. And there are predictably there are some tasks that you need to take, we can't just assume that the client is going to just do that right. Sometimes you're lucky and they do it for you. But you need to have that in mind that you need to accomplish those tasks and tick those boxes to move from working to closing. Closing not closed, closing stage.

## **James Taylor**

So the closed the closing that closing stage, the end goal is

## **Tom Abbott**

closed or to go too close.

## **James Taylor**

So we have a little bit of time like so something is missing a little bit so we have the new opportunity to talk with that inquiry comes in. Then moving into working opportunity then Moving to the closing stage of the closing stages. final goal with that would be the closed end. I, the agreement has been completed. Just taking us back up to the top Now, you mentioned some of

these tasks that need to be completed in that new opportunity to take someone from new opportunity into that next stage of working opportunity. What what are those tasks? Okay, so

### **Tom Abbott**

the first task is going to be initial reply. So, you know, look, as I say, this is going to seem super obvious. And yet how many people don't do this consistently. So the first task is the initial reply. So that inquiries come in. You now have to ask yourself, now, what do I do? When do I reply? How do I do that? Is it by phone or email? How quickly do it and what do I say in that reply? Right. So like, this is part of your process. So this is the initial reply. So I've seen some studies that have said that if you reply to an inquiry within four minutes, you increase your chance of closing that deal, you know, like tenfold? Okay. So I don't know whether that's true or not. But I've heard that but I'll tell you something, you don't think that if you reply promptly, you have a better chance of booking a meeting? Absolutely. You don't think you increase your chance of building rapport and establishing a strong relationship with that prospect? Absolutely. So I've seen some people I'll be quite honest with you. I remember I had an engagement. And I was talking about responsiveness and sales. And the sales director kind of chuckled. And I said, What's so funny? He said, You know what? Before we had this training today, I just got a call earlier this today, from one of the people that we reached out to inquiring about sales training, and they finally got back to me with the initial reply. And he just laughed and said, Dude, I'm in a workshop right now. Like, you missed the boat, man. So, I mean, you might just be shocked, that's baffling James, and how slow people can be to respond to people asking, I want to give you some money.

### **James Taylor**

And I guess as well as and this is moved for those speakers who are or trainers that they're doing that they've got, they're out there, they're traveling, they're doing different things. Sometimes doing that immediate response or a quick response is is more challenging, because you're in a place your days training, or two day training or whatever, and you're having to catch up. So that's when obviously things having having your assist, or maybe an assistant or a team or your virtual assistant around you is very useful. But that only really works if you actually have no written out your process. And I've put some things in place like this is the template or the basic template, you might you're going to use for that that initial reply.

### **Tom Abbott**

Exactly. So think about this chain. So whether you have staff or not, if you're using a CRM tool, like we use Infusionsoft, for example, if you're using a CRM tool, you can automate that. Yeah, so we have it automated, as soon as soon as someone goes on our website and fills out that form. As soon as someone submits that contact us form, they will immediately I think we do it either immediately or within five minutes, or I don't remember, but they will immediately get a reply from me, that's, you know, hey, thanks so much for contacting us about your engagement. You know, he's kind of a about your engagement. I just attached for your convenience, a



brochure that tells you more about our company and all the different programs that we have. It would be great for us to schedule a quick call to talk about your your event or your your session in greater detail. I've got some availability this week, what's the best day and time for us to chat?

### **James Taylor**

Yeah, it's that responsiveness and also because it just that, that that first interaction that they have with you is, is such a, it just says so much about you know, they're like all event planners, they're looking at risk mitigation. Are you gonna turn up? You know, are you gonna Yeah, am I gonna look good in front of my boss and my my members, my visit Association, so you're always doing that risk mitigate. I know, for us, you know, when one of our speaker pages, we have that inquiry form there is it's actually a it's a two step. So first step is, you know, basic basic name, email, phone number, maybe timezone, and then the next stage it goes through to at that point, they can immediately schedule a time on my, I use a thing called calendly. So I can immediately schedule a time on my schedule for an account, they just choose that. If they don't within the first within that they don't complete that second step. I think that we have a trigger that goes like 30 minutes afterwards, that sends them an email. Which says, Hey, thanks so much for signing up. We're going to be getting I'll be getting back to, you know, he is space similar to what you do as well. And also just looks to ask them, you know, give them another opportunity to schedule that time and for the call.

