Laylee: If you've ever wondered what event hosts really think when your pitch hits their inbox, this episode is for you. In this episode, you're gonna hear directly from the decision makers themselves about what makes 'em say yes, and what finds your pitch in the no pile. Welcome back to the Leili Amati podcast.

I am so excited about today's episode. Because it's a little bit different as part of my sought after speaker system course, I have been interviewing event hosts about what they're really looking for when it comes to speaker selection, as well as a whole host of other topics that we talk about when it comes to working with speakers.

And inside the course, you'll be able to find the full conversations with each event host themselves. But for today, I have pulled together some of the best highlights for you here on the podcast. Now this episode is all about applications and pitches. What hosts are looking for? What makes them stand out?

What makes immediate yeses immediate nos? And you're gonna hear from several different incredible hosts who have received countless pitches and applications, and their insight is. So, so valuable. I am so excited for you to get a hold of all of the things they have to share if you wanted to land more speaking gigs in your business.

This episode is exactly a must listen for you. Let's go ahead and dive in.

Laylee: I would love to know any, like, any additional advice as a host in particular who reviews pitches and gets people like probably, I don't, I dunno if you're like me, but like.

Constantly being like, if you need a speaker, let me know. What advice would you give to someone who's hoping to speak at your event or any event one day, and what can they be doing or should they be doing right now to get on your radar for that next

Elizabeth: Yeah, that's such a good question and my biggest piece of advice is like people need to understand that finding great speakers is not a pain point.

Right. It's not a pain point for you to find great speakers. It's not a pain point for me to find speakers. It's not a pain point for me to find great podcast guests.

So they need to really be thinking about that when they write their pitch on, I'm not actually solving a problem for this person. I am just trying to get my face in front of their audience. So how can I show up with a really good give? What's in it for them? Right? And I'm like. Such a warm-hearted, loving person, but like for real, like what's in it for me?

Right. And the biggest advice I can give people is like, if they wanna be on your stage, they need to be in your community, in your membership, like setting up a coffee chat with you. They need to actually know you. And I know that's true for my event because it's so co-created. I mean, it is literally.

Created with the members of my program. So of course they are all gonna be first in line to speak because we're kind of speaking on this, um, overarching mission of what we do, which is we help people do what they love and make a living doing it. So it's like I want people, like you said, that are already in that ecosystem.

And when I do choose somebody from outside, it's usually a referral. And it's somebody who really fits the vibe. I always have them on my podcast first to make sure that I feel like their energy is good, their speaking is good. My people can get to know them before they come. And that's not to say this is like an exclusive club, but it's like.

It's just not a pain point. Like finding great speakers just isn't a pain point. Now, I'm not going after like Mel Robbins and the big name people. It's very different. Somebody who is wanting to attract those big name speakers, that might be different to them. Maybe it is a little bit more of a pain point, but for me it's more about finding the right energy for the room so that my people are getting the most out of it.

Laylee: Yeah, yeah. I agree with that and I, I love that you mentioned getting people on and seeing how you interact and seeing how they show up and seeing how they speak. Because in the past. I typically will let you know, go through the process. And for my own events, I've had people who I've never had speak for me, come and speak for me.

It's nice. That's a nice idea to like kind of have that like first step of, let's see how this goes because it is, it's not that it's an ex. I love that you said it's not an

exclusive club. One question we got submitted a ton was some variation of the question like. Is it just friends? Asking friends?

And I don't, I haven't seen that really in any of the host interviews. I have seen people who have built relationships with peers, but it's not like calling up your random bestie and being like, come on over. It's like somebody who's great at their job and who you can trust and who you know will deliver.

And I think if you can build that trust through an application or through a podcast or whatever, like that's a great stepping stone.

Elizabeth: Yeah. Yeah, and I can see how it does seem that way. I actually was making jokes about that recently. About, I applied to speak somewhere and I was like, this is one of those situations where I was like, I am overqualified for this room. Everyone's telling me this is a good opportunity for me. And, you know, I didn't get it.

And I was like, not but hurt, but very curious. And then I'm like, it looks like she picked all her friends, right? And I'm like, but Liz, that's exactly what you do. Right. But it's, it's, it's like you said, it's not because. They're my friends. It's because the trust is built. It's because I know they have the heart to give, that their intentions are in the right place, and I just know what they're gonna bring to the room.

