

# Speak Easy

Connect with Every Conversation

by **Lou Diamond**



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## THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Sometimes, that promising lead turns out to be a bust. The sales pitch fails to land the client. But what if you knew the steps to “set up” each conversation to increase the likelihood that you connect, engage and win? Lou Diamond, a storyteller, podcaster, and professional speaker, wrote his book, *Speak Easy: Connect With Every Conversation*, to address the questions above and more. He has analyzed, edited, and broken-down thousands of interviews and great conversations.

Through him, you now have exclusive access to proven strategies, tactics, and lessons to make more of your conversations lead to great connections.

## IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- Some of the best-kept secrets of some of the world’s elite interviewers and conversationalists.
- The mindset you should strive to be in before, during and after you have a conversation.
- How to prepare, maximize, and continue a great conversation.
- How to utilize a conversation to connect with prospects, engage with partners, clients, and colleagues.
- How to win the sales, deals, and relationships you need to get your business to thrive

## Introduction

In Speak Easy, you will learn the skills and develop the tools you need to increase the likelihood that more of your conversations lead to great connections. Speak Easy will address the mindset you should strive to be in before, during, and after you have a conversation, as well as how to prepare, maximize and continue a great conversation. Speak Easy will show you how to utilize a conversation to connect with prospects, engage with partners, clients and colleagues, and win in business and in life.

At the end of each chapter is a section titled “Connect, Engage & Win,” in which you will find tips, techniques, and best practices utilized by some of the world’s greatest communicators and leaders. The suggestions in these sections are specifically geared toward connecting with business prospects and targets. You will receive tips for engaging your audience to win the sales, deals, and relationships you need to get your business to thrive. Think of Speak Easy as your playbook to tap into the unlimited potential that lies in every conversation.

## Conversations Matter

Too often, sales professionals, team leaders, and CEOs approach their sales and client meetings as business presentations.

By approaching a meeting with the mindset that you need to present who you are and tell them what you do, you’re more focused on delivering a performance than establishing a connection and engaging with them. Rather than approaching a business meeting as a dog and pony show, try to engage in a conversation. Asking questions, viewing reactions, and listening to what your prospects have to say will create a more stimulating environment for your meeting. It also will create a more engaging, vibrant environment that is way more enjoyable than having to watch the uninviting and uneventful “PowerPoint march of death.”

Remember that we all love and need more conversations in our lives. Ditch the slides and the scripts. Take the initiative and have a conversation in all your business meetings.

## What Makes A Conversation Engaging?

As you think about an engaging conversation, whether personal or for business, review your approach ahead of time to see if the Seven Cs resonate with the audience you are about to connect to.

Are you going to speak about familiar content within a relatable context? Even though you are familiar with what you’re going to talk about, are you going to communicate your thoughts and message in a clear, easy-to-understand manner? Will you share content through an authentic lens that demonstrates the creativity within you that is unique to your specific circumstances? Can you speak with a continuous flow and a familiar cadence that will keep your audience engaged? Will you find a way to connect your thoughts and ideas, which in turn will establish a connection with whom you are speaking?

The more of the Seven Cs you’re able to incorporate as you converse, the more likely you’ll achieve an engaging conversation.

## Sound Check

Utilize prep time by running through a thorough sound check. Before group presentations, have a member of your team role-play a prospect or client. That individual should ask the really tough questions, and the team should work on the most common Mock Tales that are applicable to the situation.

Examples of these might be why your company was founded, what problem your product solves, what your team specializes in, and what you can expect if you choose to hire us. In addition, this is the opportunity to work on engaging in a conversation versus sticking to the presentation deck.

After the sound check, talk amongst the team and discuss if the session felt more like a presentation or an organic conversation. The more your responses come across as natural, the more prepared you are to engage in a business conversation.

## Show Prep

Let’s demonstrate how you can connect your V.O.I.C.E. by walking through a popular business activity: an initial sales meeting.

V. Visualize how you will go about connecting with your target or prospect. This might entail asking questions to learn about the individual, what they do, what their needs are, and where they need help. In turn, you might be asked exactly the same questions. You then could visualize sharing some of the ways you could potentially help this target. You could also envision that this will be the first of many subsequent conversations.

O. Be appreciative that you'll get an opportunity to learn about this individual's role within their business. Another great thing that will happen is that you will get a chance to better understand this person themselves. Regardless of making a sale, this opportunity to connect is what you should be most interested in.

I. In most initial sales meetings, the role of "question asker" is the identity you'll take on. You are trying to gather as much information within this conversation as is needed to be helpful to your target

C. "You do you." Don't be afraid to show charisma by adding in some of your personality, humor, interests, and the things that make you unique. Be prepared to be open when sharing, including in your physical stance.

