Presentation Technology

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- Limit the use of bullet points
- Use pictures when possible
- Be creative!
- Practice, Practice, Practice
- Check out the room before presentation day

Many lawyers rely on presentations to help make their case. Presentations can take place in state or federal courts or at a lawyers office. Lawyers can use presentations at a mediation session to help persuade the mediator and other parties to the case to their position. Presentations can help the judge understand an issue for summary judgment, allowing the lawyer to highlight key portions of a document on the screen for the judge and/or jury to review.

A picture is worth 1,000 words

various sources

Legal support professionals are key to presentations given by lawyers. For better or worse, lawyers do not always have the technology skills needed to organize presentations effectively or know how to organize their electronic documents or video evidence for display. Knowing how to effectively use presentation software can give you a big advantage.

There are many things to consider when given a presentation. First, each type of presentation may require a different type of tool. Microsoft has its PowerPoint program. Apple makes Keynote. There are software programs that require high powered computers to run and apps for tablets. Video presentations may require additional tools or software.

Second, there are different audiences for presentations. A lawyer might need to give a presentation to a client or perspective client. The lawyer may give a continuing legal education (CLE) seminar to other lawyers. Or the lawyer may be making an argument in court. Each type of presentation will have a different feel and different requirements.

Third, each venue or location has its own challenges. What types of screen and projectors are available? What is the type of presentation required by the situation? Does the host venue only have Microsoft PowerPoint? Do you need to send a presentation ahead of time? What if you want to use your laptop? Are the proper connections available? Do you have the needed adapters? Do you have a place to plug in? Should you bring a power strip and extension cords? These are a few of the questions you should be prepared to address when preparing to give a presentation.

Types of Presentation Tools

Every case and situation is unique. To decide which is the best tool for the job requires an understanding of the different types of presentation tools available.

Linear Presentation Software

Generally speaking, presentations programs allow you to create "slides" with information contained on that slide. The information on the slides can be animated to appear automatically or with the click of the mouse. These slides are typically shown in a linear fashion so that you start at slide 1 and move one slide at a time until the end of the slide show. Keynote for Mac and PowerPoint from Microsoft are familiar examples.

Linear presentation software is the most familiar to most of us and can be adapted to work in a variety of settings. For those times when you know you will be able to tell your story without interruption (or objection), this type of presentation tool will work fine. But, what about those times when you need to move from Exhibit 1, a PDF document, to Exhibit 121, a photograph?

Non Linear Presentation Software

Non linear presentation software tools are more common in the legal industry. This type of software is often referred to as trial presentation software. There are many times when a lawyer may need to refer back to a particular exhibit or have a witness discuss something specific about a portion of a document. In those situations, it is very helpful to be able to "jump" from exhibit to exhibit easily. Advanced presentation tools have been developed to handle these issues and more.

In addition to allowing the user to move quickly from exhibit to exhibit, these types of presentation tools include tools such as pens/highlighters to allow you to mark on the document. They often have the ability to select a portion of a document and "zoom" into that section of the document for focus and ease of use.

These trial presentation tools often have a feature that allows to you see what is on your screen before "publishing" that information to the jury or judge on the larger screen in the courtroom. This is helpful because not all the documents may be admitted and the judge may need to issue a ruling admitting the document before the jury can see it.

Trial presentation tools are used for "on the fly" use rather than pre-planned presentations. This does not mean that you can be disorganized. Rather, it means that you have to know your exhibits and know them well so they can be accessed quickly and easily throughout the course of trial—generally, a high pressure situation.

Venue Considerations

It is very important to know where you will be using the presentation. You will need to do some advance scouting before the presentation to ensure that you have the right equipment available. Some courts have televisions, but don't have projector screens. If your case is document intensive, you may need a larger screen and projector to help the jury or judge see your documents clearly.

As the presentation guru, you will need to understand the venue location and the items you will need to put together an effective presentation. A presentation done poorly can be more distracting than helpful for your client's case. Do your homework by visiting the location where the presentation will be given and test your presentation to make sure you understand how it will be seen. Start early so you can add any necessary adjustments for the specific location. You may need to purchase additional equipment. If so, you don't want to do that the evening before trial, trying to learn something new and different right before the big day.

