TECH CHECKLIST FOR ANY PRESENTATION

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You know that awkward moment when someone is giving a PowerPoint presentation and the whole thing stops working. The presenter looks flustered while tapping on a keyboard to try to fix the glitch. The screen goes blank or defaults to showing a desktop of icons. The audience feels the collective embarrassment. You don't want this to happen to you in court, mediation, or any other important meeting. Here are five tips to avoid a tech meltdown during a presentation, drawn from my experience of presenting in court and at CLEs:

1 Do not wait until the day of the presentation to make sure you have all the cords, plugs, and equipment. I always do a full equipment setup in my office at least one day before the presentation. This allows me to determine whether I have everything I need. Then I pack it up into a carrying case and double-check the contents.

2 Turn off your office Wi-Fi for your laptop when testing. Have you seen a presentation when the presenter guiltily apologizes that the video won't play? Almost all of the time, this malfunction occurs because the video file is stored on a server for the office computer, but when the presentation is transferred to a laptop, the video file isn't transferred with it. Turning off Wi-Fi will assure that any files associated with a PowerPoint are actually on the laptop, rather than feeding from the server over Wi-Fi.

3 Have a backup. If the presentation is of paramount importance, I recommend having two fully loaded computers ready to go in case there is a problem with one of them. I cannot tell you how many times one computer has some issue with connecting to the projector or just will not work at all.

4 Bring your own Wi-Fi. If you want to make a wireless presentation using your iPhone or an iPad, then you will need a wireless connection. Never rely on any location you are presenting to have working Wi-Fi for this type of connection. Even if available, it will likely have security in place that interferes with the functionality. Rather, invest in a device to make your own Wi-Fi connection.

5 Check out the location ahead of time and show up an hour early. Whether your presentation takes place in a courtroom or anywhere else, make sure you know what is provided by the location and what type of plugs it takes. I generally bring all my own equipment to make sure it works, but sometimes you have to use the provided equipment. When you do, arrive as early as possible to test your presentation.

If you follow those tips, you'll have a lot more confidence that you can deliver your presentation without a glitch so that your audience remembers your message, not your mistake.

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