### **Tom Abbott**

Yeah, so that's, that's brilliant. And and for me, I wouldn't say whether you no one should or shouldn't, you know, ask for the call now or schedule the call now or wait, the only thing that will prove the effectiveness is what your response rate is to that right,

### **James Taylor**

exactly. And the great thing is you get when you use Infusionsoft, we use honorable, you can test Kenya as well. It's really interesting. You can see the stats, you can see the flow of Yes, okay, well, these people, we do an immediate call with these people, we put them into the calendly thing. And you can actually see which ones go and complete. And but you can only do that if you have a process and if you have the data there.

### **Tom Abbott**

Exactly. So I mean, I think any system is better than no system, at least have a system and be consistent with it and measure and track the results and then adjust as necessary. But that initial reply, look like you said, Man, we're so busy, we're traveling, we're in airports, we're on planes, even if you're a newbie, you're busy, and you're still trying to keep your head above water with all the different marketing things you're doing. You know, you end up having this, this challenge of like, Oh, I'm so busy. I've got you know, a few inquiries. How do I get back to them quickly? Well, you've got to get back to people quickly and at least try to get that first call, or that

first meeting. So that's always your goal is how do I get that first discovery call? How do I get that first meeting? How do I make sure that my brochure gets gets in front of them? So you know, you may even let's say, you know, some people on the call might say, Well, why don't you just get them to download your your brochure or your one sheet, you know, off your website right away. And that's a great idea, but you want to make sure that they do it. You want to make sure that they've done that that step so that when you talk to them, they're not just saying so what do you do? Right? Like everything you do has to advance the sale? Yeah, and and not be like, Oh, so tell me more about what you do. Look, bro, like, you should already have my brochure you've already been on my website, you've already seen my speaker demo video, what we should be talking about is, am I the right fit for this event? Exactly. And, and when are we going to lock this in? Exactly. That's

### **James Taylor**

what we're talking about here today, just sending into the one sheet thing is that that kind of goes goes back to the marketing thing again, but you're not the straight, you're not having the conversation about, you know, and this is I suppose this is this is a difference maybe in mindset is thinking not just you know, is, am I right for this particular client? But is this client right? For me? Because these are, these may be higher order problems or challenge and challenges to think about. But you're kind of until you start having those conversations, how can you possibly know, you know, if you know what that client's challenges are? Why the conferences, what the people are going to be attending, what they want the people at the conference to feel at the end of it, you can't have any of those?

### **Tom Abbott**

Yeah, so that'll come a little bit later. And this is great. So what we're kind of alluding to here, James is kind of qualifying and also disqualifying, right. So that would be next task. So your task number one is the initial reply, boom, you got to get back to people right away. You got to you got to touch them right away. So that's the first the first task. So the next task is the the qualifying. And in my sales training programs, I basically teach the three I call it the three A's of qualifying. It's what's the ask? So what's the client? Ask what are they really looking for? What are they asking for? So what's the ask? Can they afford it? As in? Can they afford me? Can they afford my fees? What's their budget? And who has the authority to make this decision? So I called the three A's. So, you know, on, you know, you need to be able to determine like, what exactly are they looking for? And when will this happen? Is there a confirmed date for this event? Or are they just kind of, you know, you know, putting the feelers out, just kind of updating their HR records, you know, like, who's out there? Because you need to know, you know, with how much energy and intensity and and urgency Do you need to really go after this opportunity? Is it a real opportunity, or is it just an inquiry, right, so what's going on here? So you need to find out what's the ask, are they thinking about doing something? Or do they have a date confirmed with delegates coming for sure. And all they're doing now is deciding on which speaker will

present. That's totally different from Well, we might have an internal meeting and we're just kind of playing around with the idea of having someone come in.

