

**Episode #056** - 5 Steps to winning the speaker recruitment process.

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Virtual summits are the most powerful online marketing tool available to grow your list, launch your platform, make more money and create an impact in the world, even if you're just getting started. If you are ready to take your summit to the next level, then tune in to the virtual summit podcast with Dr. Mark T. Wade.

Hi, I'm Dr. Mark T. Wade, founder of virtual summit software and creator of the one-day summit formula and I'm on a mission to help you the summit hosts get your summit out to the world in a powerful and impactful way so let's get started.

Hey summit hosts, Dr. Mark T. Wade, your founder of virtual summit software and your host on the virtual summit podcast. I am super excited for our episode today because we are going to be getting deep into the collaborative marketing strategy and we're going to be talking about something that you absolutely need to know about.

We're going to be going deep into speakers and how it can be a game changer to align yourself with a mission. So today I have a very special guest. We've got Marissa Stone, the owner of the systems lounge, host of the women's business system summit, business growth strategist and systems queen who empowers high integrity six figure female entrepreneurs.

I'm so happy you're here with us today. Marissa.

Dr Mark, I am so stoked to be here. I have been listening to your podcast for quite a while and thought to myself, I have got to get on that podcast. So thank you for having me.

Absolutely. And we've got to give a special shout out over to Jamie Slootsky who put us in touch. She's a great friend of both of ours, also an amazing summit expert over there. So I'm really excited we're going to get into some information that is absolutely foundational for some hosts. And that's speakers, speaker, research speaker, recruitment, speaker collaboration, and Marissa.

You have done a really excellent job of kind of figuring out this process of not only how to make the speakers want to come after you, but how to align that so that you really grow an incredible summit and an incredible brand. Now, before we jump into those specifics, why don't you go ahead and just very quickly let the summer's host know just a little bit about yourself.

Yeah, so, um, I actually got into entrepreneurship in 2015 and I came out of academia. I'm like, you, I've hit all of the top degrees, right? And I came out of academia wanting something different for myself and wanting to redesign what I was doing and I started managing social media and then I went into [working with women and, and dealing with systems because I've always been really techie.

And so, you know, listening to the women that I was working with, they really struggle. They get intimidated by the systems, they get intimidated by the technology and they don't know how to put their, um, business together in the online space, you know, and that, you know, turns into the systems lounge.

And basically what I do is I support those women who want to set their businesses up in the digital space with the systems that are required for them to be able to stay in their zone of genius. Be that person who is the front runner, the CEO, you know, that person making those connections and building those relationships with their prospects and clients.

And that is, I love how you said that the, the system's lounge, I love that as such a, I, I know it's a little different. I'm a cigar guy, right? So when I hear lounge, it automatically makes me just feel like a comfortable, safe environment where I can hang out and have a good time. So I love how you've kind of brought that together.

Exactly. And that's exactly where it came from because so many women are intimidated by the systems that I wanted to take that deal my notch. And I have clients who step into my office and they're like my shoulders just relaxed, you know, and I love that. That's why it became the systems lounge because it doesn't have to be crazy and chaotic. You can put together a system from the old analog pen and paper system to a full on automated technological setup like your virtual summit software.

Exactly. So we're going to get into the system's loud. We're going to get into the women's business systems summit actually. And so why don't we go ahead and start off, because you've ran, you've run several summits now. Why don't you just give us kind of a high level view of how your, your Business or your summit, I guess we'll say kind of has progressed over the last three summers, just one or two main things that you've seen grow and how it's happened.

Yeah, for sure. I think it all began with the speakers because year one, obviously I knew nothing about what I was doing inside the world of creating a summit. But what I did know was I wanted a specific type of person that was going to come in and empower our attendees. Our attendees were female entrepreneurs trying to build their systems inside their own businesses.

And I wanted people who were specifically able to say, this is the system I'm using to move the needle on my business and here's how I do it. And I started out with, you know, an application that was sort of a semi, you know, it, it was a one page document that they filled out and it didn't really capture everything. And what I learned from that experience after vetting over 80 applications that came through, I only wanted 30 speakers, was I needed more information.