And when I do bring in someone that I've never met. This year I brought in Tess, who's like a financial coach. Never met her before, but I had her on the podcast. I was like, oh, she's gonna be awesome. And, you know, it was a great fit. So there's a little bit of, pre-qualifying that we do, but at the end of the day, it's like, it's not.

Because they're my friends. It's like, because that trust and rapport is there and everyone should be doing that regardless. They should be getting in communities and meeting people and building those relationships. And if you can't find the stage to be on, like build your own. My speaking career only is what it is because I've built my own stage, like end of story.

Laylee: that perspective from Elizabeth really highlights how much trust and community matters in speaker selection. Now let's hear from Jordan Gill, who leans more heavily on applications in her process, and you'll notice she takes them very seriously.

You said you saved a few for invitations with your speaker lineup. I love that. The, the question I was gonna ask was like,

The percentage of speaker lineup cold pitches versus personal invitations or referrals. It sounds like it's mostly application with

like a few invitations.

Jordan Gill: Yeah. Mine is pretty heavy on applications. The reason being, which Lely and I have in common, uh, having moved and been in different spaces, uh, and what that feels like when it's just like, you just wanna be picked, you wanna belong, you wanna be chosen, and. I think so often in a speaking industry it is who you know.

So, and I'm not saying anything new or groundbreaking with that. And there's nothing wrong with that. And I actually a hundred percent understand why people do that because it's scary to put yourself out there and say, okay, I like this application, but like also, who is this person? Like do they like fully align with my values?

Like if people are going to work with them, are they going to be again, what I expect them to be? And so. You know, applications can be really scary, but the, I don't know, 14-year-old Jordan inside, I guess is just like, I bet there's like really dope people who could speak and bring a lot of value and I may not know about them or know them because of just whatever.

And so I want that opportunity to bring them in and allow them. To be seen by me and, and my team mainly at the time. So that was really important to me about applications. And so, and I took them very, very seriously. I didn't just like, you know, glaze over a bunch of them. Usually my team at the time would like deep dive and then they would send me the top 16 based on the criteria they know, that, that's important to me.

And then, you know, I would look at kind of the top ones that like intrigued my team, who also knew, you know, my community. So.

Laylee: I like hearing the process too, like that's, that's always fun for me as a speaker to hear. And whenever I share it as a host, people are always like so surprised that I'm not the only one reading them. And in fact, similarly to you, I'm not the first one to

read them. So, uh, a huge mistake. I see.

And this is just kind of like bonus for anyone listening.

I dunno if you got this and like maybe your team told you and you never saw them, but like so many people would like write. A message to me

and keep it really informal as though they, because I am friendly,

and so people would be like, Laylee, you know me?

And I'm like,

Jordan Gill: yes,

Laylee: but they don't know you. And I'm not even, I haven't even read this yet. Like,

Jordan Gill: yes, yes.

Laylee: don't do that.

Jordan Gill: Please

Laylee: a job.

Jordan Gill: That is definitely a big bonus tip that should not be overlooked just because Yeah, like that. What's hard too, if you are just like a super connector. If you are going to events, you're meeting people and you're then saying, oh, well I know her, so of course she'll give me a spot.

Like unfortunately, that's just like not,

Laylee: Not how it works.

Jordan Gill: not how it works. And again, I try not to have all of those biases necessarily at play, and I think. Again, there's nothing wrong with having your friends on your stage or stuff like that. Like that's totally cool. And just again, how I wanted my events to be was I wanted there to be a mix of like, oh, like I've never heard of this person.

I'm really intrigued to get to know them, sort of thing. Versus a go. Okay. I've seen them at every event that I go to, and like seeing the shtick like done with it, right?

Laylee: Yeah. It's funny 'cause as I am, as we're talking about this. I've interviewed, you're maybe like the seventh host I've interviewed and I've like put on my like little like CNN reporter hat where I'm just like,

I, whether I agree, disagree, whatever, but

I like that you're saying, you know, there's nothing wrong with

this, but these are the options and your priority was different.

And so I

think for our speakers, it's so important for them to understand that each host is going to have their own priorities, and it's

your job as the speaker who's applying

to figure out. What that priority is and speak to it. How important do you think a relationship is with the host of an event in relation to getting selected as a speaker?

