Preparing the Written Materials

Highlights
- Written materials: "Thorough, high-quality instructional written materials which appropriately cover the subject matter . . . ." MCLE Regulation 103.
- Useful as a reference after the seminar is over.
- Include relevant case extracts, statutes, useful forms, illustrative articles in an appendix.
- No copyrighted material, unless you include a written release!

The question often arises: How long do the materials need to be?
- There is no hard and fast answer in the MCLE Regulations, other than that the materials thoroughly cover the subject.
- As a very general rule of thumb, the materials should be at least 10 pages per hour of instruction.
- Keep in mind that many of our participants value the written materials as much or more than the spoken presentation: they only hear you talk once, but they may frequently use the written materials as a reference.
- We offer certain seminar materials for sale on a stand-alone basis. On occasion seminar materials may be used as the basis for a full Virginia CLE handbook.

Format of the written materials
- The format is up to you. Most choose an outline format, but one that is prose-based is fine.
- Please submit the materials to us in electronic format, preferably in Microsoft Word.
- We will reformat the material to ensure it has a consistent "look and feel" within the seminar in particular and within Virginia CLE products in general.
- We will provide you with a copy of the reformatted material for your reference during the presentation.
- We will rarely edit content, except to fix obvious errors. We will correspond with you if we think we've found something more serious.

PowerPoint presentations
- We do not encourage PowerPoint presentations <u>as</u> your written materials.
  - It may be acceptable if the PowerPoint contains enough substance to be functionally equivalent to a written outline.
  - Note, however, that its utility as a presentation aid will be severely degraded (see PowerPoint tips).
- If you choose to use PowerPoint in addition to you written materials, we will, if you request, include copies in the written materials.

Additional materials
- We often include appendices to the written material
- Some possible material for an appendix:
  - Cases, statutes, and regulations that are an integral part of the material.

- o Relevant forms or checklists.
  - o Articles, clippings, and the like.
- These materials must be copyright free unless you include a written release when you submit them!

Planning the Presentation

What 3-5 things will lawyers learn how to do or do better as a result of this seminar (*i.e., what will they be able to accomplish*)?

Discussion: Attorneys, or the firms sending them, do not necessarily look to CLE for its intellectual value; they attend CLE to gain identifiable skills. They therefore judge the value of the seminar by assessing what they are now newly able to accomplish. We can help them correctly value your presentation by identifying, up front, what they'll be able to do, or do better, by the end of the seminar. As you are presenting the material, try to tie everything into the accomplishments, and at the conclusion, remind them again about their new talents. This even applies to presentations concerning new or revised statutes and recent cases—the focus should be on the implications of the change for the lawyer's practice rather than on the change itself.

How is success defined for each accomplishment (*i.e., how do they know they've done it right*)?

Discussion: Success often seems obvious, but it never hurts to mention it: what is obvious to you may not be so obvious to others. There are many cases, however, where success is difficult to measure, and addressing how you define success will be both useful and enlightening. Practice tips often fall into this area—you are really sharing ideas for how the lawyers you are teaching can more successfully accomplish the matter at hand.

What do they need to know to do it right (*statutes, cases, etc.—the intellectual component*)?

Discussion: Presentations often start—and end—at this level. Think back to any law school lecture for an example. Of course, the law is important, but in this proposed model of instruction, it is important only to the extent that it leads the participant to successful accomplishments. Nevertheless, the bulk of your presentation will most likely be spent here, and properly so. By keeping the focus on accomplishments, you should be able to avoid wading into unproductive areas of the law.

Preparing to Speak

Plan for something other than just speaking.
- The best presentations have some aspect of interactivity. Note the following hand-out on Interactive Teaching Techniques adapted from material used at Suffolk University Law School.
- Ask a question of the audience.
- Prepare a demonstration.
- Short small-group exercises.

