

# Speaking ENGAGEMENTS

FIFTEEN TIPS FOR LAWYERS TO MAXIMIZE YOUR PRESENTATION.

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## LAWYERS SPEAK AT CONFERENCES

and events across the country. Some are paid to speak, while others pay to present as part of a firm's sponsorship package. Regardless of the circumstances or the audience, speaking engagements are great profile-raisers for lawyers and help improve the quality of legal services by sharing valuable advice and information. They position you as an authority in your field, enable you to make one-on-one connections, and give you a chance to make a personal impression on people who would otherwise only know you by name and reputation.

As you prepare for the event, you will work hard to ensure your presentation and remarks are informative, engaging, and relevant. Here are some tips to maximize your experience and develop business before, during, and after the presentation.

## BEFORE

1. *Get CLE approval.* Outline your presentation and submit it with an overview to the bar in advance for CLE approval. Offering CLE credit will mean two things: 1) It will get you a bigger audience; and 2) It will force you to make your presentation as meaty as possible to ensure CLE credit.
2. *Reinforce your credibility and expertise.* Draft a customized bio that focuses on the topic and your related experience. You will need two bios: one for the event program with a photo, and one with a summary about yourself

for the emcee to introduce you to the audience. Don't be shy; you're not reading it yourself. Keep it short but make it punchy. Focus on results, accomplishments, and whatever you're most proud of. You want your audience to like you and your introduction should tee that up for you.

3. *Check out the guest list.* Review the list of preregistered attendees from the sponsoring organization to identify the people you would especially like to meet. Perhaps you've been trying to get a meeting with a general counsel from a Fortune 1000 company and noticed his or her name on the attendee list. Often, the hosting media outlet will serve as a facilitator to make introductions between you and your prospect.
4. *Get the word out.* Blog or post on social media about your upcoming presentation to get the word out and showcase your expertise. Even if it's an exclusive event for in-house counsel only, it doesn't hurt for referring lawyers and your clients to see that you are a thought leader in a specific practice area.

## DURING

1. *Meet and greet.* Arrive early and network with attendees and other speakers. Even if this isn't your strong suit, do it anyway. Embrace the opportunity to mingle and make one-on-one connections. Ask questions and try to learn more about someone else's business. You'll get better with practice, I promise.
2. *Expand your network.* Have a table

display with a sign-up sheet that invites attendees to receive e-newsletters, alerts, etc. Once you're back home, make sure those contacts are put into your database. This is the follow-through that many people neglect, and it squanders a perfect opportunity to build your professional network.

3. *Make it interactive.* Engage the audience with an informal survey (show of hands) or online questionnaire of two to three questions. Share the results with the group during the presentation.
4. *Make your giveaway matter.* Consider a drawing or door prize that is related to your subject matter. It will be memorable if it ties directly to your topic.
5. *Leave time at the end for questions from the audience.* Prepare a list of questions that are of interest to the audience. If no one asks a question, share with them a question that you recently received from a similar group and answer it. Sometimes, this will break the ice and other questions will follow.
6. *Make a lasting impression.* Develop printed materials as a leave-behind for the attendees. It can be in the form of a white paper, PowerPoint slides, or a "tips" sheet that reinforces the content of your presentation. Don't forget to include complete contact information on your leave-behind.

## AFTER

1. *Don't bolt.* Stick around after your presentation to mingle with guests and answer additional questions. Some folks will prefer to speak with you one-on-one about a personal or business matter, rather than in a group Q&A setting. Making connections will lead to business.

2. *Be social.* Following the event, post or blog about your presentation to add credibility. Share Q&As and include a link to the video or audio podcast.
3. *Use the personal touch.* Follow up with each attendee via a printed letter or email. The sponsor will normally provide you with a copy of the attendee list. Create a different letter for those who were no-shows and include a copy of your conference leave-behind materials.
4. *Update your firm website and personal bio.* If you have a “speeches and presentations” section on your website bio, include all of your speaking engagement titles, locations, and event names (and if you don’t have a “speeches and presentations” section on your

website bio, make one). Include a brief write-up on the “firm news” page of your website as well.

5. *Repurpose your content.* If the subject matter of your presentation is compelling enough, repurpose it for other uses (unless you have made an agreement to keep the content exclusive). If you do a blog, consider breaking up your presentation into a series of blog posts on the same topic. Alternatively, you could turn it into a commentary and submit it to a business, legal, or trade publication. As long as you’ve done the research and synthesized it into an informative presentation, you might as well get double or triple duty out of all that work.

Seeking out and accepting speaking engagements is a great way to expand your connections, raise your visibility, build your practice, increase your own knowledge, and even give back to your colleagues. It should be a tool in every lawyer’s marketing toolbox. **TBJ**

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