Generally speaking, especially someone who's super connection heavy.

Jordan Gill: Yeah, I, I. I would like to have at least seen your name before an application. So whether that's like we've DMed on Instagram, like it doesn't have to be like, we've gotten coffee for two hours together. Like it, it can just be, oh, we've DMed before. Because like, I mean, I DM a lot of people and like I generally do remember names or at least like Instagram handles and like sometimes I'm like, oh, okay.

Yeah. Uh, but I, I don't want the first time, ideally the first time that I'm. Hearing about you to be the speaker application. That doesn't mean I, I like, that's like docked points by any means, but it is helpful for me just from a contextual standpoint. And I think too, I'm, I'm sure I'm not, if I'm the seventh person talking about this, then I'm sure I'm not the first about, um.

Like, there's usually a question or something oriented around like, oh, like, are you still planning to come? Or like, are you interested in the event at all? And

then a lot of answers will be something along the lines of like, oh, like I'll come if I'm speaking. Right. And

Laylee: They just say it just like that.

Jordan Gill: the other very, like, at least mine have been, and I'm a very direct person, so I'm like, all right, at

Laylee: At least they're, at least they're being honest.

Jordan Gill: I would just like to know, you know, um, versus just like, you know, fluffy marshmallows up my butt or something. Like, I just, I would rather you just like be upfront. So, you know, I, but at the same time, if that truly is your stance, like I would suggest you not even applying to the events, like,

Laylee: Yeah.

Jordan Gill: I just think about, like, again, I've spoken actually a lot this year, um, the most I ever have in a year, and all of the events were events that I would've attended.

Laylee: Yeah,

Jordan Gill: You know, like I just, and I think that that's a really important piece. Like don't just go and, and because you just see all the applications out there, you're just gonna like wing it and it's like a numbers game that.

Like, at least I can like, read through that pretty easily and my team can read through that pretty easily. because there's just no, thought and no connection to the application. It's just like, yeah, of course I wanna speak. Like I'll share this thing and it'll be cool and your audience will love it and everyone will love it.

And it's like, I mean, okay, you know, it, it's just dry.

Laylee: when you are looking at pitches. From somebody you don't know. Let's say it is a referral or it's somebody who's just like cold pitching you as a host, what stands out to you? What makes you say like, this is a easy yes, or this is like an easy no.

Christina: I use a point system, so I grade and I've used, I think, I think the added bonus of chat GPT coming out has been very helpful because I

Laylee: Oh, tell me about that. yeah, What? What are you doing there?

Christina: so, you might get over 75 pitches, and what I do in my application is you have to send a video. So you are not just applying on a form, like, I need you to send me a video and I need for, I need to see what your body language is gonna be.

Because I can go onto your social media and I could look at your stuff, or I could look at your, demo reels or whatever, speaker reels, but like, I wanna see how you show up. Just in real time. Right. And so the application is like, yeah. I ask like, how many years of experience have you had, not only in your business, but speaking.

Like what does, um, what is your mission and vision and how does it align with my mission and vision? Um, what do you, what do you really wanna get out of. Like, are you coming because you want clients? Are you coming? 'cause you wanna network? Like, what is your intention? Um, and and I, I'm really like, straightforward about that because I'm like, I know that certain speakers are going there with the intention that they wanna sell.

And I also know that certain speakers just, they just really want more experience. You know, they just wanna get on stage. And so, I mean, the application is, is very thorough, but what I've done in the past is I've, I've created like a point system. And I've taken it into chat, GPTI download all of the, the responses and I tell chat like, based off of this criteria, I need you to start just eliminating a little bit for me to get really tighter.

And it kind of categorizes it in like, you know, these are the people that are like your upcoming speakers, these are the people that are advanced, these are the people that, you know, maybe they're just looking at that. And what I kind of also focus on is. If I can see, because again, formats are different.

A panel and a fire site is gonna be very similar to if you were on a podcast. So if I could go onto a podcast and I could like already listen to it for free, no. Right. So if, if it's already on a podcast, if your session is, is something I could like totally Google and find on YouTube.

No. And then on the breakout side, I really look at like, how animated you are. Do you command a room? Are you able to not only teach something, but I don't

like, I, I've gone to so many events where it's like panel panel, panel panel or we go in a breakout session and we're sitting down. We don't have time to sit down for eight hours.

