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Effective Speakers Create An Emotional Bond

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Planning on giving a speech? More and more legal administrators are increasing their public image by speaking at ALA meetings, Bar associations, HR professional associations, and other gatherings. If you want to make sure your speech is a success, one of the most important strategies is to create an emotional bond between you and your audience. Following are some techniques:

1. Write your own introduction. This is key. Very few people are trained in the art of Master of Ceremonies. So, it is likely that the person who introduces you will be boring, bland and do nothing to create an emotional bond between you and the audience. Therefore, you should always write your own intro. It should mention how you are connected to the audience and how you are in a position to help them - or how you have already helped them. The stage for emotional bonding will be set with a clear, emotionally-positive introduction.

2. Interview attendees. Prior to writing your speech, try to talk to some of the people who will be attending. Ask them about their experiences with the topic and, where appropriate, incorporate their stories into your speech. The people mentioned will feel more connected, but also, the stories demonstrate that you know some of the people in the audience personally, and that makes you a part of the inner circle.

3. Work the room. The same concept applies to people you meet prior to speaking. As attendees begin to arrive, greet them individually. Thank them for attending. Ask them about themselves and inquire as to any particular interest they have regarding your topic. Then, try to incorporate what you learned in your program. It's great if you can remember their names. People who are quoted feel appreciated and subsequently, appreciative.

4. Use personal examples. Enhance your messages with examples that come from all areas of your life. Point out how the issues you are discussing reveal themselves in your hobbies, your family, your friendships and in your office. Try to highlight how your topic relates to your values and beliefs. Explain the feelings you have experienced and how your behavior has been impacted. The more you can reveal your personal experience, the more connected the audience will feel.

5. Maintain eye contact. Eye contact is an astonishing technique for creating an emotional bond. Rather than looking out to the general audience, try look directly into the eyes of every attendee. The best approach is to think of your speech as a conversation

with individuals. So, as you speak, keep talking to someone directly. If the lighting prevents this, try to imagine faces to talk to. The impact will be similar.

6. Avoid depending on your notes. Reading takes your eyes away from the audience. It also limits the energy of your delivery. A great technique for remembering what you want to say is to think of your speech as a travel itinerary - with different issues taking place in different cities. Imagine that the things you want to talk about reside in each city. Then, think of traveling from city to city in a logical geographical progression. For example, start your speech by discussing the issues that reside in Los Angeles. When you finish, you transition (travel) to Denver where you discuss the issues that reside there. Then, you travel to Chicago for the next issues, and so on. Placing the things you want to say in each city makes memorizing much easier. When you're not chained to your notes or a lectern, you'll be more relaxed, animated, energized and motivational.

7. Beware of excessive visual aids. Too often, speakers allow visual aids to distract the audience. Visual aids are great to reinforce a point or show a picture which might be worth a thousand words. However, when the attention is on the visual aids, it is not focused on the speaker. Remember the most important asset you bring to a speech is *you*, so the more time you spend revealing your positive qualities, the more the audience will feel bonded with you.

8. Smile most of the time. One of the most effective bonding tools is a slight smile - *even while you are talking!* The goal is to send a message that you are a nice person who is happy to be speaking and happy with your audience. Too often people appear too serious and that can be misinterpreted as unhappy or uncomfortable. Those emotions push people away. On the other hand, you don't want to maintain a Cheshire cat grin. The best smile is a Mona Lisa smile. Of course there will be moments when you should scowl or frown. But, most of the time, remember: "Smile and the world smiles with you." And, a smiling audience is a bonded audience.

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