

Tips for Speaking at HCCA/SCCE Conferences

By Adam Turteltaub

Adam Turteltaub is Chief Engagement & Strategy Officer for SCCE & HCCA. Prior to that, he was at a compliance training provider and regularly earned slots on both the HCCA and SCCE conference agendas. Below are his tips as someone who successfully earned panels at many conferences, and as an association staff member who has reviewed thousands of proposals.

1. Submit your proposal on time. The SCCE & HCCA receives many more proposals than there are session openings. As a result late submissions will not be accepted.
2. Make sure the title and description are clear in terms of what attendees will learn at the session. A colorful title is fine, but make sure people can see from the description exactly what the session will cover.
3. Avoid marketing speak and lingo in your proposal. Too many buzz words turn reviewers off. Likewise, if you're using special phrases or terms that your company uses to market, it sends up red flags in front of reviewers: they'll be afraid you're going to do a commercial.
4. Having in-house presenters helps a great deal. Being a vendor and speaking alone isn't a deal breaker, but attendees do like hearing from fellow practitioners. So, if you can present with a practitioner, do.
5. If you have a panel, be sure to have all of the panelists lined up before you submit. We often receive multiple proposals about the same topic. If your proposal doesn't have all the speakers listed, it probably will lose out to a similar proposal that lists everyone.
6. No commercials. I know it sounds obvious, but we do receive proposals that are clearly advocating for one vendor's approach to a problem. The committee reviewing proposals rejects those very quickly. And, if you do get on the agenda and your session turns into a commercial, it will be a long time before you are invited to speak again.
7. Think about atypical takes on hot topics. Some topics are hot and as a result we can receive half a dozen or more virtually identical proposals. If you're addressing something that is in a hot topic area, think of a proposal that isn't the standard one and illuminates a part of the problem that people may not have thought of yet.
8. Make sure your proposal is relevant to the conference and not your standard proposal. If it's off topic or clearly a proposal originally written for another conference, reviewers will spot it immediately.
9. Be nice and a bit humble. It's okay to call the SCCE & HCCA to learn more about the process for selecting sessions. Don't call telling us how great you are, how no one else has a product/solution/vision/panel as brilliant as yours. We don't like to be sold to, and in the end, the decision of who speaks is made via a committee that includes volunteers.
10. Don't fixate on the annual meeting. Yes, it's the biggest event, but you can have a lot of impact at our smaller, vertical meetings where the competition to speak is often less. Plus, you'll be able to reach a more targeted audience. Also, think about submitting a proposal for a web conference. We're always eager to hear new ideas.