Like that is crazy. So I'm like, are they able to take this and create something that's very tangible that allows the audience to experience something? And I think that's what really gets me to a hell yes versus a hell no. It's like, oh wait, if I can go and Google this. Find a podcast or like one time I've had competing, topics where people have pitched the same topic and oddly enough it was on podcasting and yeah, it was on podcasting.

And the way I kind of critiqued it was okay. I also do like beginner, intermediate, advance. So are you

Laylee: asked that or

Christina: Yes. Yes. In, in the application. In the application. I wanna know if, if your session is in the intermediate or advance, because your sessions will also dictate the audience. If I have too many beginners, then the audience is gonna gravitate to the beginner.

And then also, I have a lot of people who pitch mindset and I'm like, that's great, that's cool. But again, if I could listen to it on a podcast,

I don't want that on my stage. And so I'm very like intentional. I go through every single. Response. And I'll go on and I'll start having like, can I hold a relationship with you?

You know, can I do that? And I think that's what makes it really beautiful is it is people that come like. With the referral, it allows for me to already gain a, a trust because if I'm trusting my colleague, um, Becca, who is referring somebody in her network, then that's already an an in, and I think that that has been helpful.

Laylee: how do you go about selecting your speakers for your events?

Amber: Yes. I would say I've, I've done a mix of both. So there's some years where I have done an application process and I, I, I love that I even considered that at one point here for the Bloom and Grow Live that we're working on right now. Uh, just because sometimes there's people out there that I just don't know

about yet that haven't come into my world and can have a really great pitch and can have, you know, I wanna give a new people the opportunity that aren't in my world yet.

I would say though, majority of the people that do come are ones that are in my world. They've either been in my programs before, I've met them at other, you know, live event experiences. They're in my network in some way and have made a connection. And usually it's enough of a connection where.

I feel like I always personally vet the people that I'm bringing. Like I wanna make sure that they are the type of people that I want my attendees to maybe invest in maybe as a next step experience. And so it's really important for me to have those personal relationships and, um, already have those in place.

So that's usually kind of what I'm looking at of, of when I'm starting to, you know, draw up my list and, and start bringing those in. And I think I, I'll say this just right now, and you may ask this later, but you know, I get people, my dms every day. That, see the events I put on because not only do I host like the, the in-person ones, I host virtual retreat experiences.

Those ones are just led by me and, and so I know when people come into my DM box and they don't know really what it is, what I do or how the experiences function just based on the cold email they sent me or the cold message. And so it's honestly a little like. And I don't know if it's like you wanna say a mark against them where I'm like, oh, like sister.

Like you didn't even like actually go to the website and actually check out. You saw the word retreat. You saw the word conference and thought, Hey, if you ever need anyone, I'm your person. And I'm like,

Laylee: And it's always that sentence. Please, guys, if you're watching this, listening to this like. Please don't send the sentence. If you ever need a speaker,

Amber: yeah. That's what it, it's that's what they do every day.

Laylee: I get it. Like I get, I get it. But there's like a, like a, there's more that happens afterward that you don't think about before you send that. So this is us just saying like, think about, think about.

Amber: There's like, there's just a better way to do it. Like, like follow the right channels. Follow the right avenues, go invest in maybe one. I have, I have programs at all levels. Like you can do something with me for like $59 Right.

And start showing up in my world. Right. And that is to me is how you can kind of get foot in the door.

And I can start to maybe take you ser seriously is because I know you actually know what I'm about and you're, because I think of the speakers as a extension or reflection of my brand. So it's really important that I already kind of know you in some way.

Laylee: Yeah. I love that you said that you, you view your speakers as an extension of your brand because that, that's what came to mind when you were talking about vetting your people was I think a lot of times I get the speakers I work with as a coach, not like the people that I put on my stages, but the people that I coach will, will oftentimes ask me like, how much of this is just like a, it's who, you know, it's like a, it's like a friendship club.

And I'm like, I think it's less of about being friends and more about your trusting this person with your reputation as a host, which is a very different way to, I think, frame that. So I like that you said that.

Amber: So powerful. So powerful.

Laylee: So when you were doing both application process and, um, personal invites or referrals, about what percentage would you say you took from like a speaker lineup to take a, an applicant versus like an invite?

