

Tips for Hosting Speakers And/Or Featured Guests

The following are aspects to keep in mind when hosting a speaker or bringing in a special guest.

You Set the Tone: As the chapter leader, it is up to you to set the tone for the speaker. When you have a mixture of viewpoints in a room, it is clear that not everyone will agree with what the speaker has to say or has said in the past. When you act gracious and applaud the group for engaging in civil discourse, they are more likely to do so. There is nothing wrong with asking tough questions, but it can be done politely and with respect. As leaders, we must be the ones to set the environment up for that, by reminding people that the purpose of the network is to allow people to share ideas with one another, not to assume we know all the answers.

Control Guests Acting Inappropriate or Obnoxious: If a guest gets out of line and is acting overtly rude to a featured guest (or any guest), it is up to the chapter organizers to calm them down, whether that means they ask them to leave or stopping their behavior. It is best to start out letting people know what you will do (and that your job is to facilitate the discussion and allow for a positive welcoming environment) if individuals are acting rude towards guests.

Who to Invite to Speak: Given there are a mixture of viewpoints (not all liberty-lovers agree on everything), it may be necessary to invite a small range of viewpoints that are not always 100% in sync (i.e. libertarian, Objectivist, Anarcho-Capitalist, etc.). However, our jobs as organizers are to bring our guests the most pertinent information possible, so be sure to find the best speakers who are the most engaging. Often times there aren't many libertarian educational groups and you may be the only one in town offering a different perspective. Lastly, consider your group's reputation. As unfair as it may seem, you will be judged by the speakers you bring in, so be sure to stay true to your mission at all times!

Potential speakers could include professors, liberty activists, authors, radio show hosts, leaders of free market groups or causes, newspaper columnists, candidates (see Do's and Don'ts to learn more about inviting candidates), etc.

Create a List of Potential Speakers: Have an idea of people you can invite way ahead of time. It's best to make up a list, and continually add to it, so you always have someone in mind for the next meet-up (if you choose to have a featured guest and/or a speaker each time).

Promote Your Speakers and/or Guests: Hosting speakers and/or featured guests is a great way to draw people out to your network. While you may be acquainted with the

“who’s who” in your area, many others are not and would love the chance to meet them and/or hear from them. If you have a featured guest and/or speaker coming out to your meet-up, be sure to market that.

How Long Should they Speak?: When it comes to the amount of time they speak to the group, it is always best to keep it short. This will keep guests interested instead of restless. It is also beneficial to add Q & A at the end if the speaker is up for it. This can either be included in the 10-20 minute talk, or if not, set for a few extra minutes after the talk. It is best to elaborate your guidelines before the guest speaks (and to let them know when you invite them) so they are aware of their timeframe, the guests know how long they will have for asking questions and no one is surprised when you wrap up the discussion.

Why Have a Featured Speaker or Guest?: It is not required that you host speakers at your happy hour events, and some networks are not equipped for it right off the bat. However, if you choose to have a featured speaker at your event, it can be a great way to provide an educational aspect to your chapter, build your attendance levels, and become better connected to leaders, academics and scholars in your community.