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The Lawyer's Guide to Profitable Virtual Presentations, Part 3

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THE LAWYER'S GUIDE TO PROFITABLE VIRTUAL PRESENTATIONS, PART 3

By Cynthia Sharp, The Sharper Lawyer

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Part 1 of this article, published in the [January 2017 issue](#) of the *GPSolo eReport*, addressed the challenges of choosing topics and finding audiences when offering a virtual presentation. Part 2, published in the [February 2017 issue](#), focuses on strategies designed to engage viewers/listeners who will ultimately either refer or become a client.

Have you ever endured a CLE where the attorney rambles on without any apparent sequence to the remarks, reads lengthy excerpts from case law, tells endless war stories that don't seem to relate to the topic at hand, or all of the above? You can avoid subjecting your own audiences—virtual or otherwise—to this fate by learning how to structure engaging presentations.

Let's examine the approach of special-education attorney Alan Dale as he writes a presentation on the topic "Transitioning from High School to College." (This case study is based on the experience of a client whom I recently coached; however, the name has been changed to protect confidentiality.)

Core Message

Before putting pen to paper, Alan reflects on the core message that he wishes to convey to his audience, which will be composed of parents of children who need special-education services. Having previously delivered the material as part of a CLE session, he has mastered the content but will need to restructure it to address the needs of the parents. His message to attorneys was that zealous representation requires knowledge of all resources available to help clients, while the

core message to parents is that they have the responsibility to take advantage of all available resources to ensure that their child has an opportunity to reach full potential as an adult.

Opening

Great openings engage the audience right out of the gate. My favorite technique is to begin with a story. Other approaches are to start with a surprising statistic, a quote, or even silence while you scan the audience. Compare these two openings. Which would be more appealing to a group of parents?

Opening 1. “Hi, I’m Alan Dale and I’ve practiced law for 20 years. I graduated from Georgetown University Law Center and attended undergrad at Ball State. My partner does special-needs trusts, and we also do real estate closings. Today I will talk about special education.”

Opening 2. “Let me take you back to the year 2008 when Kimmy Kelly had just turned 16. Kimmy, who had been receiving special-education services at her school, is a candidate for college, and her parents began the planning process early on.”

Starting with a story or case study with which your audience members can identify helps them develop an emotional connection with you from the start.

Body

First, write down the three key themes or points that support the core message. As you draft the subpoints and elaborate on the topics, focus on the benefits that people can realize by being informed of their legal rights and then putting the knowledge into action.

Instead of lapsing into dry technical jargon and outlining the features of the law, Alan continued with Kimmy’s story—describing challenges and obstacles that she and her parents faced, followed by a description of the legal solutions. Think of it this way: “Tell a story. Make a point.

Tell a story. Make a point.” The facts, brief legal analysis, or data points transform your example from the theoretical to reality.

Closing

Inexperienced speakers who have neither written nor timed their delivery may end like this: “Well, we’ve run out of time. Sorry we only got to half of the PowerPoints. The rest is covered in the materials. Thank you.” The audience is left hanging, and the emotional connection as well as the opportunity to motivate to meaningful action is lost.

Alan crafted a compelling closing by finishing Kimmy’s story: “When we began about 45 minutes ago, I related that Kimmy Kelly’s parents consulted with me because they wanted to do everything in their power to help her build a better future, and I’ve shown how we were able to help. The story has a really happy ending: Kimmy is now 25, graduated with a degree in nursing, and is happily employed in a private clinic. Who knows what would have happened if her parents had not been so proactive?” The audience is now receptive to a low-key call to action such as: “If you know anybody facing similar issues, please let them know that solutions are available. I’d be happy to speak with them personally. By the way, if you are interested in signing up for our newsletter devoted to the latest developments in special education, please send me an e-mail, and we’ll add you to our mailing list.”

Conclusion

Compelling content is the cornerstone of any strong presentation. The suggestions provided above will help both experienced and inexperienced speakers structure speeches that will inspire and motivate audience members to action.

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Business development leader and veteran attorney Cynthia Sharp, Esq., works with motivated lawyers seeking to generate additional revenue for their law firms. The business development strategies and skill sets that she shares were developed and tested over a period of 30 years in practice and are

constantly refined to reflect modern marketing techniques. For additional information about business development issues, check out thesharperlady.com.