

Return of the Speaker Assistant

By Dori Allen


Nashville saw the return of the speaker assistant — this valuable volunteer position. With the speaker assistants, speakers are less pressured, especially when they have back-to-back sessions. Speaker assistants participate in the volunteer spirit of COMMON and get more involved. With speaker assistants, attendees receive more organized, coordinated sessions. In short, things run a whole lot smoother.

post conference speaker Survey, where we find out what went well for the speakers, the presence of this role was the clear winner. It got mentioned time after time in the writein comments. This year, Speaker assistants wore a green volunteer ribbon on their badge identifying them as an appreciated resource and their names were put into the “hat” and to be eligible for the nightly drawing of iCAN caps. As if those fashion statements weren’t enough, first time volunteers also got

was only my second COMMON and it was a nice way to get involved without having to compromise my agenda while attending the classes. I will definitely sign up again the next chance I get to come to COMMON.”

Speakers were also positive about having speaker assistants. On the speaker survey we asked, “What went well for you in Nashville?” It generated responses such as: “I loved having a speaker assistant”, and “Speaker assistants helped to do some tasks for me.” In fact, not one speaker had a negative comment about speaker assistants.

With such excellent results at Nashville, the Volunteer Excellence Team is already gearing up for repeating this opportunity in Reno. We’re especially interested in recruiting folks who don’t already have a volunteer position within COMMON. To help you take on this role, a team member will be at the sign up board at Registration to explain how the board works and encourage new volunteers to sign up. Previous speaker assistants will be contacted in advance of the conference and reminded of the opportunity.

So, if you were one of the speaker assistants, THANKS! You made a difference. If the prospect of being a speaker assistant sounds good to you, watch for the sign up board in Reno, Nevada. If you’d be willing to lend a hand during registration or during an iSocial (signing up new speaker assistants or explaining the role), please contact the volunteer excellence team. We’d be glad to help try and match you up with a role which capitalizes on your talents and interests. You can reach us at: VolExcellence@common.org. 



Volunteer speaker assistants at COMMON's Annual Meeting in Nashville

What is the role of a speaker assistant? In theory, the speaker assistant signs up to help a speaker at a session. The speaker assistant arrives in a timely fashion, distributes both handouts and evaluation forms, assists the speaker when problems arise such as blow outs or projector problems and at the end of the session insures that the evaluations are handed in and placed in the proper envelope. By helping with these administrative tasks, the speaker has more time to focus on answering questions and getting equipment set up.

The volunteers pictured here took on this role by signing up in advance – during Registration or at the iSocials — to help out at a session they already planned to attend. By the look of this photo, they must have enjoyed the experience. Just look at the smiles on those faces! They got the opportunity to help their favorite speaker and the grateful appreciation of the speaker community. In fact, on the

to sport a cool “1st Timers (I made a difference!)” button.

But don’t believe me, here are some comments from several of the 30 speaker assistants who stepped forward in Nashville. **Marilyn Lemasters**, Columbia Insurance Group: “Thank you for the opportunity to be speaker assistant, I very much enjoyed it. Everyone was wonderful to work with and if I am able to attend COMMON again, would be happy to volunteer.” **Victoria Wolfe**, Georgia Pacific: “It was my honor to assist my favorite speakers that I have looked up to for many years. If I get a chance to make it to the next conference, I will be happy to volunteer and contribute to COMMON.” **Jeff Green**, AGC Automotive Americas: “I was a speaker assistant at the conference and it was a lot of fun. I don’t have a lot of time to volunteer and this made an easy way for me to become involved.” **Michael Whitmer**, AmTrust Bank: “This

About the Author

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