



The AI Speaker Sourcing Playbook

How to find the right speakers and ask them well.



Before you start

A strong line-up starts with knowing exactly who you want on stage, well before you open LinkedIn.

This playbook takes you from an agenda with empty slots to a short list of people who fit, each one asked with a message written for them. Four steps and four tools. You approve every message before it leaves.

What you need

- Your agenda, with the open slots marked
- What you offer a speaker: fee, travel, audience, recording. Decide this first.
- A Clay account, to find and enrich people
- Claude, to draft the messages
- HeyReach, connected to your own LinkedIn profile

What to expect

This is a small-volume playbook. You contact dozens of people, each for a reason you can name.

Speakers who reply, out of every 20 asked:

[needs number]

Hours to fill one open slot: **[needs number]**

Read this before you automate anything

LinkedIn does not allow automation tools. Its User Agreement prohibits third-party software that automates activity on the site, and HeyReach is that kind of software. LinkedIn can restrict or close an account that uses it. That risk lands on your own profile.

There are limits either way. LinkedIn caps the invitations an account can send each week. It does not publish the figure, and around 100 a week is the number usually reported. Connection notes are short: 300 characters at most, and fewer on some free accounts.

The safe version works too. At speaker volumes you can send every message in this guide by hand. Steps 1 to 3 stay the same.

The people you research have rights. Under GDPR you need a reason to hold their details. For speaker invitations that reason is usually legitimate interest. Page 6 explains what that asks of you.

The playbook on one page

Four steps and one review before anything is sent. The pages after this one take each step in turn.



Bonyfire

1

Identify your Ideal Speaker Personas



Claude

What to do

Write two to four Ideal Speaker Personas, or ISPs. One for each kind of slot you need to fill. Each ISP says what the talk is about, what kind of person gives it, how you will know they can hold a room and what rules someone out.

Tool and setup

A page in a document is enough. Claude helps you sharpen it and turns each persona into search filters.

Prompt

I run [event] for [audience, size, city, date]. These slots are open: [list]. Help me write an Ideal Speaker Persona for each slot. Ask me up to five questions first. Then write, per persona: Topic. Who: roles and seniority. Proof they can speak: what to look for. Why our audience cares. Disqualifiers. Search filters I can use in Clay: job titles, industries, locations and keywords.

What good looks like

Specific enough that two people on your team would pick the same names. "Founder or COO of a Greek food exporter with 20 to 200 staff, who has spoken on a stage in the last two years." Example

Common mistake

"Someone inspiring from tech." If you cannot type the persona into a search filter, it needs another pass.

2

Source and enrich in Clay



Clay

What to do

Build one Clay table per persona. Find the people who match, add proof that they speak, score the fit and keep the ones you would be glad to host.

Tool and setup

1. New table, then "Find people". Use the filters from your ISP: job titles, industry, location, company size, keywords.
2. Enrich each person from their LinkedIn profile: headline, summary, current role.
3. Add an AI column called "Speaking proof" with the first prompt below.
4. Add an AI column called "Fit" with the second prompt.
5. Filter to a fit of 7 or more with at least one talk found. Read every row that passes.

Speaking proof

Search the web for talks, panels, podcasts or articles by {{Full Name}}, {{Job Title}} at {{Company}}. Return up to three, each with title, year and link. If you find none, return "none found". Do not guess.

Fit

Score from 0 to 10 how well this person fits the persona below. Return the score and one sentence explaining it. Persona: [paste the ISP]

What good looks like

About 20 names per persona, each with a link to something they have said in public.

Common mistake

Enriching everyone before filtering. Each enrichment spends Clay credits. Filter on the free columns first. Leave email addresses out. This playbook does not need them.

3

Draft the messages with Claude



What to do

Write two messages per speaker. The first is a short connection note. The second goes out after they accept and makes the ask: the slot, the audience, the date and what you cover.

Tool and setup

Create a Claude project. Add your ISPs, a one-page description of the event and three messages you wrote yourself, so Claude can match your voice. Then run the prompt for each speaker. You can also run it as an AI column in Clay with a Claude model selected.