### **James Taylor**

So we still in the in the new opportunity stage at this point as well. We're still there. We haven't even gone The the working opportunity this point.

### **Tom Abbott**

So that's an important question and answer, James, because so many speakers, what happens is they get that inquiry. And the inquiry says, Please send a list of topics or an outline with a quote. And what do they do is they spend hours on some kind of proposal, and then email it off. And that's their initial reply. And then they never hear from that prospect again. Because either the price was wrong, or the deliverables what they offered was wrong. Like they were just guessing. Right. This is why I hate the word proposal. proposal implies, yeah, James, just propose a few ideas. And we'll see. Right? propose, why propose? We need to co create something, you need to tell me a little bit more about who you are? Who the audience is what you're looking for? why that's important to you? What have you tried before? what's worked? What hasn't worked? How will you know that this was the right solution for you? There's so many things that need to happen in the sales process the sales conversations before you even start talking about proposals. So in the in the in the new opportunity stage, initial reply, qualifying. So you got to ask some questions around their budget. You've got to ask some questions around? How will this decision be made? You've got to find nice ways of finding out are you the decision maker? Or are you just the gatekeeper?

### **James Taylor**

How do you how do you find that? Because often you'll, you'll have a conversation, maybe it'll say associations, I always find more difficult sometimes on this because there's there's committees and the kind of nebulous thing I'm kind of figuring out who's the real decision maker in this. So how do you go about knowing, you know, if you are having a conversation with a decision maker, or if this dismiss can be looped in at the right stage?

### **Tom Abbott**

Okay, so a good indication will be the title of the person who made the inquiry, right. So on our forum, we asked people to submit what their title is, number one. If they do great, you've got it. If they don't, then you know, when you do your initial inquiry, and they reply to you, it will likely be in their email signature anyway. Right? So, you know, if you're paying attention, you'll see the clues as to what is that person's role? If it's like an HR admin, staff person or something like that, you know, that they were just someone who was tasked with sourcing, or reaching out to speakers that are not the decision maker. So then why do we try to negotiate with that person? Why do we try to sell to that person? Why are we fighting so hard to try to get them to make a

decision when they can say no, but they can't say yes. Right? They can say, Oh, that's that, you know, we don't have the budget for that. But if you were to propose other solutions, or other options, they couldn't say yes. So why do we spend so much time trying to sell to people who can only say no, but can never say yes, so that's one of the bigger biggest speaker foe pause that they make is they're selling to the wrong person. So you need to find out is this person, a decision maker? In the association world, you know, it wouldn't be an admin person or someone, it would likely be someone in, you know, manager events, or the executive director or CEO of that nonprofit, or whatever. But you'd have a better indication as to who LinkedIn is a great tool to find out who really pulls the strings in an association or any organization, asking them, how will this decision be made? simple, yet powerful question. How will this decision be made? Oh, oh, we're gonna look at it. Great. Sorry, I'm a bit unclear. When you say we, who will look at it. Oh, there's a committee who's on that committee. It would be it would be great for me to have an opportunity to actually speak with the people on this committee. So I can hear from their mouth to my ears, what they're looking for, to make sure that everything is going to be in sync.

### **James Taylor**

So in this this new opportunity, where you're trying to maybe get get that person or get the decision makers on on the phone and have that, let's say initial discovery, just no discovery call. I'm, I'm interested, like, how do you so there's maybe there's an initial reply, and you're starting to kind of try and qualified to get that person for? How do you broach that because you want that person you want that discovery call? I'm guessing, having the decision maker on there. But if you're getting initially reached out by the admin person or the you know someone that's the further down the chain, how do you do that at such an early stage.