So in year two I really worked on that application and honed in on it even further. And by year three, I have a very robust five step process that allows me to go through and specifically handpick and very easily choose the people that I want inside the summit. And what that's done for me is it's allowed me to create this vast network of people who I still connect with every single day or every single month if it's not daily, where we are still finding opportunities in ways

in which to collaborate and support one another. So the summit is not only the event, but it also creates this vast network that you can then turn to when you need to accomplish your next goal.

I absolutely love this and, and you're, you're, you're talking about something that I feel is super important, especially when it comes to speakers because I see on a regular basis, some hosts kind of making this mistake where they're thinking about just grabbing that big name influencer or the big name speaker because they think it's going to immediately make their summit better. And I've talked on this a lot on why and how, I don't think that's the best case now.

You kind of have a different thought process on that as well. Like why don't you share that with us?

Yeah, I totally do. When I first started out, I, you know, like I said, I literally kind of took those 80 applications and tried to fit people into the tracks inside my summit that I felt were going to work. And what I quickly realized was everywhere I looked, there were summits with all the gurus, you know, that are jumping on there and they're having their conversations and don't get me wrong, I love them. I followed them, I listened to them.

I definitely take in the value that they're sharing with us. But what I noticed was when my attendees were looking their way, they felt like they could never achieve that. Somehow or another, that person had a team of experts behind that door over there and they had it. They, they had all the things in place that, that in my mind at the level I was, was not achievable and I didn't want that.

I wanted my speakers to be able to, you know, connect with the audience in such a way that they said, oh, if Marissa can do that, I can do that too. So I purposely did not go after those. I'll, I'll take probably, you know, B and C level, you know, experts in the field, but I won't go after those A-listers because I want my attendees to feel empowered to accomplish the goal. And I feel like there is a degree or two or six I'm separation between then and those A-listers.

And I think that can impact what your audience member gets out of your summit. Please don't take this wrong. I'm not trying to see on mean or you know, I'm just, my point is, is you've got to know your audience. You've got to know what they're looking for and you've gotta know what they need. [00:07:30] And so my audience members come in thinking, I need a productivity system or I need a social media marketing system, or I need a, you know, um, a quick cash infusion or whatever it is. And you need to know which speaker is going to be able to answer that call. And that's the speaker you pull in to speak on your summit. Right? And obviously I'm talking about my summit and my track. Yours may be different, but you definitely want those speakers that can answer that call. Oh,

I'm, I'm with you right there. Marissa because for me, I think you've nailed it with that as well and that's such a great aspect or perspective to understand from your audience perspective. I also like to say like if your goal is as a list builder, if your summit is a list builder objective and you have a bunch of influencers on there, most of those gurus are high level or a level anchors, whatnot.

They're not going to be promoting the summit. So it's actually, I see a lot of summit hosts who are in end up being kind of let down or disappointed because there's summit didn't perform and I go and look at their summit. I'm like, well you got majority of the people who are not actually going to promote it.

So I think you're speaking the truth here and you're not being mean. You're actually telling people what they need to know here. So I hope everybody out there is listening and on this. Now before we continue with the speakers aspect, I'd like to let our audience or some hosts who are listening in right now kind of understand the progression of your summit because you're, you're on track to do a pretty phenomenal.

So if you're open to letting us know, can you kind of tell us where your summit was on summit one? What, like what the success rate was, what you ended up with the last one and then again where you're on track to go now.

Yes. So some of that one, I really didn't know what I was doing. I didn't run the first ad. I didn't have a team of people on board. Like I literally, it was me and the computer and we were, you know, in the speakers and we were running this thing and so I hit, um, so I got only about 1500 people registered for that event. Um, and you know, and it was, it was okay.

It wasn't, oh my gosh, that was fabulous. What was fabulous was the collaboration that ensued from being involved in that process. And, and that just kind of sent a light bulb off in my head that, wow, look what we can do. And I got so many emails from the attendees that did show up. Oh my gosh, that was amazing. Thank you so much for producing this. Thank you for pulling in that speaker who understood me.

