

---

PROFILE

---

# ENLIGHTENED INSIGHT

---

SONJA PIONTEK

---

How a keynote speaker solves problems for client companies  
by standing before a mic in a room packed with people



**M**s. Sonja Piontek indicates for me her exact location as global keynote speaker, her new calling, on the speakers' map. We first met when she was the director of marketing for BMW Asia and reconnected when she started organizing luxury trips — those meticulously planned, no-expense-spared adventures for very wealthy clients — under her company Sonnenkind. Ms. Piontek is always filled with electric ideas and positive energies, and her latest journey is one that I expected would have come about sooner rather than later.

In the world of professional speaking are different kinds of speakers, she explains. Content speakers present in-depth content and are predominantly seen at conferences. Platform speakers use the stage to sell their products and services, and are often well-versed in sales psychology. Motivational and inspirational speakers are highly engaging speakers who inspire and touch the audience. Last but not least are keynote speakers — the main speaker of the day who deliver important messages that support the objective, set the tone and the framework for the overall success of the event. Besides these main types are their hybrid versions.

“You could probably best describe me as a deeply inspiring keynote speaker with a clear focus on creating tangible results for my clients,” she explains to me. “I take great pride in sustainably inspiring my audiences, and sharing with them valuable content as well as powerful tools.”

**Portfolio: How did you get started with being a keynote speaker? Was it something that you imagined you could be doing?**

*Sonja Piontek:* When I was the director of marketing for BMW Asia, I got regular invitations to speak at regional conferences and events. I thoroughly enjoyed sharing my insights and views on how to build one of the world's most aspiring brands successfully. When I left BMW, I didn't think I'd get to speak much again, as I assumed the main reason for booking me had been my fancy corporate title — after all, having the director of marketing for BMW Asia on stage is quite a draw for an event. To my surprise, the requests kept coming in. Corporates and event organizers made it very clear that they were interested in the content that I delivered and the way they had seen me inspire the crowds. I was baffled, humbled and excited at the same time. Of course, I accepted and went back on stages across Asia to speak.

**Take me back to your early days as a keynote speaker. What was the occasion and what did you cover?**

In the early days, I spoke a lot about “Marketing Magic” and how to create impressive return on investment through unforgettable brand experiences. Given my background, this was quite an obvious choice. Clients and audiences loved it, and I felt really comfortable doing it. But soon I realized that people often gave me feedback on how I had inspired them, challenged them to think outside the box, and triggered something in them that made them want to reach for higher grounds. It looked as if at that stage I had already started the transformation from being a content speaker to being an inspiring keynote speaker. Getting all this encouraging audience feedback helped me to pursue this beautiful path.

**What areas do you usually speak about, and who typically engages you to speak?**

The main topic I speak about today is UltraCreativity, which is an extremely powerful concept I have developed. To me, UltraCreativity is a mindset that allows you to achieve unparalleled excellence and rise to even higher grounds.

Most of my bookings come from multinationals and global corporate clients that deeply appreciate the fact that I “speak their language” and understand the challenges they face. Often they need me to help create an openness for change, an agile mindset, a willingness to do things differently or think outside the box.

As for the preparation of any speech, the core part for me is the in-depth alignment with the clients to fully understand their target group, their challenges, their objective and their needs. In order to maximize the outcome for my clients, I craft every message and every speech exactly to their specific case. This has proven very successful.

**Is public speaking a generally lucrative profession?**

Not generally. But like in any other field, people are prepared to pay premium dollars for premium products or services. It does, however, take a lot to build a premium global speaker brand and be recognized as top of the field. But once you are there, there's certainly good money to be made. After all, clients don't pay for a one-hour gig. They pay for a lifetime of experience, a stellar performance, and a life-changing inspiration for the audience with tangible results for their business or their brands.



### How does one learn public speaking?

There are courses you can book, speaker associations you can join, and trainings you can take. However, the five tips that I would like to share with any aspiring speaker are the following: 1) Don't quit your day job before you have built a professional speaking career, 2) practice, practice, practice, 3) ask for constructive feedback and take that feedback seriously, 4) never forget that being a speaker is not about being on stage, it's not about you, it's all about the people in the audience and serving them as best as you can, and 5) have fun because it is one of the most rewarding professions in the world.


### How did you reach the level you are at now? What qualities must a keynote speaker possess in order to become a good one?

Over the past few years I was able to develop a successful career as a global keynote speaker. What helped me tremendously was the credibility I had gained through my international executive career with BMW. What was also extremely helpful was the fact that I professionally built my premium speaker brand right from the start. This involved developing top-notch content and a proper brand image, defining my positioning, getting professional photos

taken, and developing the right video material and all the many collaterals you need in order to properly reply to incoming requests.

But it also means that I had to deliver on top level every single time I went on stage. I had to nail it for Google, Gilead, the Badminton World Federation, Land Rover or my speech in the Allianz Arena where they normally celebrate international soccer stars. And by nailing it I don't just mean getting fantastic feedback from the audience, standing ovations or the likes.

### Where do you plan to take this profession?

I have so far spoken in 22 countries, all the way from New Zealand to Mongolia. My dream is to reach a total of 50 nations within the next five years. I would like to get to know and work with the most diverse international leaders of multinational companies, and help them crack their challenges and see their teams start to soar. And at the core of it, to spread the powerful message of UltraCreativity across the globe. 

*If you are looking for a highly engaging speaker who delivers tangible results, visit [www.sonjapiontek.com](http://www.sonjapiontek.com) or get in touch directly via [info@sonjapiontek.com](mailto:info@sonjapiontek.com).*