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## **Speaking About Important Subjects**

March 28, 2011 by Deirdre Wheatley-Liss



In my view **the value that attorneys bring to their clients is to connect complex rules and laws to the client's situation and goals.** This needs to be done in such a way that the client is partnering with the attorney to evaluate their own situation, brainstorm and critically analyze possible solutions, and work together in developing and carrying out a plan of action. This is true for both business situations and personal planning. The key in my mind to partnering with a client is **effective communication** of those same complex rules and laws in a way that they become relevant and actionable to the client.

I am often asked to develop seminars and speeches about various areas of tax law, estate planning and business planning (*as an aside - if you have a group looking for a speaker, feel free to reach out to me*). As the subjects I talk about are, let's face it, pretty dry and even downright depressing (death, taxes, old age - not on the top 10 fun list), I have worked very hard over the years to develop ways of presenting this information that is actually engaging and relevant for the audience. Something must be clicking as I was recently asked to be a speaker on "The Art of Public Speaking" by the Morris County Chamber of Commerce. In preparing for that talk, I developed the **5 Don'ts and 3 Do's of Public Speaking** that I wanted to share.

**Why am I sharing these public speaking tips?** We are fortunate that our readers ask some great questions about how the law affects them, and our readers are clearly vested in learning more. Perhaps these tips will help you connect another person with how they can be empowered in their own planning.

### **5 Reasons Why Speakers Miss Their Marks**

1. Time Management – a/k/a “*The Never Ending Speech*”
  - Instead - Respect the audience by respecting their time
    - Ask how long you have, with or without questions?
    - Tell audience when ending and meet your goal (use a watch!)
    - Practice and time yourself
  -
2. Reading a speech – a/k/a “*The Monotone Droid*”
  - Instead – Have a conversation about material you know cold
    - Get main points on a single sheet of paper to glance at
    - Talk the speech to yourself, early and often



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### 3. PowerPoint Overload – a/k/a “*The Read and Flip*”

- Instead – Let the audience learn with their ears, not with their eyes
  - The audience can read anytime, they are there to listen
  - If you must, use the 10/6 Rule – Max 10 slides, 6 bullets, no sentences
  - PowerPoint is the skeleton, you are the dressing
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### 4. Body Language – a/k/a “*The Stiff*”

- Instead – Be as dynamic and interesting as your material
  - Move, shift focus, take up space on stage
  - Stand beside the podium
  - Fake it until you make it
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### 5. Stories– a/k/a “*The Bore*”

- Instead – Use stories to illustrate and tie in key points
  - Short, to the point, a key practical points or real life example
  - Cut any story if it’s about you instead of giving value to audience

## 3 Keys to a Successful Presentation – the ABC’s of Public Speaking:

### Audience –

- Know your audience
- It’s about the audience
- Engage the audience - tend the fire by adding and moving energy

### Breathe –

- Before you begin
- Create pauses and change tempo
- Before answering questions

### Confidence –

- Prepare, par down and practice material so you’re having a conversation
- The 2% rule - If you know 2% more, you appear a genius
- Remember the context – the audience either volunteered to be there or you want to persuade them to your point of view



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