### **Tom Abbott**

So in my case, James, and for every speaker out there, you need to have Your framework, your methodology, your way of doing something, your best practices, right? So what does that mean? When I get an inquiry for sales training or or for a sales keynote? And they say, We need someone to come in and talk about sales? I go, Okay, great. So I don't act like this with customers. But I'm just saying between all of us, I go, Okay, great. So I've written two books on sales. I have a sales methodology that has about 25 different stages in the sales process. Yeah. So which one do you want me to talk about? Right. Like that's, I'm being a bit facetious. But that's basically what we're talking about here. Right. So what I do nicely is I say, Sure, I'm more than happy I can I certainly do. This is within my realm of expertise. That's what I do. What particular stage in the sales process? Is the team struggling with? Okay. Right. Do they need help with lead generation? Or lead conversion? Is it in in qualifying? Is it in scheduling appointments? Is it getting past gatekeepers reaching decision makers? Is it needs assessments? Is it demonstrating value? Is it answering objections? Is it closing either, you know, is it is it trial closes? or hard closes? Is it follow up with customers? Is it managing their pipeline? etc? etc, etc, etc? What I find 90% of the time, the person on the phone or email, cannot answer that question. Right? It's just they don't know, they don't know the answer to that

question. So they'll tell me Oh, I'm not quite sure. I said, Oh, of course, totally understandable. Who would know the answer? Oh, that would be the director of sales. Perfect. When can we all meet

### **James Taylor**

that century, because I've seen this happen a couple of times, where maybe it's not technically the Director of Sales is the person that's organizing the conference. And there's, there's, you know, there's this in charge of the event. And, and I saw this happen, I've seen someone recently, who got out bid, actually, so someone else came in, and they hired another speaker. Because off the top my head, it was, let's say, the fee that he put forward is 15,000. And this other speaker was like 60,000. And the person I know was, was trying to deal with the event organizer, and like, say, 15,000 event organizer was great, you're definitely within our budget. Now the other guy's like 60,000. And then in the end, the guy 60,000 got the job. And the reason that he got the job is because the sales director, I think it was actually took money from their own budget, because they were so convinced that this person and I think they'd obviously had a separate conversation person, I don't know what you did, or didn't have separate conversation. And I suppose I said, I said, What is it exactly this and it was so close. And the sales director said, I'm the VP of sales, and I'm willing to put the extra 40 k in or whatever the figure was, to get this, yeah, this additional person. And that would have never heard him and my friend felt really sore about it. But but he also recognized actually, there's a there's a learning point here.

### **Tom Abbott**

Well, there absolutely is. And look, at the end of the day there are there's there's the person who's organizing the event. And then there are key stakeholders in that event. So a good sales professional doesn't just sell to the person in front of them, but has a big picture view of the context of this event. Who's coming? You know, who, who has the biggest stake in the success of this event? Who's going to be in the audience? What do they need? Right? So, you know, people think, oh, we just need a speaker. But no, what do you what does your organization really need? Do they need to increase sales? Do they need to increase productivity? Do they need to increase resilience or whatever, but what, what needs to happen at this event, and who knows what needs to happen at this event? All right. So people approached me Because obviously, they need, you know, something around sales. So my number one job, James is to make sure that I have a conversation or at least get input from director of sales, VP sales, you know, sales, you know, whoever initiated this request or whoever has the biggest stake in the success of this event, so that their voice is heard. And to be quite frank, I mean, you know, a gatekeeper would not be doing a good job if they shielded me from That person. And they just said, Hey, boss, hey, DSM, here are three speakers and they're all about the same price range. And they all kind of talk on sales that is actually doing their boss and this event a huge disservice. huge disservice. So I remember there was one situation where I felt like, you know, my, my approach of saying, hey, great, when can we all meet? We need to talk, I need to hear from that person. Where do they want blah, blah, blah? This one guy wasn't having it wasn't

