

# Introduction

This book is a long time coming. I tend to like speaking more than writing, so it took a while. It's based on almost thirty years of experience training various professionals, starting with political candidates and elected officials and extending to attorneys, heads of national nonprofits, executives, friends, and others—as well as my formal education in rhetoric and communication.

It's organized by topic, so feel free to skip around.

However, if you really want to improve your presentation skills, it's important that you do read about each area of public speaking—Audience, Message, and Image/Delivery—otherwise known as my AMI™ method of public speaking.

You need to know about and work on all three to be your best.

You'll find my discussion about knowing your Audience in Chapter Two.

And even if you think all you want or need to do is improve your image and delivery style, it really is critical you read how to organize your presentation, which you'll find in Chapters Three, Four, and Five, all under “Message.” Disorganized presentations are one of the biggest problems—and most common mistakes—speakers make. They are also the ones audiences will not forgive, regardless of your delivery acumen.

Chapters Six through Ten will give you skills you need to make your delivery more exciting and captivating—to help you reach your audience.

While almost everything in this book applies to presentations made by attorneys in and out of court (and I point out when my advice does not apply in court), in Part Two I specifically address in-court-related speaking settings.

For the trial level oral argument chapter and the trial advocacy chapter (Chapters 11 and 15), I've summarized insight I've obtained from many judges and justices interviewed for this book, as well as those who have shared their stories and insight with me over the past fourteen years I have had my Continuing Legal Education company.

I've also included three guest chapters by very well-respected attorneys and a retired judge, all dedicated specifically to in-court speaking settings.

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And I wrap up Part Two with a bonus chapter on media relations—while not the typical form of presenting we usually think of, it's still a form of communication and presenting your ideas. And these days, it is more important than ever for attorneys to know how to do it.

It would be difficult for anyone to implement all of the ideas in this book (or any how-to book), but try out a few new ones each time you speak, one speech at a time, and you'll improve—each time.

It's a learnable skill after all.

I hope you enjoy it.

Be Heard. This time. Next time. Every time.