Make sure you have the correct adapters and connection cables if you are connecting to the facility's equipment. I have seen many panicked individuals who planned on giving a presentation, but didn't figure out what kind of connector cable they would need. Take an extension cord and power strip to make sure you have enough power outlets.

You might also need to bring your own projector and screen, depending on the venue. Make sure you research the projector and screen to ensure that it works for the space you are using. There's nothing worse than having an underpowered projector ruin the hard work of your presentation by making it appear too dim or without the proper colors.

Plan, prepare, test, and do it again until you are confident that you know the presentation and the support information in the presentation.

Other Considerations

If you are using a resource like TrialPad (linked below), take some time to think about how you want to name your files for easy access. You will want to ensure the files are named consistently so they sort appropriately. Using something like "Ex 0001".

Another tip is to create an index of what Exhibit 0001 is and use that to guide you as you access the documents. I will use a table similar to the following to help track exhibits:

Exhibit Number	Exhibit Description	Offered?	Admitted
Ex 0001	D Witness List	Yes	Yes
Ex 0002	Photo of Plaintiff's Car	No	
Ex 0003	Witness Statement	Yes	Yes, over hearsay objection.

It can be difficult on the fly to try and find "D's Preliminary Witness List" from a large list of files. It's much easier if they sort together in numerical order.

Keep in mind that if you use numbers in file names, make sure that you have enough leading 0s to keep the sort order working appropriately. To see what I mean, try making 10 different files,

naming them Ex 1 through Ex 10. When you sort them, you will see that Ex 1 and Ex 10 show up right next to each other. Not what you want.

Now, rename Ex 1 through Ex 9, but this time put a 0 in front of the number 1 (e.g., Ex 01). Now, they should sort appropriately.

Remember this tip for when you are working with large document sets or you will have to go back and rename a large number of files to get it to sort appropriately. Not a fun experience, I can assure you. I generally use at least three leading 0s and sometimes four, just to be safe.

In addition, you must practice with the presentation tool chosen until you are completely familiar with how it works. You should be able to use it confidently and without hesitation. The only way to accomplish this is to practice with the presentation.

When you practice the presentation, you will know where the tool likes to "hang up" or when to wait a few extra seconds before the image appears on the screen. You can help the attorney avoid panicking if he or she fumbles with the mouse or tablet, because you know both the software and the information in the presentation cold.

Assignment

For this week's assignment, review the resources below. See which tools are linear or non linear. Comment in the forums on what presentation tools you would recommend for a law firm and why.

Are there other presentation tools that you have used and found helpful?

You will likely note that we did not list any cloud-based presentation tools that are available. What are some benefits/risks to using a cloud based presentation tool in the legal context?

Note: there are no Reference PDFs this week. All of the reference readings are listed below.

Reference

- Watch some of this tutorial to help you with your PowerPoint assignment. You should be able to access it through IU's Lynda account. Video: http://www.lynda.com/Office-tutorials/PowerPoint-2013-Essential-Training/115468-2.html?org=iu.edu

- TrialPad: http://www.litsoftware.com

  - https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/trialpad-organize-present/id828542236?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D8

- Sanction http://sanction.com/about/

- Timeline3D: https://www.beedocs.com/timeline3D/mac/

- TrialDirector: http://www.indatacorp.com/TrialDirector.html

An additional (**non-required**) resource we recommend is available from Attorney David Sparks (macsparky.com). This book can help you learn how to design and give effective presentations.
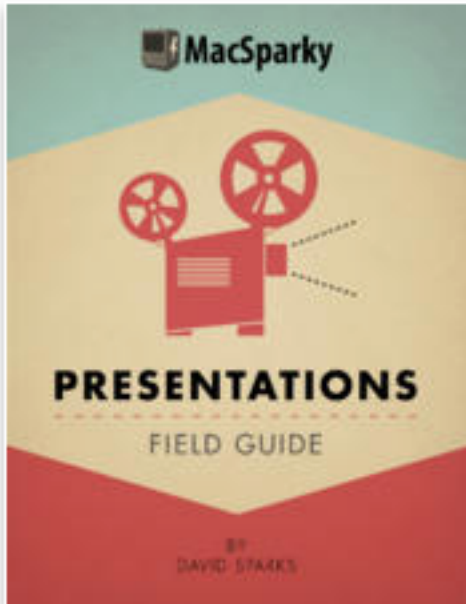
Presentations (iBook), by Attorney David Sparks.

$9.99