E. People love to connect to others with high energy. Gauge the individual you're with and try to raise the energy level a little above where they are at. Try to rev your engine when asking your questions and learning about your target prospect. It's sometimes tempting to show more excitement when you are talking about your own work or your offering. Keep in mind that in trying not to overpower the prospect, you might come across as not excited about them. Balance your energy and embrace this opportunity to learn about another person. That is where your connection will be strongest and where the conversation will appear to flow the smoothest.

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## Set The Stage

Be excited and enthusiastic about the opportunity to have a conversation. Make everyone involved in the conversation feel comfortable and at ease. Provide a clear path toward what you plan to talk about. Give a heads-up as to how you'd like to conclude the conversation.

If you are providing a literal agenda, make it concise. Use one-word descriptors representing the topics that need to be covered (sales, marketing, operations, and so on). Next to each agenda item, list the names of the individuals that will address that specific topic within the meeting. The simpler the agenda is, the more likely the meeting will head down a path toward being a connecting conversation.

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## Show Up

The major message for top sales professionals around the globe when it comes to showing up is to aim to be the "host" versus being the "guest" in prospective business conversations.

Every talk show host or podcast interviewer is tasked with asking great questions that the guest answers, which creates an engaging conversation. Your goal should be to do the same—ask great questions as if you were the host—in a business meeting, conversation, or presentation.

While both parties in a business conversation are learning about one another in an initial meeting, the one asking the questions is the one driving the conversation. The more questions you ask, the more you can cater your answers to your target.

When you show up in a business conversation, you need to authentically demonstrate that you are appreciative of the time you've been given to converse. When you show up, you need to demonstrate that the way you are in this conversation is how you always will aim to be.

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## Fun Street

The Thrive LOUD podcast has a dedicated segment toward the end of each episode that's called "Fun Street." Within this segment, the guest is presented with a set of rapid-fire questions where the answers are all about things that make them feel good about themselves and things they love and truly enjoy. You can use these suggestions as icebreakers to start conversations or as a way to close meetings on a high note.

"Share something fun." Whether in introductory meetings, weekly team huddles, or board meetings, kick-start your conversation by having at least one person share something fun they have planned. Whatever it is, hearing what others like to do establishes a happy, upbeat tone.

"What are your favorite things to eat?" A large sales team of a Fortune 500 company concludes every weekly sales call with one person sharing a recipe for something they love to prepare. This feature became so popular that the company created a special blog section on its corporate website with a new recipe each week.

"Tell us about an activity you wish you did more of." Too often, work gets in the way of our getting to do the things we really love. Asking and sharing what activities you love to do helps you to connect. It's fun to learn what people like and even more fun when there's an overlap of interests.

"Talk about an activity you wish you did less of." On the flip side, learning what people don't like doing can also be enjoyable because you can commiserate with each other.

Find some shared joy when you learn someone else dislikes doing what you dislike. That’s called making “unfun” fun.

“If you could go anywhere in the world . . .” While we may not all love to travel, we all have a favorite place. Learning where that spot on this planet is for each of us is always intriguing. In addition, you’ll be amazed at how many people have been to some of your favorite places. It is always fun to share common experiences.

## Last Call

There is nothing more gratifying in the sales process than to see a conversation within a meeting begin to establish a genuine connection. However, many times the conversations within the meeting can run longer than the allocated time, and the meeting must come to an abrupt halt with no clear next steps or action items. To be clear, in a business setting, the meeting cannot end until you’ve had “last call.”

To make certain everyone’s needs are served within a meeting, every meeting should have a designated timekeeper. This individual’s primary job is not only to make sure the meeting stays on track but also to allocate time for your last call with a few minutes to spare to summarize key action items and immediate next steps.

The importance of summarizing the meeting and what needs to happen next cannot be overstated. A well-defined last call session with clear “calls to action” can transform an initial conversation into an ongoing business relationship. In prospective sales conversations, ideally, these next steps

could entail flushing out the specifics for a proposal to share how you can work together and help one another.

## Outro (Conclusion)

We live in very busy times, and we have a lot of things to do every day. Time is one of the most valued resources we have. We don’t ever really want to waste it. Understanding the importance of brevity in this fast-paced world is about appreciating the time we have with others. Recognize that it is truly a privilege to make the time to sit down and have a great conversation with another busy human being. Make the most of the time you have and be respectful of it by optimizing and being “straight and to the point” within your conversations.

The connection made through a great conversation is a “win” for everyone involved in the conversation and everyone connected as well. Because when we move onward and upward, we thrive.



**Lou Diamond** is a highly sought-after speaker, sales and marketing consultant, leadership and performance mentor and podcaster. Author of *Master the Art of Connecting* and CEO of Thrive, Lou has made it his life’s work to help businesses, leaders and brands thrive through the power of connecting. His innovative connecting tactics have helped hundreds of companies across the globe explode their sales, retain their clients and build a thriving culture.

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