I even had a speaker who was in college, she was a second year, I believe. [00:10:00] Um, and this was the first time she had spoken, you know, on the international level. And my summit is and has always been an international summit. And so that was, it was, I realized at that point that by listening to my audience, I was changing. I was changing my eyes. So you're too obviously wash, rinse, repeat.

I get a little bit better in choosing my, um, my speakers and really making things happen. My numbers tripled. Um, again, I still wasn't really into ads or anything like that, but I did, you know, our reach was about 350,000, and I was like, wow, OK. You know, and I didn't, the only thing I changed with regard to pulling my speakers in was I got more specific on what I wanted inside the tracks.

So it again, it wasn't that I went after the A-listers, I went after specific people who were answering the call that my audience was providing to me. And this year we're poised to reach 750,000. Super stoked about that. Um, we have some amazing speakers. Every single one of them brings their A-game when it comes to their interview.

And the other thing that I started doing even year one was I created a community for my speakers. So a lot of times when your speakers show up, they show up to your event, they do their spiel with you, whatever the interview process or we're workshop or whatever it is, and

they, they, you know, promoted out and that's it. You may follow up with them later and you know, maybe rerun the summit or whatever it is you're doing. But that's pretty much [00:11:30] it. And I decided that I wanted more for my speakers.

I wanted to give them back what they were giving me. So I created this community for them within which they can engage with one another and I'm always in there encouraging collaborations and encouraging opportunities to engage. If somebody else is running a summit, I'm telling them who was fabulous in that topic area on my summit.

You know, I'm looking for ways to really give that to them. And what I found by this year summit is that I have this network of people because new to my summit this year is a mission that we're working on. And I know we're going to talk about that a little bit later, but I think what's been a game changer for me and my business is this vast network of people that I've created because I've worked so hard to nurture my speaker.

Yeah. And I think especially for our newer summit hosts out there that it's important to understand like, cause I talk a lot, I'm obviously I'm, I'm a summit guy, but I, I talk about how to grow your business too because ultimately we run the summit ascension model and when it comes to running a business, collaborations are one of the quickest and most powerful ways to really scale your business.

So I love what you've got there. And I want to get into the, the, the speaker group a little bit more here in just a second. But I also want to make a really important distinction here because I know a lot of our summit hosts also think, well, I need to do a 50,000 person summit. Like maybe 1500 people is not enough. And when I, when I hear that, I just like, that's 1500 people.

If you were going to do that in a physical event, a, uh, I don't, I can't remember the last 1500 person conference I've actually attended, right? So each one of those is an actual person that can move forward with your customer journey. And additionally, that's a six figure business. My first \$136,000 launch came from a list of 900 people.

So for all of our summit hosts, especially our new ones, even if that first summit is not a 5,000 or 10,000 person summit 1500, you got to remember that those aren't just numbers. Those are people. So I love what you got going on here. Marissa um, also what I'd love before we jump back into that speaker group, cause you've mentioned multiple times now how the summit has allowed you to create these collaborations with speakers and I'm way with you on this. Can you give us one example of a great collaboration that actually came out of with one of your speakers?

Yeah, for sure. Um, one of the things that I'm working on right now is I'm working with one of my speakers who is also a publisher, um, and we want to turn tracks inside the speaking, inside the summit into publications. And so that's, that to me is my most exciting opportunity to collaborate.

Obviously there've been tons of opportunities to speak on their summit, speak in their Facebook groups, um, you know, go into, um, these collaborations with regard to courses or retreats or live events or, or what have you there. I cannot even tell you how many times I have collaborated

with another female entrepreneur and added, you know, 500 to a thousand more people to my email list simply because I took the opportunity to reach out and say, hey, would you like to do this? Uh, one of my other speakers on collaborating with her and we're hosting a retreat.

So I'm always looking for ways in which to bring people together and, and provide our audience with even more value. So, you know, I know that speakers sometimes can be difficult to manage. There's a lot of back and forth, there's a lot of schedule changes. There's a lot of, you know, there's a lot of moving pieces in a summit.

I get that. But if you can look beyond that and you can say to yourself, wow, look at what this person has accomplished, how can I support them and elevate them that that is in turn also going to elevate myself in my company so that we can work together to provide our, both our audiences with even more value. That's the game changer piece.

