

Lasting Impressions & Law Firm Seminars

by [Mister Thorne](#)

Let's say you're an associate, and have been for five or six years. In the past few years, you've been so impressive that the head of the employment law practice group wants you to make a presentation at an upcoming seminar. This is a great opportunity. Instead of working in the office, you'll be on stage.

Your presentation is on the differences between an independent contractor and an employee, and you have to prepare an article about that for the seminar handbook.

You prepare a draft of the article, and here's a line from the section that discusses how the IRS determines whether a worker is an employee or a contractor:

Such a relationship exists when the person or persons for whom the services are performed have the right to control and direct the individual who performs the services, not only as to the result to be accomplished by the work, but also as to the details and means by which that result is accomplished.

You review the draft and that line seems just fine to you. As far as you're concerned, it doesn't need to be changed.

But it does.

That line might be fine if most attendees are lawyers, but they're not. They're HR managers and small-business owners — people with degrees in English, Sociology, and Business Management. They don't like legalese. They can't stand it.

You need to tailor your article for your audience. If you don't, people won't be impressed by it. Heck, if your article bears the formal style of a contract, they won't even read it.

And if they won't read your article, why write it?

So far, you've impressed the right people, and that suggests at least this — before you make your presentation at the seminar, you polish your appearance: if you're a guy, you have your shoes shined, your hair trimmed, and your suit cleaned and pressed. That's because you **know** the importance of first impressions and [how your appearance affects them](#).

Now those people want to see if you can serve the firm by attracting new clients.

The reason your firm is hosting this seminar is to attract potential clients. Many of the attendees work in the HR departments of local businesses, and your firm reckons that — if the seminar works as intended — some of them will call when they run into legal issues.

The seminar is promotional. So is the handbook.

Remember, your audience won't consist of lawyers; it will consist of people who don't like legalese. So you don't want it (the line above) to read like this:

Such a relationship exists when the person or persons for whom the services are performed have the right to control and direct the individual who performs the services, not only as to the result to be accomplished by the work, but also as to the details and means by which that result is accomplished.

You want it to read like this:

Workers who are performing the same job and performing under the same supervision as regular employees are usually found to be employees.

Your readers — potential clients — aren't looking for lawyers who read like statutes. They're looking for lawyers who can explain statutes — **in plain English.**

Don't disappoint them.