Amber: I would say, when I think back to the, like when I was doing the applications, I would say it was like a, a pretty even split, honestly.

Laylee: Yeah.

Amber: Pretty even split. Yeah. And usually I'm, I'm really also looking for speakers that I know, like, because we're all running businesses here, the, the type of conferences and and events that I produce are for business owners that they are B2B centric.

Right. And so, naturally, the people that I invite in to come speak, right, they usually have businesses. They're, they're educating in some way. And so I look at a, as a business relationship as well. And so I hope that, you know, when I give you this. Spotlight give you the stage presence that like I'm also saying, Hey, like down the road, like I know you're gonna do such a good job on this stage, that people are already gonna like fall in love with you like I have, and then go check you out.

Go work even deeper with you in your programs and those things as well. And so when I do get speakers that don't have any offering. They're just a speaker. That's not as interesting to me because like to me that maybe works well. Maybe I, I have had keynotes every now and then, like years ago, not really anymore that were more inspirational focused.

Like where like the only goal was to bring a person in to like. Fire the group up, like to be motivated to be, you know, encouraged or something in some way. Right? So in that case, I'm not looking, you know, that my, um, attendees are gonna have a relationship with them after. But for the most part now, like, I want that to happen.

So that's important to me when I see like, almost like I'm gonna go check your business out when you apply, or even when I'm, you know, bringing people in from my group, I'm like, what do they have available? So then I know if they wanna go deeper with them, they have something that they can invest in with them.

Laylee: Yeah, that makes total sense to me for the environment that you're setting up for your attendees, like needing it to be somebody that has that like quality education behind it, not just like motivation.

Amber: Yeah.

Laylee: So that being said, when you're reading a pitch or an application really stands out to you, what are you immediately drawn to or what are you immediately just kind of turned off by?

Amber: Um, I think I am very interested. Well, I told you earlier the practical thing's really important to me, so I think like when I'm seeing a pitch, I'm really wanting something that's gonna say, this is like exactly like the kind of framework I'm gonna teach. This is why it's important for this audience. And this is what they're gonna be able to walk away with.

And so I think like those very concrete, again, like I, I can think of one pitch I got like on one of those applications, um, years ago. And I remember, like, I don't, I don't remember all of it, but I knew the title of it had the word fairy dust in it. It had a fairy dust in it, and it had like a very like, oh, a magic wand.

Very, yeah. Right. It can, like, it sticks out in my head. 'cause I'm like, this particular pitch, I'm like, this is, I, I don't even know. Like, I would not want to put this on my lineup of like, here's what you're gonna learn. Like, that's so

cringey. You know? And that was, yeah. And so anyway, like, that's what I'm saying is, is like, gimme concrete, gimme confidence too.

I think I do like it when I can sense a, um, like authoritative tone, a confident. Like, those things are important to me as well. So I'm looking for that too. And I'm looking for some kind of personal touch. Like I, I said earlier, like, kind of like the dms that I get, I'm like, oh, you haven't even been on the retreat page.

Like the people who go and pitch me for like the virtual retreat. I'm like, if you would go on there, you would see like, that's not a, like a hosting experience, right? Like that's not a, all right, that's not an opportunity for speakers to be on that. I'm hosting it the entire time. So it's like, just do your homework a little bit.

Laylee: yeah. Oh my gosh. I love that answer so much. 'cause I obviously agree. Um, okay, the last question I have about like selection.

Amber: Mm-hmm.

Laylee: Is, does audience size matter to you or is there any other factor that is like something that stands out to you that really matters?

Amber: Yeah. I would say is audience size can be nice. It's not everything. And I've had, um, speakers that have small audiences. I've had speakers that have huge, hundreds of thousands like followings. You know. I would say most of the people that I am selecting or bringing in, like are, are a mix, like small and large.

So it's not everything. It's nice. I do like, bringing in those who have communities that are similar to mine that might have people, because obviously like there may be the opportunity that some of their people may be interested in coming to our event as well. So I think that's nice when like the synergy lines up when I'm looking at things.

Laylee: when you are looking at those new pitches or the applications, what stands out to you? What is something that is like an immediate, like immediate no. Or an immediate yes for you?

