



THE PROFESSIONAL PROVOCATEUR!

Out-of-Towners Bring Value, Perspectives and Solutions

by Craig Harrison

We all need help from time to time in solving problems, shifting gears, getting out of our own way and embracing new perspectives. Whether you are leading an organization, managing a team or heading up a campaign, consider the value of utilizing an external "specialist" to stimulate new thinking and energize your environment.

Agent provocateurs entice or provoke for nefarious purposes. Outside specialists are positive provocateurs. They come in all types and flavors with the express intent of improving your situation.

Among them:

- Professional Speakers
- Consultants
- Storytellers
- Trainers
- Professional Organizers
- Humorists
- Facilitators
- Graphic Facilitators
- Magicians/Entertainers

Professional Speakers:
What they are and what they aren't
 Motivational Speakers are sometimes spoofed as snake oil salesmen, glorified

cheerleaders or that bizarre Saturday Night Live character Matt Foley, popularized by the late Chris Farley. (It's OK, we laughed at that character too!)

Yet professional speakers can be inspirational, motivational, educational or entertaining or combinations thereof. Depending on your needs, a professional speaker can do any number of things for your group, team or audience.

Industry Experience.

Often a company's employees know 'the company way' to the exclusion of alternative ways of doing things. Industry

speakers often bring years of relevant experience from competitors or even pioneers in the field. For employees used to hearing about the industry from their own experiences within their own company, the outside perspective is both eye- and mind-opening.

Outside perspectives

Too often companies are beset with group think. A motivational speaker brings his or her own perspective to a company, unencumbered by prevailing sentiment of a field or a prevailing corporate ethos. Their voice may be a breath of fresh air or sound a clarion. Either way their words are welcome and their perspective vital.

The Tough Message

At times the outsider can better deliver the tough message. One can come in, tell it like it is, rattle a few cages and then disappear. The internal speaker bears the baggage of resentment, repercussions or reprisals. Often listeners take the message personally when it is delivered by an insider, whose existing relationships can't help but cloud the message and how it is received.

Uniqueness

The best motivational speakers are one of a kind. Their unique blend of skills and experience ensures that their perspective is fresh and their presentation has impact. Consider the singing keynoter, gold medal Olympian or the speaker who skydives into your event.

Speakers specialize in one or several of hundreds of areas from sales to self-esteem, time management to technology, and cater to groups as diverse as non-profits, start-ups, educational markets or multinational corporations. Even within sales there are sub-specialties: selling to big clients, b-2-b sales, consultative sales, etc.

Consider hiring a speaker from the National Speakers Association: www.nsaspeaker.org. Their members are trained in ethical behavior, adept at partnering with clients and are steeped in service to best meet your needs.

External Trainers

For similar reasons, an outside Trainer will offer fresh perspectives, different material and a distinctive delivery style. They can reinforce existing training or introduce new material. They come in different genders, many ages, from various countries and with different

dialects. Find the trainer or trainers that are right for your group.

Source for trainers: American Society for Training and Development. (www.astd.org.)

Consultants

You probably already have experience utilizing consultants for limited or extended durations. There are consultants for whatever ails your organization or wherever you want to go. Conduct your due diligence beforehand for best results. The benefits that apply to outside speakers apply to consultants: they can say things others can't or won't, their voice is fresh and new and they bring years or even decades of savvy to bear upon your situation.

I recommend searching through the Institute for Management Consultants for best results. (www.imcusa.org/)

Facilitators

Have you noticed how employees behave better when an outsider is in charge? Utilizing a trained Facilitator from outside your organization can make a huge difference in resolving internal problems, launching new initiatives or easing mergers or reorganizations. External facilitators have no pre-conceived notions or pre-existing relationships with your participants.

I recommend hiring a facilitator from the International Association of Facilitators. (<http://www.iaf-world.org>.)

Visual Practitioners

Of special note are graphic facilitators, graphic recorders and visual practitioners who bring ideas and information to life through colorful, expressive graphic depictions of the concepts, processes and ideas shared in meetings. Their work is spectacular in its ability to stimulate creativity and create new and vibrant futures for participants.

Check out the International Forum of Visual Practitioners for resources. (<http://ifvp.org/>)

Storytellers

Not just for children, Storytelling brings the wisdom of the world to you. Storytellers come with stories from many cultures and pick just the right ones to help you look at problems from new perspectives and with wise eyes. When a story focuses on others we all can see our own situation better. Tellers are masterful at this!

Find a storyteller from the National Storytelling Network. (www.storynet.org.)

Magicians, Entertainers and Humorists

Magicians help audiences envision the impossible. Entertainers take us out of our routine and employ fun to dazzle us and stimulate new thinking. And Humorists take that which is serious, scary or challenging and help us reduce its specter through laughter.

Professional Organizers and Feng Shui Practitioners

Two other professional provocateurs to consider may not seem so obvious. Professional organizers do more than tell you where to put it. They address the underlying thought processes whereby you aren't deciding, acting or completing work, leading to disorganization. They are skilled at creating systems, identifying the best furniture and supplies and matching solutions to individuals. Best of all, they suspend judgment when working with you. There's no shame attached!

Select a professional organizer from the National Association of Professional Organizers. (www.Napo.net.)

Not unrelated to professional organizers, Feng Shui consultants are masters at freeing energy and improving one's work environment to yield better results. The art of placement is key to setting you up for success. Feng Shui experts help your environment work with you, giving you energy, calm and focus, which leads to increased productivity, health and happiness.

Contact the American Feng Shui Institute for more information or to find a local consultant. (www.amfengshui.com)

Both as one who provides speaking, training, coaching and consulting services to clients, and one who uses coaches, organizers and other professionals, I see firsthand the difference these professional provocateurs make. There's great value in hired guns to move your organization forward. Ready? Aim, Hire!

San Francisco Bay Area-based Professional speaker Craig Harrison founded Expressions of Excellence™ to provide sales and service solutions through speaking. For information on keynotes, training, coaching, curriculum for licensing and more, call (510) 547-0664 or email to: Craig@ExpressionsOfExcellence.com