It is such a game changer and I love that idea about the tracks in a publication. She actually got my mind going on a couple of things. I mean I've got 20 something summit sitting there that could easily be turned into physical either books or articles or things like that. So I love this idea. This is why I do this, right? I, I'm a student of the game, I'm constantly learning as well. So keep feeding me these ideas.

Marissa so let's jump into the back into the speaker group a little bit. Can you kind of walk us through this process of how, let's say, um, maybe start with your application process cause we were discussing that a little bit on our pre-interview chat. So kind of walk us through your, your specifically through your application process, like what that looks like and then maybe on the back end, what, what it looks like getting into your speaker group and then kind of what you do with that.

Yes. So, um, so I have a five step system that I put into place to manage my speakers because it is, there are a lot of moving pieces than it is, you know, a good bit of work to do. So. And if you're, you know, if you're a small team or for some of you out there being a one person show, you need to automate as much of this as possible.

And so my first step is a very robust application process and I want you to stop and think to yourself, what do I truly need from this speaker before my summit goes live? And some of those things are going to obviously be, you know, their social media channel links their headshot and it needs to look like a real headshot, not as Sophie, right? Cause you want to you want to raise the standard of your summit.

Um, you know, and I always collect from my speakers, their professional bio and their abstract and all of those pieces that I'm going to need their Freebie later. The third cause I always have my speakers give something away at my summit. I'm not one of those summit hosts that gives every speaker my full list.

And I know some of you are out there. I don't feel like I am being ethical to my attendees if I give every speaker that list. So instead I have my speakers provide a Freebie for my attendees and if they want that Freebie, obviously it should be set up on a landing page and then they can

collect email addresses that way. Um, so the first thing is that robust application process. I do mine inside Google forms because it automatically spits into a spreadsheet. And when that becomes a spreadsheet, which is step two, I can immediately weed out every one who did not complete the process.

Here's why you want to do that. If they are not willing to slow down and complete the application process, they're not very likely to answer and respond and, and fulfill the requirements of being a speaker for your summit. Perhaps they're not ready yet and that's okay. And I don't ever say, if you're not on board this year, you can't reapply next year. Right, because they can, some of your speakers simply aren't going to be there yet.

Right. And I have speakers inside by summit this year who've been following my summit for years and are finally at a place where they've stepped into their zone of genius and they want to share their knowledge and expertise. And so that, that kind of process, watching them grow over time is also magical to me. The third step is obviously weeding out anybody who did not follow the directions, didn't you know, do what you ask them to.

But also after looking at all of their links, checking their social media, determining what their message is, all of those people who's message doesn't quite align with yours. Now why do I care about that? Because my audience is coming to me as the experts in systems and I want to make sure the message that my speakers are sharing aligns with my values and my expertise.

With regard to systems, right? You're going to want to do the same thing when you're looking at who's applying to be a member of your summit, a speaker inside your summit, and then once I have kind of gone through and weeded through them, I send them a speaker agreement. Now I use doc hub because it's \$59 a year and I'm able to set up a template in there that I can send out to hundreds of people, so not only do I use it for my summit, but I use it for my podcast and I use it for all the other opportunities people have with which to engage with me in the online space.

I attached the welcome letter to the front of that speaker agreement. Now I've killed two birds with one stone, right? Again, automating that process so that in that welcome letter, it has everything they need to know from what type of microphone they need or headset. If they, if they're using a headset, it has, you know, all of the tips and tricks about not wearing any jewelry or not, you know, all of those things you don't really think about are inside my welcome letter.

And then the speaker agreement allows me to repurpose the content in any and all ways in which I want to repurpose it. Again, doc hub follows up with them so I don't have to play the email back and forth game that can, nobody wants to play anyway. And then step five is sending out that scheduling.

Like that scheduling link does not go out until all the other steps are complete, which means the speaker, if it puts the burden on the speaker to have Creighton, you know, completed [all those steps before they ever get the opportunity to schedule an interview with me. But that's not all inside my scheduling tool.