Kristina: Yeah, I would say so. An immediate no, like, like just like flat out truthfully is. When the topic doesn't really have anything to do with entrepreneurship or like business or they haven't done a good job of, of really

explaining like the impact it would have on those women. I see the same thing with podcast pitches, right?

Like we wanna make sure that they're very focused, that it has to do with your conference in particular. And that's the number one piece of feedback I give people. When people come and they're like, oh, like why wasn't I chosen? I'm like, well, actually like. Entrepreneurial women don't care about this topic.

You care about this topic and, and you wanna speak and that's fine, but that doesn't align. Right. And so that's a, an immediate kind of no for me. And I do look for speaking experience, but it doesn't have to be like, I love it when someone has a speaker reel. I love it when someone has a YouTube video, like, or they have podcast episodes.

Like, that's so great. But it doesn't have to be a must. But how are you able to pull your experiences and be able to be like. 200 would be a big first stage. Like, um, that would probably be like, you know, maybe not the first thing that I would suggest someone do, but I'd encourage people to do podcast interviews or, you know, they're, um, connecting with other people.

They're speaking at summits, they're doing retreats, they're doing smaller events. And then over time I think you kind of build to that stage. And so I'd love to see like the progression of, of how they invest in themselves. And one of the biggest things, and this is something that gives me the major ick.

I don't if this is gonna be the egg. I know, I know this is meant to be q and a, but I'm, I'm gonna tell you, this gives me the ick is when people apply to speak and then, you know, I message and I say, oh, you know, our speaker applications are closed, or, we're already kind of past the point or whatever, whatever.

And they go, oh, okay, no problem. Next year. And I'm like, well, why don't you come to the event, check it out. And they're like, oh no. Too far, i'm busy that day. Um, like can't make it. Like if you are not willing to like come to an event, you're probably not qualified enough to speak at it. That's just my perspective on it.

But I don't know if that's something you come across as well.

Laylee: Yeah, I mean it's definitely like, I feel like especially for yours, which is for, so your, yours is generally for entrepreneurs and business ownership, right?

So like, the people who are applying are the people who, who should be attending. When I hear certain hosts say that, my instinct is to say, well, maybe it's like not going to benefit them as an attendee. But in your situation and in, and honestly, quite frankly in my situation, because I always say like it's, it's one of our things is that like the people in the audience could be and would be on stages.

Kristina: Yeah.

Laylee: likely it's the same for yours, where it's like gen. If it's general entrepreneurship and business and you have an entrepreneur who's applying to speak, then it should be an easy like, yes, I will come immerse myself into your community.

So in your situation, I would say, yes, I agree.

Kristina: Totally. And there are situations where like you're, you know, if I was speaking at a real estate conference and I'm like a social media manager, I don't need to buy a ticket to the real estate conference 'cause I'm not a realtor. Like, you know, but

Laylee: in our, but in this world, I'm with you. I'm with you on that.

Kristina: And also there's like a really poised way to do that, which is like, and I've done this, like this year I had a baby.

And um, you know, people would be like, oh, like, you know, like I'd apply for something and they would be like, would you come? And I, I would just be honest. Right now, I'm prioritizing speaking opportunities because I only have so much time. And I feel very good about saying that to people. It's not about the fact I don't, and I'd love to promote your event and like, you know what, if I can make it work, I'm going to, but also like this is what I'm prioritizing right now.

And like that's also okay, but saying you can't make the date. How are you gonna speak

Laylee: that, that is definitely like an absolutely no, like, no, no, no, no. That is rough, honestly. That's just like, okay, we just, we just caught you out. This is rough.

Kristina: And I think it's also about being like a gracious attendee.

Like I have seen people who show up who are amazing attendees, and they put in like kind of a mid speaking application. And I'll go to them and I'll say, Hey, your speaking application was mid. Here's why. So I'd love for you to revise this because you have an amazing energy in the room and like the people who I've seen be the most successful speakers 'cause something else too lately.

And not to go too off topic, but I actually rely on my speakers to find me future speakers. Like I go to my, my, my Peeps and I'm like, Hey, I love to having you and I want more of you. So like, how do I get those people who are your. And I get fabulous introductions from that. You'll get that like, you know, recognition, but also people like wanna be around you and wanna stay connected.

So, um, that's another piece of it as well for me.

Laylee: I love not, not underestimating the power of referrals, like even in a virtual world, I think as a host, I definitely look to referrals as. Like a huge component of, of our system, of selecting our speakers too. So I love that.

