**How to Present to an Adult Audience**

Studies have shown that adults learn differently than children. Often our teaching styles have evolved from our own learning experiences when we were in school. However, to help our presenters reach their audiences more effectively — providing a greater benefit — we offer some practical advice for you to use when preparing your next ALA presentation.

When teaching adults, keep in mind:

* Experiences that learners bring to the classroom
* Individuals motivation for learning including why they are there and what they expect
* Different learning styles in the room
* Your role and how to move from being a teller of knowledge to a facilitator of learning

*What is a facilitator?* A facilitator provides the setting for attendee engagement that results in their learning. Facilitators of learning deliver some content through short lecture, however, much of their pre-conference planning time is devoted to learning design: designing active learning experiences and activities like individual reflection, peer to peer sharing and small group discussions. Time is also spent developing contemplative and challenging questions that require attendees to reflect, think, consider and process information with higher order thinking skills and critical thought.

It is important that the adult learner be included in the process of goal-setting for the learning experience and to understand the key learning styles for adults:

* **Visual** learners prefer using pictures, images and spatial understanding. They require time to think before understanding a lecture and need time to process information. These learners like charts and diagrams and enjoy taking notes.
* **Auditory** learners prefer using words in both speech and writing. They are great at remembering names and follow spoken directions well. The auditory learner uses word association to remember facts and enjoys participation in group discussions.
* **Kinesthetic** learners employ the use of many senses in the learning process. They learn best by being a part of the learning process. They prefer short blocks of content and learning with others. A good example of this would be technology training.
* **Problem-Centric** learners come to your presentation expecting to get their problems solved. They are not there just to get more information. If your presentation does not help them solve their pressing issues, it will be forgotten.
* **Relevance** to the learner’s life and work. If the information being presented is not relevant, it will not get their attention. Your content must have meaning and immediate relevance and why your presentation is important and how it relates to their work. Always explain why the audience should participate in specific activity and how the process and content benefits their learning.

When designing and delivering programs for the Association of Legal Administrators, it is important to keep these suggestions in mind. Our learners (ALA members) come from different backgrounds and different size and style firms; they come for varied reasons; they have different expectations. We need to draw them in, explain to them what they will learn, and present in a variety of ways so we can fulfill the needs of all styles of learners. It is our hope that your expert knowledge, in combination with delivery styles that will best reach our audience, will be the key in getting the knowledge into the hands of our audiences so they can use the information right away. We want your experience and those of the learners to be meaningful and life lasting.

The greatest sign of accomplishment for a speaker is to be able to say, *“The audience is now working on the content as if I did not exist!”* (Paraphrase, Maria Montessori).