happening. He was like, No, no, you can just talk to me, it's okay. But I wasn't getting my questions answered. So my approach, James is, I figure, if I just deal with this guy, I've got about a one in three chance, or one in four chance of winning this deal. Because he's talking to a few other people. And if I can't get him to understand value, that I'm going to lose out to someone who's cheaper than I am. So I figured, hey, if my odds are one in three, or one in four, I'm gonna go around this guy. And I'm gonna find out who his bosses, and I'm talking to his boss. So I just found out who it was I connected directly with his boss on LinkedIn, I said, hey, I've been dealing with your guy, awesome guy. I can tell that you're all very busy. It's critical that you and I have a discussion about this event, to make sure that we include everything you need, and nothing that you don't need. And I say, when is a good time for us to talk? He replied to me right away, we're on the phone immediately. Boom, and I closed the deal. But

### **James Taylor**

that's that's also quite a high risk strategy, because I could have gone against you as well, with with the see the person that you were dealing with, initially, the event organizer, who could have felt that you've gone over there, I don't know which country this was this event was in as well. But no, in some some places. That's, you know, there's a seniority thing, there's, there's a whole journey, other direction going on there as well. So you obviously knew you basically, if you played you played the odds, you played the odds for the one and four.

### **Tom Abbott**

Well remember how I practice it, because I felt like I had a 25% chance of winning it, right. So I felt like I had a 75% chance of losing it anyway, okay. So that that's where sales comes in. And having the courage to say, look, the way I win deals, is when I speak to the right person, that is how I win deals. So if this person doesn't get it, I'll do the best that I can to still hold him in a very high esteem with his boss. Hey, been talking to John, he's great. I know, he's super busy. And you're traveling. And so it's been really hard for us to connect. So I thought I would just drop you a quick LinkedIn message and see if we can set something up, just you and me, right? You found a nice way to do it, that doesn't make him look bad. Right. But at the end of the day, you know, everybody has to know, what is their success strategy, what's going to work for them. And I just felt like, this is too big a deal. And I want this bad enough that I'm not leaving the fate of this engagement in the hands of this guy, that's not playing ball. And, you know, the results speak for themselves. So your number one job in the end the new opportunity to film a new opportunity. And, and this

### **James Taylor**

is, this is this is interesting, because, you know, and we could have gone through the other ones. And we've sat here with the new opportunity. Because it's, it is so much I mean, it's just so critical making these decisions and and all the little nuances within it. And I know you talk about Yeah, 20 other, there's can other stages in his sub stages as well. This is a huge area that you get you get into and Yeah, and I think it is something that's so, so misunderstood in that we are

in the business of speaking this is this is what we do this is how we earn our livelihoods. So you have to you know, you obviously develop your platform your master on the stage, but all these things here is kind of what takes it someone from just being a you know, you know, a good having a good speaking business to having a really great speaking race I'm so so glad that you can sharing all these little nuances here because they're so critical. So let just would like to kind of finish up the new opportunity thing and then we're going to have a offer for people because they're all these other stages and we're gonna speak about so your your qualifying you're making sure what is the goal that has to happen in order to move someone from that new opportunity to the working opportunity.

### **Tom Abbott**

You have moved from a new opportunity to a working opportunity the minute you have confirmation of Meeting with the decision maker. Okay. Boom, once you've locked that in once it's like, oh, yeah, James, great, I've set up a meeting with you and my managing director or whatever, or scheduled a con call, I'll send you the calendar invite. Once that has happened, you have now move this from a new opportunity to a working opportunity. Now this is meaty, it's real, something is gonna happen. You've qualified or disqualified it, right? You've right, so maybe, maybe they're just kind of, you know, fishing around and nothing's really going to happen. So maybe you say, Great, well, this isn't an opportunity, let's, let's drop this one, or put it in a nurture campaign, or we'll follow up with them later, they can get our email. But if you've moved it, if you've qualified it, and they Yes, they've got the budget. Yes, the event is going to happen. It's happening in Munich on the third of July. We're flying in 200 people, and we are going to firm up a speaker. It's between you and three other people. And I'll schedule a meeting with you and the managing director or the event organizer. This is now a working opportunity now.

