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# Virtual TRAINING is the Future . . . At Least for Now (PART 1)

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Incoming associates have enough stress starting a new job and now they cannot run down the hall to get an answer to a legal question, or guidance on how to navigate the law firm world. Other priorities rose to the top these past months, but now we need to address the arrival





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of our newest associates. Conscientious development of associates through training and development enables them to become dynamic, professional, and ethical attorneys who provide high quality service that clients expect.

First, firms need to focus on a training program which ensures that new attorneys learn how to practice law. Knowing that the legal environment is not the way it used to be, think outside the box and realize that everyone in the firm can play a part: assistants, paralegals, associates, partners, and administrators.

Often incoming associates have no work experience, so they are a blank page to fill with knowledge about how to practice law in *your* firm. Think about everything they will need to know in general to practice law and then take a deeper dive into what they need to know for their specific practice area. Your firm might already have learning benchmarks which is the best place to start.

Look at the topics or benchmarks and align this with who is the best person in the firm to teach this in our remote environment. Under normal circumstances you might not have an assistant or paralegal teach a session to attorneys, but now they might be the best choice. Who better to guide how the courts are working now or how





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to share work product remotely, then those who were thrust into knowing a few months ago?

If your firm already has training prepared, then these programs need to be adapted to the virtual environment. Consider the content and decide what must stay and what can be omitted. Chunk the training into smaller pieces so it is easier to digest as attention spans are even shorter now. Add more visuals to make the presentation interesting and engaging but be sure the visuals are stimulating not just words on a slide. Learn how to use “fancy stuff” so you can add animation, music, and video clips.

It is not enough to ask the presenter to speak into a camera instead of standing at a podium in a conference room. The delivery needs to be addressed as well as the content. As many of us have spent hours in virtual meetings we have seen what works and what does not. Moving training into an online presentation will take concerted effort. The program needs to be engaging so it holds the audience’s attention. Here are a few tips that will help the speaker make a connection with the audience

- Ask the speaker to open their video so the audience can see them
- Encourage the speaker to use a conversational tone so the audience feels included





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- Create polling questions that engage the audience
- Use the chat feature so people can respond instantaneously

While we are on the topic of remote training, we need to address the visual aspects of online training as well. Be sure the speaker checks for camera readiness and follows this advice.

- Check the lighting so the audience can see the speaker clearly
- Be sure background is appropriate and not distracting
- Practice with the speaker so they are aware of how the technology works
- Ask the speaker to wear a solid color, but not white
- Make sure the camera angle is not too high or low

Finally, this might just be the opportunity you have been waiting for to CHANGE presenters. Often, we are stuck with a presenter because “they always” do that topic. Now is the chance to push harder for a fresh face. Blame it on the pandemic.



**Author:** Dr. Sharon Meit Abrahams has been a PDC member for 28 years and is offering PDC



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