

# Marketing to Diverse Customers: The 10 Biggest Mistakes Speakers Make

By Victor Gray

**A**re you looking for additional customers for your speaking business? Then you will definitely find the following information useful.

On the Meeting Professionals International Website, the MPI Multicultural Initiative ([www.mpiweb.org](http://www.mpiweb.org)) reported some startling U.S. Census statistics about the buying power of the following ethnic groups:

- African-American – \$572 billion
- Hispanic – \$452 billion
- Asian – \$254 billion

By 2009, the combined buying power of African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, Asians and Native Americans is expected to exceed \$1.5 trillion, more than triple the 1990 level of \$456 billion – a gain of 242%. Three years from now, the buying power of people of color is projected to surpass that of whites. (Source: MPI's Meeting Multicultural Toolkitat [www.mpiweb.org/resources/mci/pdfs/toolkit.pdf](http://www.mpiweb.org/resources/mci/pdfs/toolkit.pdf).)

Multicultural groups are the majority in 48 out of 100 largest U.S. cities. MPI's report on Building the Business Case for Multiculturalism projects a 20% annual growth rate in the number of multicultural meetings.

More than 90% of survey respondents ranked speaker/presentation screening as the number one factor for the success of multicultural meetings.

According to Visit Milwaukee (formerly the Convention and Visitors Bureau), two of the biggest conventions in 2005 were the NAACP and the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

## How to Diversify Your Markets

Here are some common opportunities to expand your business to diverse markets:

- **Market Development**  
Sell present products and services in new markets
- **Product Development**  
Offer new/improved products and services to new markets
- **Product Differentiation**  
Change the image of current products or services for new markets
- **Combination**  
Mix two or more of the above opportunities
- **Segmenting**  
Identify a submarket that can be served

## What to Avoid

As you expand your business to diverse markets, please avoid the 10 biggest mistakes that speakers make.

1. Using a one-size fits all

approach. Adapt your approach to meet customer needs.

2. Viewing customer diversity as race only.

Diverse audiences include women, various generations, LGBT, the disabled/handicapped among others.



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3. Not having a plan to deal with diverse audiences. The old saying is, "if you fail to plan, you plan to fail".
4. Failing to understand the demographic changes that have and are taking place. As the above statistics indicate, to assume that your present markets will always be there can be a costly mistake.
5. Not developing marketing materials targeted to the demographic group. Diverse groups can determine your commitment by seeing if they are pictured or mentioned in your PR materials.
6. Not utilizing staff and partnerships that mirror the demographics of

the targeted consumer. Develop alliances and utilize staff that represents the groups you wish to target.

7. Failing to watch your language. This refers not only making an effort to communicate in the language spoken by the targeted group, but be familiar with the terminology and jargon of the group.

8. Not networking or going where the customer goes. People generally do business with those they are familiar with.
9. Not being patient. It may take time for some organizations or individuals to agree to work with you. The patience you invest may generate a great future reward.
10. Not learning. Commit yourself to learn something new about diversity on a regular basis. Try different reading materials, TV programs or movies.

Although you may not be ready today to serve diverse markets, by starting today, you will be ready for the major changes that will occur tomorrow.

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