### **James Taylor**

Yeah, let's get as we start to finish up here as well. What is in your speaker bag? What is in that bag that you carry with you to all your speaking engagements, you never leave the office or home without the what is in that bag?

### **Tom Abbott**

Oh my god. That's an awesome question. If I knew you were going to ask that I would actually bring it with me. I just did an engagement and I showed a fellow speaker buddy of mine, I have the coolest gadget bag. So it's a gadget bag. I opened it up. And inside, there's like Velcro and little things that hold everything together. So within that, I've got two chargers so that I never run out of power on my phone. So I've got two of those those USB bank charger, things are in there. I've got a VGA converter and HDMI converter, it's a two in one for plug in my MacBook Pro two, you know the projector that's in there, I got a couple of USB devices in there just for file sharing. I've got my new Logitech spotlight, which is a cool new thing. presenter I've got that in there. I've got two sets of headphones with mics in there always. One is for the apple seven phone with

the new thing. And then one is the usual like RCA thing. So I've got those in there. Every gadget you could possibly need I have in my gadget bag. I love

### **James Taylor**

it. And then what about we've talked about books a little bit earlier as well. But what if you could recommend just one book to everyone? It could be a book on speaking, it could be a book on onset sales and selling what would that book be?

### **Tom Abbott**

That's another great question. Okay, so I'm not going to do the usual thing, oh, you should get my book social selling or the Soho solution. It's a great book, which they both are great. But I'll tell you something, I learned a lot from million dollar consulting proposals from Alan Weiss good million dollar consulting proposals, I think it's called million dollar consulting or million dollar consulting proposals by Alan Weiss. That is a really, really great book to really help speakers get their mind around how do you sell a service? How do you package and position a service? And how do you come up with what he calls and I also borrow from that I share with people conceptual agreement. So before you even send a proposal, make sure that you have a conceptual agreement on conversations that you've had before or agreements that you had before, to make sure that you're both on the same page before you actually put all this time and effort into writing a proposal. That as I said, at the beginning of this interview, is basically you just pitching your services. Do they like it or not?

### **James Taylor**

That's kinda, that's an excellent book as long but it will have a link to that here, as well. What about any online resources or tools or apps that you find really useful for yourself as a speaker?

### **Tom Abbott**

apps and tools as a speaker? Well, I'll tell you, my favorite app that I use all the time is the Infusionsoft app. So as a sales guy I love I love CRM. I love any technology that helps make my life easier. That helps me sell. I'm all over it. So what's cool about Infusionsoft is they actually have an app. So it's not just the desktop, but also mobile. So when I'm on the go, I can not only update contact information in the CRM right away on my phone, I can apply tags immediately, and send people my brochure right away from my phone. I just love it. You're talking about responsiveness. That's how you can beat out on people just by being quick.

### **James Taylor**

And I think it's great and things like Infusionsoft, like the good CRM, they will have some kind of visual campaign builder that you mentioned. Your sales funnel, the sales process, you can basically map a lot of this stuff out as well. So when you're at that you can be put people into it. And there's a lot of automation that allows you to have it. So you have that. And it's just so



powerful. And so sometimes those things we, you think, okay, you'd like to have a team? it, I always think like the CRM, that's like having another, like at least one member of my team, the one that remembers everything at all.

**Tom Abbott**

Yeah, at least.

**James Taylor**

Okay, let's imagine final question for let's imagine if you woke up tomorrow morning and had to start from scratch. So you have all the tools, your trade, or the skills you've acquired and selling and speaking and training, but no one knows who you are, you know, no one, how would you restart? What would you do?

