

DAILY REPORT

LAW INC.

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Put yourself in listener's shoes

WHEN PREPARING A PRESENTATION, remember how hard it is to listen

SURE IT'S HARD TO BE A GOOD speaker. But if you're really serious about improving your presentation skills, you'll think about how hard it is to be a good listener.

Here are 10 challenges that a listener faces when sitting through a presentation.

Challenge No. 1: Where's Waldo? Few speakers make it easy on listeners by saying "the point of my presentation is..." Instead, speakers provide a lot of information and hope that listeners will find the point on their own. It's like a corporate version of "Where's Waldo?"

Challenge No. 2: This ain't "24." Listeners live in the hyper-fabulous world of television. Simon Cowell insults the lousy singers on "American Idol." Santonio Holmes makes an amazing catch to win the Super Bowl. Jack Bauer saves the world every Monday night on "24." In such an environment, it's amazing that anyone can sit through a presentation on employment discrimination.

Challenge No. 3: The clock is ticking. The blackberry is buzzing. Voicemails beckon. And then there's that presentation to write. As a result, people sit through presentations with a strong sense of the clock. "Is this worth my time?" Is the implied question running through every listener's head at all times.

Challenge No. 4: The question won't go away. If you raise your hand, many presenters want you to hold the question until later. But you don't want to wait until later. The question is bothering you now. So you think, "Who is this presentation for any-way?"

Challenge No. 5: "Where's Waldo— The Sequel." The speaker's presentation is so complex and filled with jargon that finding the takeaways is next to impossible. Few speakers have mercy on their listeners and say "if you remember only three key things, please remember this." Instead,

the listeners are left to make their own judgments and find their own takeaways.

Challenge No. 6: Fatigue. There's no coffee. And how the heck is someone supposed to sit through an 8 a.m. meeting without caffeine, especially if you were at the office until 11 p.m. last night?

Challenge No. 7: The speaker isn't Oprah. The speaker stands at the front of the room with a clicker, advancing the slides and exhibiting all of the excitement of a houseplant. It's like watching someone else yawn. The boredom is contagious. Plus, the listener can't figure out why the speaker insists on saying "vis-a-vis" over and over again at totally inappropriate times. And why does he keep picking his nose? Doesn't he know he's giving a presentation?

Challenge No. 8: The speaker misses the hot button. The listener's sole issue is the fact that his organization is losing money. But the speaker either doesn't know about the issue or doesn't care. Either way, the listener finds it impossible to care about the presentation.

Challenge No. 9: "The Return of Where's Waldo." People attend presentations to get direction. Yet, too often, speakers fail to tell the listener the next simple step they can take to make their lives better.

Challenge No. 10. It just isn't any fun. DR