

Identifying, Vetting, and Recruiting High Quality Speakers

The best CLEs have engaging experts as presenters. The quality of the presenter can make or break a program. Considerations for identifying, recruiting, and vetting high-quality speakers are included below, along with an evaluation matrix to assist in the vetting process.

What makes a good speaker?

- **Relevance and expertise:** The speaker's content and skills should match the goals for the program and expected audience.
- **Energy and engagement:** A speaker can make a program succeed or flop. Even if they are the leading expert on a topic, if they can't deliver the information in a captivating or entertaining manner, the audience will lose interest. Try to find speakers who are dynamic and use various methods to keep audiences engaged (interaction, polls/visual aids, co-presenters/panels to present different perspectives, etc.).
 - Professors and others in academia are often skilled at communicating information in a way that's easy for the audience to digest. Be sure to consider academics and other types of professional trainers when looking for speakers.
- **Experience and ability:** Consider what kind of speaker will resonate with your audience. Be sure that their background aligns with the program goals and topic, and if possible, that they have some speaking experience and are able to speak on the topic being presented.

How do you find a speaker?

- Use your network. It's always good to start with who and what you know. Members who have spoken at past ISBA CLEs are a natural place to begin.
 - Reference the CLE team's Speaker Ranking Spreadsheet to find a past ISBA speaker on a given topic and view their attendee rankings.
 - Utilize the post-event feedback shared by the CLE team after a program.
- Members/staff may also consider speakers they have seen at other events, or put a call out to the section, committee, or other professional networks for suggestions.
 - Regularly encourage section and committee members to recommend quality speakers they see at other events and keep a list of potential options.
- The Indiana Office of Admissions & Continuing Education has a [course search tool](#) that can be used to find past and upcoming CLEs. This may be helpful if you are struggling to think of a speaker on a given topic and want to see what other courses have been offered (and who led them).
- If an event calls for a bigger name (i.e. a more high-profile keynote speaker), national speakers bureaus may be useful. Note that national, more well-known speakers are generally more expensive.
 - [National Speakers Bureau](#)
 - [NSB](#)
 - [AAE Speakers](#)
 - [Key Speakers](#)
 - [American Bar Association Speakers Bureau](#)
- One thing to keep in mind: It's easy to continue to use the same individuals every time a speaker is needed for a given topic. Don't be afraid to branch out, and be mindful that some members

do a LOT of speaking engagements and it's easy to get burned out. Try not to use and abuse the same people over and over again.

Tips and best practices for vetting a new speaker:

1. Watch them speak live or virtually to ensure their quality and abilities.
2. If possible, review the speaker's previous events/speaking engagements. It is perfectly acceptable to contact these event hosts to ask questions about the experience of working with the speaker.
3. Expectations are key. Make sure the member or staff member who recruits the speaker communicates:
 - a. Program goals
 - b. Expected audience
 - c. Program format
 - d. Program length
 - e. Opportunities to increase engagement (polls, audience interaction, etc.)
 - f. Whether written materials are expected/required
4. Reach out well in advance of the program so you are not scrambling for a speaker at the last minute.

Speaker Vetting Matrix

Has the speaker led a CLE for the ISBA before?		Is the speaker considered a subject matter expert?	Does the speaker bring a diverse perspective to the discussion?	Has the speaker been informed about the topic and audience?	How will the speaker's content benefit the audience?
If yes: Did the speaker receive positive ratings?	If no: Has a member seen the speaker before?				
Additional thoughts/discussion:					