**Tom Abbott**

Wow. That's an awesome question. There's, there's a couple of layers to that question. One is about what I would do differently in terms of choices I've made, another has to do with the time period. So I started, I started in the speaking business 20 years ago, when Infusionsoft didn't exist, right. So there are certain things that I wish I had started earlier that I actually couldn't start earlier, because it didn't exist, if that makes any sense at all, James, right. But what I would do is I would form partnerships a lot sooner, I would reach out to people and build alliances, friendships, referral part owners just a lot sooner, I feel like this business more than most is kind of one of lone wolves, where we all kind of do our own thing. And we try to figure it out to the lumps and the bumps and the trials and errors on our own. And it's taken me admittedly, a really long time to say, Man, how much more can we do together? Like, yeah, how can we grow? And how do we build a bigger pie, not just fight over the same piece of the pie? But how do we build a bigger pie? How do we leverage what we're doing, even fellow people in sales speakers, to be able to say, we can work together on certain projects? So I mean, if I were to start over today, which is different? No, if I were to start it over today, I would. So two different lessons. If I, what I would change is I would build relationships a lot sooner and partnerships and alliances a lot sooner. Any advice for other speakers just getting started? I would get online, fast, get digital fast, use technology fast. Move away from I don't know, a lot of old school stuff. really look at, you know, things that we're doing with our online sales training program. Look at what James is doing right now, with this online. Virtual, but it's real, but you know, summit. Instead of trying to get 2000 people in a venue at one day in time, how can you still deliver insane value at the comfort when when people want and where they want it with replays and all this stuff. So if you haven't done it already, sign up for whatever past so you can get lifetime access so that you can enjoy this all the time. That is not I was gonna say the future, it's not the future, it's the present now. So anyone who wants to get going, look at how you consume things. If you're on this, now you're a consumer of this type of thing. So don't have old thinking have new forward thinking. That's what I would advise anybody.

## **James Taylor**

I mean, it's great events, obviously, like the summit, but also people doing things like apss in Singapore, or they join National Speakers Association or PSA. So you can kind of find you get the hear what other people have done, how other people, you know, doing it. But then you know, I always think that it's quite refreshing if you've got that chance to start again, because we're living in such an amazing time in history, that all these tools are available to us and, and so now it's a lot of the things I love about technology is now they're so good that they frankly disappear. They're not the thing. It's just about using your creativity, as using like things mentioned, like partnerships, relationships. So I think this is a powerful, powerful time for speakers. But I think if speakers can think of themselves not just as speakers, but in terms of the overall transformation that they want to make, which you mentioned like right, the star, you said you're you're brought in not just to speak, you're there to make transformation and it could be training books, online courses, if you widen out there. Yeah, yeah. We are an amazing Amazing, amazing point in history,

## **Tom Abbott**

there's never been a better time there has never been a better or easier time than now for people to get their message out there. Never before in history was it so easy to do this so we have the leverage on this.

## **James Taylor**

Well, Tom, thank you so much for coming on. We're gonna have we're gonna have that link to your own site. Thank you for coming on. And I know you do incredible work with with apss with Asia professional speakers in Singapore. And I look forward to catching up with you soon and getting more of your gems on selling.

## **Tom Abbott**

Awesome, cool. Thanks a lot, James. Pleasure to be here. And if anyone's got any questions, I'm happy to answer them just reach out to me. You can probably see the information below just find me online at SoCal selling, happy to help and all the best to each of you as you grow either start or grow your speaking businesses I know you can do it.

## **James Taylor**

Today's episode was sponsored by speakers you the online community for speakers and if you're serious about your speaking career then you can join us because you membership program. I'll speak as you members receive private one on one coaching with me hundreds of hours of training content access to a global community to help them launch and build a profitable business around their speaking message and expertise. So just head over to [SpeakersU.com](https://SpeakersU.com) to learn more.

