

How to Give a Bad Presentation at an HCCA or SCCE Conference

By Adam Turteltaub

People often ask about how to get on the agenda for SCCE and HCCA conferences. I've written about that before and [the advice](#) still very much applies.

What they don't ask is: how do I give a bad presentation?

Obviously, no one wants to give a bad presentation, but some do anyway. They don't intend for their presentation to be weak, but it just works out that way.

If you do want to give a bad presentation, I've unlocked my curmudgeonly side and am pleased to provide the Seven Elements of a Dreadful Compliance Conference Presentation. They come from my observations and from the speaker evaluations I've seen across dozens of conferences. And if you don't want to give a bad presentation, read them anyway, just add the word "Don't" before each one.

1. **Start with the basics.** If you want to put the audience to sleep there's nothing like beginning a presentation with an explanation of what an effective compliance program is and what the seven elements are. Remember: you're talking to a room full of compliance people. Trust that they know what a compliance program is. The one exception: if you're session is a 101 on the basics of compliance. Then it's okay. Otherwise, skip the introduction to compliance.
2. **Go heavy on minute detail about the law and regulation, and go light on what compliance people should do as a result of those laws and regulations.** If you're giving a presentation on HIPAA or FCPA, for example, odds are good people walked into the room because they already know what HIPAA or FCPA is but need to figure out what to do about it. They don't need to hear you recapping what the law is and requires. What they want to know is how do they manage this risk area effectively. What are people doing new that is working, what are some new issues that have come up either out of the mouths of regulators or based on recent settlements. Again, same exception: if your session is billed "Understanding the very most basics of HIPAA" then it's okay to get into the basics.
3. **Spend time discussing the value of compliance programs.** I know, it sounds ridiculous, but a lot of presentations begin with discussing the value of a compliance program. Remember, your audience is compliance officers. If they didn't think compliance provided value to an organization they wouldn't have the job. Well, maybe they would have the job, but they would be hanging out at the pool instead of sitting in your session. Unless you have a hot new study showing how to demonstrate the value of your compliance program to management, skip that part. Move on to the subject at hand, and assume people who work in compliance value compliance.
4. **Ask the people in the room to introduce themselves to each other.** The networking sessions are for them to meet each other. The conference sessions are for them to learn from you. And, remember you may not be the only person asking them to introduce themselves to each other. They get sick of it real fast. Also, nothing says, "I don't have enough content to fill my talk" than spending 10 minutes on introductions.

5. **Give a sales pitch either for yourself as a vendor, or for the vendor who asked you to present with him or her.** Okay, I've been sort of guilty of this one. When I was a vendor, I would put together panels and was pretty good at getting them on the agenda of conferences. That's how I got to know the HCCA and SCCE. I was also good about not pitching our service, but sometimes a customer would feel the need to say how great a solution provider we were. I would quietly cringe while I could see the audience squirm. If you're a vendor for a solution for X, talk about X, not your solution. And ask, beg, demand, implore, and plead with your panelists not to sing your praises. Heck, offer them a discount if they promise not to gush about you. Plus, whatever you do, no more than one **brief** slide on your background. People figure you know your stuff if the association put you on the agenda. They don't want to hear about all your accomplishments.
6. **Take your time getting to the heart of the issue.** In some ways this repeats some of the points above, but if you've got some great insights, don't spend ten or twenty minutes setting the stage. Get into it quickly. Otherwise, you end up running two risks. First, people lose interest and walk out before the good stuff. Second, you may run out of time before you deliver the content people really want to hear.
7. **Go over time.** People have other sessions to go to, giant cookies to eat at the break, and great gobs of email to answer. If you go over, they resent it, you look unprepared, and you make it much harder for us to get the room ready for the next presentations.

Now that the Seven Elements of a Dreadful Compliance Conference Presentation have been revealed, I hope you won't be tempted to use them.