Prompt

Write two LinkedIn messages from me, [name], organiser of [event], to the speaker below. Message 1 is a connection note under 280 characters. Mention one specific thing they said in the talk linked below, and say I would like to ask them something about [event]. No pitch. Message 2 is sent after they accept and stays under 90 words. It gives the slot, who is in the audience and how many, the date and city, what we cover, and where I found their talk. It ends with one question: are you open to it? Plain words. One specific reference and no other flattery. No exclamation marks. Match my sample messages. Speaker: [row from Clay]. Their talk: [link and two-line summary]

What good looks like

A message you could not send to anyone else. Read every one, then fix it or bin it.

Common mistake

Praising a talk nobody on your team has watched. If the reference is wrong, the speaker knows by the second line. Watch ten minutes before you approve the message.

4

Reach out through LinkedIn with HeyReach



What to do

Send the approved messages in a short sequence: connection note, the ask once they accept, one follow-up, then stop. When someone replies, answer them yourself.

Tool and setup

1. Connect one LinkedIn account, your own. The invitation should come from the person who runs the event.
2. Bring the list in from Clay, through Clay's HeyReach integration or a CSV export. Map the two messages as custom fields.
3. Build the sequence: connection request with message 1. On accept, wait one day and send message 2. After five working days without a reply, send one follow-up. End.
4. Set the daily limit to 15 connection requests or fewer, on weekdays, in working hours.
5. Make sure the sequence stops when a person replies.

What good looks like

You answer each reply personally within a day. "Not me, but ask my colleague" counts as a good result.

Common mistake

Turning up the volume. Speaker outreach is 40 people. A higher daily limit will not find you better speakers. It raises the odds that LinkedIn restricts your account.

The rules, in plain words

You are contacting people who never gave you their details. Do it in a way you would be happy to explain to them.

LinkedIn

- Automation tools are against LinkedIn's User Agreement. Using HeyReach is your decision and your account's risk.
- Weekly invitation limits apply to every account. LinkedIn does not publish the figure. Around 100 a week is what users usually report.
- Stay well under the limit. Fifteen invitations a day is plenty for this playbook.
- Use your real profile and your real name. Never rent or buy accounts.
- If LinkedIn shows a warning, pause the campaign that day and go manual.

GDPR basics for cold outreach

- **Legitimate interest** is the usual basis. Write down your reasoning: why you want to invite this person, and why a public speaker would expect an invitation like yours.
- **Say where you found them.** Article 14 asks you to tell people how you got their details, at the latest when you first write. "I found your talk at [event]" in message 2 does this. Link your privacy notice.
- **A no is final.** Anyone can object to outreach at any time. Keep a do-not-contact list and check it before every campaign.
- **Keep little, delete soon.** Remove the people who did not fit once the line-up is set.

If you switch to email

Cold email follows national rules on top of GDPR, and they differ a lot. Greece requires prior consent before unsolicited email, including email to people at companies (Law 3471/2006, Article 11). Germany and Poland are strict as well. Some countries allow B2B cold email when there is a clear way to opt out. Check the country of each recipient before you send. This guide is not legal advice.

When a speaker says yes

Move the conversation to email the same day and confirm four things in writing: the slot and its length, the fee and travel you cover, the deadline for title and slides, and whether the talk is recorded. Then mark them as confirmed in Clay so no campaign writes to them again.

The checklist

Print this page. Tick as you go.

- ☐ Fee, travel and recording terms are decided before the first message.
- ☐ Each open slot has a written persona with disqualifiers.
- ☐ Every person in the Clay table has a link to something they said in public.
- ☐ No email addresses were enriched for this campaign.
- ☐ You read and approved every message, and watched part of every talk you mention.
- ☐ Message 2 says where you found the speaker and links your privacy notice.
- ☐ HeyReach runs on your own profile at 15 invitations a day or fewer.
- ☐ The sequence stops when someone replies.
- ☐ A do-not-contact list exists and was checked before launch.
- ☐ You have read the LinkedIn warning on page 2 and chosen automation or manual sending.
- ☐ Confirmed speakers have the four terms in writing.
- ☐ People who did not fit are deleted once the line-up is set.

Talk to **Bony**

Want a second pair of eyes on your speaker personas, or on a message before it goes out? Send Bony a message. Tell her the event, the date and the slot you are trying to fill.

Message Bony on LinkedIn

linkedin.com/in/bonny-bonfire-b50977441/

Bony is Bonyfire's assistant for event organisers. This guide is practical advice, not legal advice. Check the rules that apply to your event and your country before you contact anyone.