Laylee: When it comes to like receiving a pitch or receiving an application, if somebody's like coming to you for the first time, what stands out in a positive or negative way?

Joanna: Yeah, well, I think if I was to get an email from a PR company that was a copy and paste that, you know, they're sending to 50 other conferences, I immediately am like turned off because that wasn't. Community that wasn't the fit for the community. And if it was like, maybe I wouldn't be turned off, there was a few times where the name of the person that the PR company would bring was a like, oh, I actually do like that person.

But if it, especially if it was a long email, there was nothing about who we were or the brand. I never liked that. I, especially with cold pitches, I always. Enjoyed when I just got a straight to the point,

Laylee: Yeah.

Joanna: Hey, here's who I am. I, I will, I always use this as an example of like a cold pitch that I was immediately like, yes, Jess Ekstrom, who like now works with speakers.

She spoke at Yellow Conference in 2015, our second conference, it's 10 years ago. I didn't know who she was. We never had connected on the internet and the year before, that was the first one. So nobody was pitching me to speak at the conference. I was reaching out to every single person. And then the next year we started to get people pitching and it was all like.

It. People would always send these long, long emails that I'm like, ah, I do not wanna read this. I could again, tell us copy and paste. You don't know anything about this community. I think if someone was relational, they understood who they were emailing. Even just a sentence or two about why they, like, they wanna speak at this conference in particular. And even now with my work at Flodesk, you know, when it's the same thing. Like we wanna work with, people who know float desks and like float desks, you know?

So just showing that like this isn't, even if you are copying, pasting some stuff, show like, well this is also why I'm copying and pasting to you in particular.

Laylee: Yes. I love it. The personalization, I love the, that you brought up, keeping it really concise and short and sweet and like. If somebody is interested, they will pursue. Like Do you look for any like, specific qualities in a speaker beyond the topic? Social presence, experience. Does audience size matter?

Joanna: I think at the beginning of yellow, audience sized. Mattered more than it does today. Back, you know, in 2014, it was such a different world. We could have somebody who had 50,000 followers on Instagram posts that they're speaking at this conference. We would sell. A ton of tickets. It's not that world anymore.

And uh, yeah, that doesn't happen. They post for speaking Cool, you know, onto the next thing. so I think, I don't think that honestly matters a ton. What I always like to do as a conference host is have a mix. You have maybe the. We would have like total like eight to 10 speakers 'cause we would do a two day, um, event.

And I always like to have like two to three bigger names that people that would draw people in, that people had heard of and wanna hear from. But the rest, to me it was more about the value that they brought and creating a space where. The attendees could leave feeling like they got value out of that.

So, I don't think it, I think it does. Having an online presence is really helpful, so people can get a taste. So conference hosts, organizers can get a taste of who

you are, how you speak. Um, for a long time I said I wouldn't book anybody to speak unless I saw a video of them speaking.

'cause I had a few, uh. There was a few times where we would book someone who maybe did have the big name and they, it does not mean that they are a good communicator. It does not mean that they are a good speaker.

Learned that the hard way a few times. And so then I was like, you know, I'm not going to book anyone unless I've seen them speaking.

And whether that's on a YouTube video or an Instagram channel, just to get an idea of who you are, how you speak, what is the value that you bring? If I can get a sense of that, then I'm not, I'm not caring too much about like, how many followers you have or anything. Because really today that doesn't, you know, it doesn't mean a ton anymore.

You could have a very small following who are super engaged. There's a lot that's going on behind the scenes that people don't see. But I would say having an online presence is important more to understand. What it is that you're talking about, what the value you bring is, and just to kind of get to know your speaking style and your communication style.

Laylee: I hope that this conversation gave you a behind the scenes look at how event hosts really make their speaker selections. Now, this kind of candid insight is what can completely change the way that you approach pitching yourself for stages. Now you wanna go deeper. The full interviews with each of these hosts are available inside the Sought After Speaker System course, and that is where I will walk you through creating incredible pitches, building real relationships with event hosts, and creating signature talk topics that make you the obvious and the first choice for event hosts as well.

So you can find all of the details there are linked in the show notes or@leliimadi.com. And I'm super excited to see you guys on the next episode of the Le Amidi podcast.