

ASK THE EXPERTS ISPA CONFERENCE & EXPO 2012

Putting together a well-planned, exciting and education-packed ISPA Conference & Expo each year takes a village. It's easy to forget the long stretch of planning, time, communications and expertise invested into the event each year unless you're part of the creative crew behind the scene.

But how do you exactly put up a great show? Where do you find brilliant speakers? How do you piece together an Expo floor on a tight deadline? *Pulse* walks you through behind the scene with insights from some of the experts who have helped put together a great ISPA Conference each year.

TIM MATHY Partner, Speak Inc.

1. How long have you been working behind the scenes at the ISPA Conference?

The first speaker I booked for ISPA was Erik Wahl for the 2004 ISPA Conference. I guess I owe him a "Thank You" because I have worked with ISPA ever since.

2. What's the most challenging part of your job?

Finding the next great speaker. ISPA does a great job of taking risks and selecting great speakers [so] that it creates a challenge to top it the next year. It keeps me up at night.

3. How do you source or field your speakers?

We have thousands of speakers in our database. I watch a ton of videos, but the best way to get a feel for a speaker is seeing them live. I attend a lot of events in Denver, but also travel to see a speaker live. I also have good friends [who] are competitors and we share speaker information [at] a regular basis.

With ISPA [this year], I thought Peter Sheahan would [make] a great keynote speaker. [ISPA President] Lynne McNees and [Vice President] Becky Brooks were [at an] event where he spoke and after hearing him, they felt the same way [as I did] and booked him on the spot. Lynne wrote about this in her "End Notes" [column in *Pulse*] a few months back.



TIM MATHY

4. What is the typical process in selecting the right speakers?

There is no exact process, it differs from year to year. You have the Sheahan example, but other times, it can take months to find the right speaker. ISPA trusts my opinion which helps a ton and leadership knows who is "hot" and good. The theme and learning points ISPA wants to convey that year also influences who is selected. The 2012 ISPA Conference has yet to happen, but I already have some ideas in

mind for the 2013 ISPA Conference in Las Vegas. I am sure the ISPA staff and I will chat about speakers before everyone arrives in Orlando.

5. What key qualities or criteria do you look for when finding the best speakers?

I get asked this question a lot, and there [are] no exact criteria. I wish I had a better answer, but when you have been doing this as long as I have, you just know what good is when you see it. The speaker has an "it" quality that is hard to explain.

A [couple of] years back in [Washington] DC, ISPA booked Marcus Buckingham and Doc Hendley as keynotes. Buckingham wore an expensive suit and [was] a very polished speaker. Hendley wore boots and jeans and [was] so authentic, you knew he spoke from the heart. Very different styles, but both have the "it" factor and delivered. ■