

# Building a two-sided market from scratch: connecting speakers to event planners at scale

A cold outreach subscription service that sent 1,000 personalized speaker introductions per month to event planners — built on a 40,000-contact proprietary list, complex automation workflows, and an interactive catalogue that generated 49,014 opens.

**40K+**

contacts built

**1,000**

itches/month per speaker

**100+**

monthly clicks/subscriber

**49,014**

catalogue opens

## The problem — two-sided and structural

### For speakers

Finding paid speaking gigs required being known before events were planned — but finding the right decision-makers was time-consuming and most events were non-paying. Speakers needed consistent visibility with the right people long before a booking decision was made.

### For event planners

Online speaker directories had hundreds of options with no way to filter for fit. Finding emerging speakers for breakout rooms or experienced voices for mainstages required either deep research or existing relationships — neither scalable.

## What was built

### Proprietary 40,000-contact list built from scratch

Researched and built a cold email database of 40,000+ contacts with job titles aligned to event planning — meeting planners, corporate executives, and event industry decision-makers. No purchased list. Built through structured research and targeting.

### Complex automated outreach workflows

Built multi-step automation workflows sending 250 emails per week per subscriber — hitting 1,000 personalized introductions per month while maintaining deliverability and engagement. Each workflow was calibrated and refined over time as list quality improved, growing monthly clicks from 20–25 to 60–100+ per subscriber within a year.

### Monthly lead delivery to subscribers

Every month, each speaker received an Excel report with the names, email addresses, and company details of every event planner who clicked through to their website — turning outreach activity into an actionable contact list for their own follow-up.

### Interactive speaker catalogue — solving the memory problem

Identified a second structural problem: event planners saw one speaker per email, then a different speaker the next week — with no way to remember who they'd seen when a booking need arose. Built an interactive multimedia digital catalogue embedded in every workflow, delivered once every 6–7 weeks with a 12-month lifespan. Planners could watch embedded video, click through to speaker websites, and email directly from the catalogue.

## The results

Catalogue 1 — opens

**7,566**

Catalogue 2 — opens

**49,014**

Monthly clicks per subscriber — year one vs. steady state

**20–25 clicks on launch → 60–100+ clicks within 12 months**

A 4x improvement in click performance driven by continuous workflow refinement, list quality improvement, and audience calibration — not by increasing send volume.

## The honest outcome

The system performed. Visibility was delivered. Leads were generated. But speakers reported they weren't converting introductions into booked gigs — and I couldn't continue selling a service that wasn't producing the outcome clients wanted, even when the marketing system itself was working.

The conversion from introduction to booking was a sales skill — not a marketing problem — and one that was outside the scope of what the subscription delivered. The system did its job. Closing was theirs to do.

## Final Thoughts

This project required building a two-sided market from zero — no existing list, no existing product, no playbook. It required list building, automation architecture, deliverability management, content production, audience segmentation, and a feedback loop that improved performance 4x over twelve months.

It also required the commercial judgment to identify when a product wasn't serving its customers well enough — and the integrity to stop selling it. That combination of systems thinking and honest commercial assessment is what I bring to every marketing program I build.