I also give a last minute questionnaire for anything that they may have forgotten. So let's say I've connected with a speaker and they're busy, they're of town, they're on vacation, they're at an event, whatever, whatever. And they haven't had a chance to send me their abstract or send me the three to four questions or topics that they want to make sure I touch on inside our interview.

Inside this questionnaire, they can fill those last minute pieces out. And some of my speakers, probably about 50% of my speakers actually create a specific Freebie for the event because of the topic that they're talking about at my event. So sometimes I'm also collecting those freebies, you know, on the back end. So that's pretty much my five step process and it has served me extremely well in making sure that I'm vetting my speakers and creating an event that's on a standard that I want it to be.

Again, once I've got all my speakers together, I then invite them to become members inside my speakers' community. Now only the speakers are allowed in the speakers community, not their assistance, not their, you know, their, their obms or whomever. I want the speaker themselves because my goal is to allow those speakers the opportunity to, you know, gain from the collaborative experiences that I gained four from over time. Right.

And, and because my goal is to empower these women, I want to empower all women that come in contact with my summit, but even my speakers kind of need that little extra push. And so I'm always encouraging inside the speakers community. I'm always encouraging them to tell us about events they have coming up. Tell us about, you know, what they have going on, where they might need a speaker and I'm, I'm reaching out and letting them know, hey, you know, this speaker was fabulous on such and such a topic.

You may want to touch base with her. And then I will, you know, I connect, but I tagged both of them in that post. Things like that where we're doing more, we're going above and beyond just showing up and doing our spiel and promoting and leaving. We're going above and beyond with the summit and the experience inside the summit to have those opportunities to connect and collaborate.

That's just so intriguing. I love that idea of the speaker group. I mean we've done, we've done speaker groups often, but usually they're like one offs or they're specific for a certain summit. But I like this kind of ongoing, almost like, you know, comradery or collaboration, [which again, collaborative marketing strategy, why not pass it on? Yeah. So this is, this is incredible and I've got a lot of great ideas going on over here, Marissa.

So I want to keep this, keep this going. So we've gone through your, your vetting process on how you worked through that. And I love this, I mean we're talking with the systems queen right here, right? So you're taking us through all of these systems, which I'm loving and all of you, some of the hosts, let me put this out there for you because I'm, I'm kind of one of those disorganized mess chaos or whatnot.

But if you're thinking like that, I will say it is, you've got to start somewhere, right? Even if you can't implement everything, start with one or two of these, get them in place. And then once you're comfortable with that, you implement one or two more. And I completely agree with you



that once you have that your ability move move at a much more rapid pace as well as scale at a much more rapid pace is, is, is so much more. So definitely be listening to this. Go back re-listened to implement this and maybe a Marissa you have something that we can put in the show notes where they can get access to your five step speaker vetting process.

Okay, cool. So moving forward with the speaker group, we've gone through that. I like to add, I also like to just ask, could you give us one or two more like kind of like, let's say your summit's over, the summit is gone and you run this summit annually. Um, can you let me know or let us know, what do you do more specifically?

Do you actually have a plan or a strategy ongoing after the summit on keeping that group engaged? Cause I know from my own perspective or my own experiences sometimes, you know, I get lazy, I'm not in my group enough and it kind of dies off. So give us a couple of your strategies or your systems on keeping that engaged throughout the whole year.

Yeah, for sure. So another thing that I tell my, um, my speakers as they come in, first of all, let me go back for just a second and let you know that this has been an ongoing group for the past couple of years and well over a third of my speakers have stayed in the group. That's, I mean I've, I've interviewed, you know, probably 150 women, we'll know [a little more than a third because I think at the last count I have 96 women still in the group.

So it's amazing that once you create this collaborative opportunity, how many people are going to stick around. Right. I've spoken on a ton of other speakers summits as well, which has given me, you know, that many more people on my email list, but the, the ongoing process. So every single speaker that comes to me before I do the interview, I kind of give them the housekeeping tips and a couple of those housekeeping opportunities are obviously the publication.

Um, you know, opportunity that's coming up where each speaker would be able to own a chapter inside the book. That's all about their area of expertise, right? So that collaborative kind of authorship opportunity and then also opportunities to be on my podcast moving forward. Um, and you know, obviously things that I don't know are going to come up.