Decide beforehand when you are going to take questions. Announce it, and stick to it.
- The listener's attention span is no greater than 10 minutes (more likely 6-8 minutes).
- Permitting questions throughout the presentation fosters interaction and generally leads to a better presentation.
- *At a minimum* you should ask for questions at the end of each major point you cover.
- In phone seminars the last 15 minutes are reserved for Q&A, but it is essential to do something to break up the monolog every 8-10 minutes (tell a relevant story, raise or lower the intensity of your presentation, ask a hypothetical question that forces your audience to think, etc.)

Decide how you plan to use the written materials
- If written materials will serve as a reference only, announce it so they can put the materials aside and direct all their attention to you.
- If the presentation will follow the materials (be careful of staying on the intellectual as opposed to practical level!), occasionally announce where you are.
- If you plan to jump around in the materials, announcing where you are is essential.

Have a plan to fill the allotted time.
- Have enough material to cover (this is not usually the problem).
- Remember that questions and other audience interaction are very important and may occupy more time than you expect.
- Know beforehand what you can cut.
- Always save time for a conclusion.

Avoid:
- Reading materials, including PowerPoint slides. (See PowerPoint tips)
- Trying to cover too much material; if the material doesn't require discussion, simply refer the participants to the written materials.
- Not having a logical flow of discussion.
- Not engaging the audience
- Talking above or below your audience.
- Talking too fast or too slow.
- Technology problems—insist on testing everything before your presentation starts.

Interactive Teaching Techniques[*]

All studies show that people learn more when there is involvement to allow for processing the information. We therefore encourage you to allocate some part of your teaching time to interacting with the attendees. None of these ideas have to take a long time but they will improve the educational value of the program.

Here are some participatory techniques to consider:

1. We have audience response technology. This allows a speaker to pose some questions to the audience and have them answer anonymously. This tool gives the teacher a better sense of either what needs to be taught or whether what has been taught was understood. It can also be used to gauge audience levels of experience and views on difficult and unsettled questions. It can produce useful information and makes the audience feel more involved and attentive. All the presenter has to do is prepare some questions that can be answered as multiple choice or true/false.

2. Case studies are an effective way to apply what is being taught to real life situations.

3. Buzz group—a large group is divided into smaller groups for the purpose of discussing a specific problem or issue. This can be limited to a very short amount of time, but it is an effective way for the audience to test their own understanding.

4. Game—individuals or groups perform an activity characterized by structured competition that provides the opportunity to practice specific thinking skills and actions.

5. Debate—presentation of conflicting views.

6. Role play.

7. Simulation—it can be focused on attitudes and feelings related to a situation presented.

8. Counterarguments—stop for 5 minutes and allow the audience to write down all counterarguments to some argument or theory being advanced.

9. Believing and Doubting—ask the audience to write briefly in support of an idea, argument, or method and then in opposition to it. Then review a few as a group.

10. Problem generating—ask the audience to write down key issues or questions generated by the presentation and then review some.

11. At the beginning of your presentation, ask a question related to what you plan to discuss. Ask the audience to write down what they think the answer is.

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[*] Adapted from material developed at Suffolk University Law School, Boston, Massachusetts.

PowerPoint

- PowerPoint is an aid to your presentation. It shouldn't be your presentation, nor compete with you as the presenter.

- PowerPoint can be invaluable when a visual depiction of something is necessary. Most of your slides should be:
    - Diagrams
    - Photos
    - Videos

- Rule of thumb: if it is something you would like to point to, it will work well on a slide

- Bullets are generally good
    - Four words per bullet
    - Four bullets per slide

- Text—less is generally better

- Highlight the most important words

- Don't read your slides to the audience—it bores the audience and adds no value

- If you must include a large block of text, remember that while the audience is reading it, they aren't listening to you. So, stop talking, let them read, then bring their attention back to you as you continue

- Similarly, if the material you are now talking about is not supported by a slide, blank the screen or include a blank slide (i.e., don't leave the slide from the previous discussion on the screen)

- Avoid:
    - Extravagant slide transitions
    - Sound effects
    - Cute clip art
    - Garish color combinations