

CHAPTER ONE

Why Work at It?

It may seem unnecessary to offer legal professionals advice on how to present information in public. But I'm proposing to do that for two reasons. First, although public speaking is a core skill for anyone in a law firm, there's a big difference between just speaking and really communicating. If you work in the legal field, you can bet that you're going to have to talk to a crowd of people sooner or later. Professionals know that being able to speak well in public has a positive impact on a career. Good public speakers are seen as leaders. And the reverse is also true.

So why not become the best public speaker you can be?

My second reason for writing this book is that I know that I can improve the performance of anyone who has a willingness to learn. I have spent the last thirty years helping attorneys, CEOs, nonprofit leaders, executives, and others improve their presentation skills. I have run seminars, taken part in oral argument prep (and presented oral arguments as well), and privately coached more attorneys than I can remember—both newcomers and old hands—and they all had one thing in common: **They all improved significantly as a result of our work together.**

In the following pages, I have consolidated the most helpful and effective tips of the trade in order for you (and your staff as well) to become better public speakers. These tools have been time-tested and are guaranteed to ensure that both in and out of the courtroom, you project the image and message that you want.

Whether you want to go from good to great, or so-so to good, or even “Jeez, I hate this” to “Okay, I guess I can survive,” this book is for you. Simply follow the guidelines I have assembled here and you will be on the road to becoming the public speaker you would like to be.

Let's get started.

My “Friendly” AMI™ Method of Public Speaking

Public speaking is a skill. It is a teachable skill that anyone can learn. This includes people who have never done it before and those who do it all the time but never really learned how to do it right or well. *Everyone* can improve their public speaking, even experienced speakers.

I cover a lot of ground in this book. The most important thing you need to know to follow along and to improve is to utilize my AMI™ Method of Public Speaking. Since we know mnemonics are important, it may help you to remember enough high school French to recall that “ami” is the word for “friend.” My method is not only user-friendly but downright indispensable in providing the framework for a winning presentation.

AMI™ stands for “Audience, Message, and Image/Delivery.” To improve your presentation skills, and every presentation you give, you must:

- Find out who your AUDIENCE is;
- Craft a careful, organized MESSAGE;
- Present a compelling IMAGE and create a dynamic DELIVERY style to make sure your message gets heard.

This book is organized around those principles:

- In Chapter Two, we start with a discussion about getting to know your audience and getting past the old rules that tend to put up barriers to communication rather than facilitate it.
- Starting with Chapter Three, we move on to a five-step process on how to organize your message.
- Chapter Four gives focused attention on how to create an attention-getting introduction and a memorable conclusion and provides tips on how to make smooth and effective transitions.
- Chapter Five describes several rhetorical techniques that you can use with powerful effect on your audience during a presentation.
- Chapters Six and Seven cover how you can improve your image and your delivery style.
- Chapter Eight provides valuable advice on managing and overcoming fear.

- Chapter Nine is a special break-out on PowerPoint and new technology.
- Chapter Ten discusses how to handle questions during your presentation.

I wrap up the book in Part Two, addressing specific attorney-related speaking situations, such as oral or motion argument (Chapters Eleven and Twelve), opening statements (Chapter Thirteen), closing arguments (Chapter Fourteen), and trial advocacy (Chapter Fifteen). Most of these tips in the chapters are constructive advice and skill-building tips from judges and justices. Some fabulous guest chapters address specific topics just mentioned.

The last chapter in the book (Chapter Sixteen) addresses media relations, including both crisis communication and public relations.

Finally, an appendix in the back of the book contains a handy list of resources.