I always turn to my speaker group before I turn to any other groups and I, I own a number of groups out here in the online space and I'm always interacting in those groups. But my speakers, because they are near and dear to my heart and they are really my VIP is when it comes to my summit, I give them opportunities before I turn those opportunities to anyone and everyone else. Again, my goal is to empower them and encourage those collaborative efforts that actually move all of us forward and move the needle on all of our businesses together.

So yes, I don't know that I have an exact system DM for collaborating with them, but I do make sure that I'm in that group several times a month, updating people on what's happening, asking them what's going on with them. introducing people.

When I see somebody else posts something where they're looking for, I jump in an answer and tag the speaker that that I think that they should turn to, or if they, that speaker has already left the group, I'll go shoot a message to that speaker real quick and say, Hey, somebody in the group

is looking for you. If you're interested, I'll introduce the two of you. So it's, it's really taking that opportunity and connecting them with people you know, can help them and support them and or vice versa. They can help and support. That's really all it's about. It's relationship

And that's so important. The relationship, as you just said, relationship building is what makes the partnerships and the collaborations happen. And even at one other kind of idea or tip that comes out with that is, you know, you're already giving opportunities when they come in for our summit hosts listening out there, even if you don't have a speaker group yet, um, when you get opportunities to speak on summits or even on podcasts, for example, every time I'm asked to speak on either a podcast or a summit, I always offer at least two people to that host of the podcast or the summit because you know, they're there, they're looking, they need people. And if you can help them look, they're gonna remember you.

So you're actually winning twice. You're helping the host. So now you're, you're a huge, they're a huge fan of yours, but you're also helping co these other speakers get opportunities.

So anytime you can kind of pair or match or share, it's always a great idea. So I, I love, I love this, um, with, with this now, like, so let's keep continue on this journey. Let's actually, um, w I, I had something pop up a couple, a couple of minutes ago when we were talking and I want to get this because I know sometimes I struggle around this.

I'm curious with your system, you have to tell some speakers no occasionally. Right? So I'd like, I like to hear kind of how that works, like how you handle that and how you kind of still may get like, uh, you're still good, but no. So kind of talk us through your, your know process when you have to tell speaker. No.

Yeah. So my no process, I follow up with an email, obviously similar to the welcome email. This is a, you know, sorry, we had hundreds of applications and I had to select only however many are in the summit, you know, um, but I do want to encourage you to reapply and also attend the summit later on so you can kind of see a little more about what I'm looking for in the inside, the application process.

So I always try to give them that, um, that piece that I was missing. Right. For some people it's they'll, they'll add their name, their email, and maybe their URL and then they don't finish the rest of it. And that tells me one of two things. Either they want me on their radar but they're crazy busy and they can't get to it at that moment. Or they're simply kind of freaked out and they just don't even know because it is a robust application process and I know it can be intimidating, right.

And so if they are somebody that I'm interested in, I will reach out to them. You know, I had one speaker this year who just had a baby and she was crazy busy and I had work the interview around her baby's schedule because she was, do you know, there was no putting that off, you know, so, so sometimes that happens with your speakers and you know, giving yourself that opportunity to come up with a really good email out to them when you have to reject somebody is extremely important.

The rejection, a lot of times when we get rejected, it's devastating to us. And what we need to remember about rejection is a lot of times it's, no, not right now. It's not no forever and ever. Amen. It's no, not right now.

And I've had that happen with a lot of speakers over the years that I've been running my summit where in year one or year two I did not accept them, but I did accept them this year, seeing what they've accomplished, seeing what they've done in the space, I recognize that they can be a motivator and, and that person that might empower one of my members of my audience or my and these and I want them to, you know, I want to give them that opportunity to speak at that point.

So just because you get a no, when you know, when you're asking, cause there, there have been times that I've applied to go speak somewhere and I've gotten a rejection letter. So I look at those rejection letters as it's, no, not right now. It's not no forever. Right. So that's kind of what I'm coming to the table with when I write my own rejection letters.

