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Communication Skills for Lawyers

Here are a few simple ways to communicate more effectively as a lawyer

Remember that less is more

Judges are busier than ever, and they've heard it all before anyway, so tell them what they really need to know, as concisely as possible, and they'll ask questions if they want to know more.

Be precise

Think before you speak. Don't be like the attorney who had this exchange with an expert witness in court:

- Attorney: Doctor, as a result of your examination of the plaintiff, is the young lady pregnant?
- Witness: The young lady is pregnant—but not as a result of my examination.

We've all been there and feel the lawyer's pain. But with the right set of skills, these mistakes are easily avoided, and, let's face it – this kind of thing isn't exactly a boon to your career.

Be an active listener

Show you're listening through posture and facial expression and playback what you've heard.

Empathy

A little empathy goes a long way. People will be less defensive and more receptive.

Know your audience.

- Who are they?
- What do they know?
- What do they need to know?
- Are they friendly or hostile?
- What motivates them?

Embrace non-verbal

Remember that most communication is non-verbal. What you have to say is of course paramount, but it's not enough.

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To help your audience grasp and retain your message you must be skillful and strategic with your non-verbal communication as well.

The short version of that is: stand up straight, speak up, and look people in the eye. Let your body language project poise and confidence, not fear and uncertainty.

An attorney's communication style-not just what he or she says, but how he or she says it can affect the outcome of a transaction.

Look professional

You don't have to dress like a millionaire but at least retire that suit you bought during the Kennedy administration. People judge you by your appearance more than you may think.

Keep learning & Practice

Learn some new communication skills and then work on them as if your professional success depends on them. Go to a communication skills course, or workshop, be brave and watch yourself on video, and, above all, practice, practice, and then practice some more.

Clients have too much at stake for lawyers to just keep doing what they've always done, hoping for a different result.

If all you intend to do is simply deliver your content to your audience, you might as well send your newest associate and take the day off.

To be persuasive, compelling, and memorable to your audience you must add strong non-verbal skills – good eye contact, appropriate gestures, confident posture, and professional appearance – to the words you say.

With even a modest investment of time and effort, you can be a more powerful advocate for your clients and

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