

My First Speaking Engagement at ISC West: Tips for Success

I took the stage for the first time at ISC West 2023, and delivered my first in-person, thought leadership speaking sessions in the Security Industry. As a speaker, there's nothing quite like the excitement and nerves that come with preparing for your first speaker event – I was a ball of nerves before taking the stage. Whether you're a seasoned professional or a first-time speaker, there are a few things to keep in mind to help ensure a successful and memorable presentation.

Preparation is Key

The more you prepare, the more confident you'll feel when you take the stage, simple as that. Dedicating time and effort to developing, familiarizing, and practicing your material is the most important preparation you can do – your tone, ability to flow through the presentation and your mastery of the material gives you credibility as both a speaker, and a subject matter expert.

It's never too early to begin preparing for an event like ISC West – I was fortunate enough to have 3 great co-presenters that helped us stay accountable with our preparation. Having a dedicated cadence of meetings to develop and practice our presentation helped ensure that everyone was on the same page and that the presentations ran smoothly. In addition to prioritizing run-throughs with your groups, it can be helpful to run through your presentation with a friend or colleague who can give you honest feedback as well as identify areas of improvement.

Managing Anxiety and Imposter Syndrome

Even with all the preparation you can do, it's normal to feel some level of anxiety and imposter syndrome leading up to taking the stage. This is especially true if you're new to speaking! The Security Industry is a relationship-based industry, so try inviting a few familiar faces to attend your session, as well as connect with other speakers and attendees so you feel more confident and comfortable. Networking can lead to valuable connections and opportunities down the line, and a speaking engagement is a great way for someone to get to know you! Remember, you were chosen to speak for a reason, and the audience is there to learn from you and benefit from your expertise.

Pay Attention to Body Language

The best speakers, the ones who capture a room, command a presence that stems from non-verbal communication as much as the actual speaking. As a speaker, you need to have stage presence – good posture, eye contact with the audience and co-presenters, and charisma will not only help your audience stay engaged, but will help you appear polished, prepared and in command of the room. My first speaking engagement was both exciting and nerve-wracking. By focusing on preparation, having a strong relationship and cadence of meetings with co-presenters, and managing through any feelings of hesitation and paying attention to your stage presence can set you up for success and help you make a lasting impression on your audience.