And obviously it's a, you know, it's a templated letter. It's a boilerplate letter because with hundreds of applications, I'm sending out a large number of those, but I do come to it with this idea. This is just no right now

And I liked that because it's actually a really important fact here, especially for those of you listening that are applying to be speakers on summit's a, a good friend of mine, Pete Vargas over at advance your reach. He actually has this process, I mean, and they're, they're putting speakers on stages on physical stages. So I mean that's a majority of no's with a few yeses, but they actually, the process they have, so I'll add onto yours because I think this could be a really big powerful moment for all of our summit hosts listening in here as you're trying to get on summit is when you get a no, they don't actually just say, okay, whatever.

And then even maybe apply again next year. What they actually do is they follow up with a completely, I understand and they look for a way to help that host out. Even though they got turned down to be on the summit, you better believe it's almost like a 70% yes rate on the next year for them getting that stage.

It's gonna work the same way on a virtual summit. If you get told no, look at that as an opportunity to shine and step up and don't just take that as a no one walk away from it, but find a way to actually step up and deliver some value to that host.

You almost guarantee you can be on their next project or their next summit. So for sure, one of the things that I'm thinking about implementing that I have not yet implemented is what's called a maturity model and a maturity model basically allows that speaker to rate themselves throughout the process of whatever it is you're asking them to do. In this case, it's the application process.

Right. You know, and obviously the first question might be, did you fill out the application a hundred percent what were your key takeaways? What were, you know, what is it that you gave me that made me want to think about bringing you on as a speaker? And the cool thing about the

maturity model is it allows me as a speaker to understand perhaps why I wasn't chosen and what I can do better the following year to make sure I'm chosen, if that makes sense. And I use maturity models a lot of times with my students, helping them to master whatever it is the task at hand is. And so I'm thinking about implementing that inside the summit process on the application process because I do have to send so many of these rejection letters.

Yeah, that would be, that would be an amazing thing to add to that. So as we near the end of the, the episode here, I want to take a slight, slight detour, slight turn and talk about something that you've been doing with this summit that you've, you've, you haven't done on your previous summits. And I'd like to kind of you to talk us through this, uh, kind of taking a stand or taking a mission and incorporating it in with your summit. Can you just walk us through what you're doing this time and kind of why?

Yeah, sure. Um, can I go a little deep? So, um, this year we decided to take on a mission and this mission gives the A WIHS Academy. The A Wish Academy is a, is something that is very, very near and dear to my heart because, um, it supports women coming out of domestic violence. And I was one of those women. And when I finally decided to leave, it took me five years to leave in another two years to get back on my feet.

And I know with the systems and the technology that we have available today, I can shorten that amount of time for women across the world. And so my goal with the wish academy is to teach women those, not only those hard marketable skills that we all need in order to make it in the space, but those soft skills that nobody wants to talk about.

Right. And the a wish academy has been something that's been on my agenda and I haven't been able to figure out kind of a way to funnel funds into it that, you know, that didn't touch my life, that didn't touch my livelihood and the things that I have going on and taking care of my own family.

So I kept getting this recurring dream, hey, you know, the summit can do this, the summit can do this. And I thought, wow, okay, that's a crazy thought. And then this is, this is all happening before the summit even got off the ground this year. Right. And then the, the name of the academy always came to me as a walk in her shoes and I'm like, that's way too long. Anybody that knows anything about marketing, you can't have something that long. And presented out there. And I was meeting with a colleague, I guess that's been about two months ago.

And she said, well, let's see what the acronym is. And she wrote the acronym out and it's A WISH and the h and the s are flip flopped, right? So that it's AWIHS, A WISH Academy. And I said that's why I couldn't get it out of my head. So what I'm finding is most of the women that I interview, probably two thirds or more of them have a similar background experience. And what I'm finding is the women are jumping behind me at this opportunity to support this effort. Several are saying, Hey, let me come in and teach a class inside your academy.

Hey, let me, you know, let me support you in figuring this piece out or that piece out. And what that's taught me is you can actually put together a mission that goes along with your summit. Still. My ultimate goal for the summit is empowering women.

Well, my ultimate goal for a wish academy is empowering women. So it aligns perfectly with what I'm trying to do. And granted, this is not something I've ever done before, but nobody gets to get out of line free card. So we all begin at the beginning, but I am super, super excited to see where this takes us into next year and beyond because of the network of people and the collaborations that I've built in being able to put together an academy that is going to be game changer for those women who are coming out of that space.

Most people who serve that group of, of women don't work with them in the place where they're trying to design a plan to get out because the yoga, right? They go back and forth and people won't touch them. The only real things that they have is maybe the local church.

They sometimes have shelters if they're not overwhelmingly crowded and the justice system, which oftentimes can be used against them by the perpetrator. So there's really nobody stepping in and saying, Hey, I can teach you project based skills so you can freelance in the online space.

I can teach you the systems to get your, to rebuild your life and get yourself out of there. I can teach you, you know, the soft skills that you're going to need to be able to break out of that toxic relationship. Nobody's saying those things to them, and that's what the a wish academy will do.

So this is an extremely inspiring and aspiring, uh, kind of project you've taken on and aligning it with your, uh, with your summit. And I think is, is really powerful. I've, I've had a host on here before who actually ran an entire summit around a charity, a nonprofit to help during, uh, times of disaster.

So I fully believe are going to be able to use this and scale it and grow it. And you're going to be helping thousands and thousands of people out there. So I'm really excited and happy for you. So as we start to round this out, um, first off, everybody listing in here, we've talked about a lot of different, uh, resources and aspects of this.

So please be sure to head over to the [show\\_notes@podcastdotvirtualsummits.com](mailto:show_notes@podcastdotvirtualsummits.com) forward slash zero five six so you can get access to all of these, including Marissa's 5-Step Speaker vetting system. So head over there for that and I'll, I'll just turn it over to you for a second to kind of give any kind of parting piece of advice and also, you know, let our summit host where they know where they can come find you at. Where are you hanging out at?

Yeah, for sure. I am the Systems Lounge on all channels. You can find me anywhere underneath the system's lounge. And I think my parting advice would simply be, you know, if you're thinking about doing a summit and you're scared because it might be too overwhelming, um, give yourself the opportunity to try it out.

I didn't even know what I would be capable of, you know, with regard to running a summit until the first year that I did it. I didn't know how much I would love the interview process. I didn't know how much I would love connecting and collaborating with the other women in my summit. I didn't know what an impact I was going to make on my audience until I actually stepped in and did it. So I would encourage each and every one of you who were thinking about it, give yourself the opportunity you didn't know you could ride a bike until you first did it either.

Right? So give yourself the opportunity to become a summit host and see whether or not it's something that's worth it to you. The other thing that I will say is give yourself time. You know there's a lot of conversation out here about, oh my gosh, you can do this in 24 hours or a month or 60 days or 90 days. If you feel like that's too much, it's okay to stretch this thing out for six months.

I start working on my summit every year, a year in advance of when it's going to go live. And the reason I do that is because I believe in running a stress free summit and I don't want my speakers stressed out and I don't want myself stress out and I want plenty of time to add in the new cool things that are going to come along with getting involved in the new set of speakers that are coming around the pipe.

So give yourself that opportunity to really hone in and look at your schedule, look at what you already have going on and determine whether or not you want to do it in 60, 90, you know, 180 days or whatever the case may be.

You can definitely find my summit at Biz systems, [summit.com](http://summit.com). I'm sure that those links will be below and definitely come ask any questions you have. You can look me up on the systems lounge. You can also find me under Marissa stone, either one of those locations. And I'm sure the links will also be in the show notes for that.

Absolutely. So great. Oh my God, this has been an absolutely incredible episode. I got so much information here. I love when we go deep on speakers because it's so important. I mean, that is what makes the summit happen

So thank you so much Marissa it's been absolutely incredible. I appreciate you for taking the time here. Want to give a shout out to all of our summit hosts who are listening to this episode? You rock.

I'm Dr. Mark T. Wade, founder of virtual summit software, and your message matters. So make sure you go check out the show notes, get access to all these amazing resources, and we'll see you on the next episode.

Bye everyone.