Exclusive Summary: Brian Beckcom speaks with Laurie Gilbertson about how to give a terrific speech or presentation, principles of persuasion, why stories are the most important thing in the world, how to start and end a speech, how to deal with pre-speech nerves and anxiety, and a whole lot more.

Introduction

Brian Beckcom: Lori is an expert in presentations and public speaking. That is a topic that I know a lot of people are super interested in. We're going to talk about how to prepare, how to research, how to think about, and how to give a presentation whether you're a lawyer or a business professional. Lori, tell people a little bit about yourself, where you came from, how you became a prosecutor, why you became a prosecutor, and how you got to where you are today.

Laurie Gilbertson: I think that my interest in law started really young. My father is a trial attorney, so I grew up with this kind of advocacy always in our household where it was really accepted to just be able to advocate for what I thought and have some evidence to back it up. And I never knew that that was really what you do as a lawyer. That's just kind of how our conversations went. So I did end up going to law school, and my very first day in criminal law, I was just hooked. I was listening to the professor talk about cases, and to me, these didn't sound like cases. These just sounded like the most interesting emotional human stories that could possibly be told. When you add in the component of really wanting to be able to make some difference in people's lives, be able to actually do some justice for people and put that with what I was learning in criminal law, I just wanted to be a prosecutor, I knew that that was what I wanted to do.

I had known that I wanted to be a trial lawyer, but that really cemented it for me. So I knew after law school that I wanted to be a prosecutor in New York City. I grew up in Maryland a little bit outside DC, so kind of grew up with all of the politics. I could name every cabinet secretary from the time I was about six. That was just normal conversation in DC, and I was ready for something different. And much like criminal law hit me in that class the very first time I visited New York City when I was about 15, that also hit me, and I said, this is where I was meant to be. This is where I want to live. I just love the energy and the excitement. And if you want to be on the cutting edge of the law and you want to really have the opportunity to work hard and make a difference, a New York City prosecutor's office is a great place to be as a trial lawyer.

Brian Beckcom: No doubt about it. And not only that, but New York City historically, I think, has the second-best trial lawyers in the country next to Houston.

Laurie Gilbertson: I was going to say, I didn't even have to ask where the absolute best were. I knew that was coming.

An Empathetic Prosecutor

Brian Beckcom: Let me ask a couple of questions about your career as a prosecutor. My stepmother, my mother died when I was 10. My dad's been remarried for about 30 years. She was an undercover police officer, and then she became an investigator in the Tarrant County, which is in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, Tarrant County Sex Crimes prosecutor unit basically. Her job was to go out and interview children that had been victimized. I've asked her a couple of times, man, that's got to be some of the worst types of crimes, the stories you hear. I mean, how do you do that on a day-to-day basis? Let me ask you the same question, Lori. You're looking at homicides, you're looking at sex crimes, you're looking at some of the worst possible crimes. How do you do that on a day-to-day basis?

Laurie Gilbertson: It is not easy, and especially when I was doing it, I was not one of those people that could compartmentalize things. I couldn't just kind of leave it at work and be done with it. In the Sex Crimes Unit starting in my second year at the district attorney's office, I became, there was, you would get sent somewhere, and that was where I wanted to go, and I was the grand jury assistant there, meaning I was responsible for nearly all of those interviews that would start right when the cases came in. So it was kind of being inundated with exactly what you're talking about. I think that the reason that those are so difficult to hear, to conduct, and to be a part of is exactly the reason why you need to let it affect you. And why I felt in order to be a good prosecutor, I couldn't just put those feelings aside.

Someone really needed to be there to be an advocate, to be an ally, to be a sense of security and support for people like these children who were coming in. And people don't often think that there's a huge place for empathy when they think prosecutor, that seems like a bit of an oxymoron, an empathetic prosecutor, but I believe those are the best kinds. So you do it, you give it all. You find ways to separate. And for me, one of the best ways of dealing with that was working with colleagues who cared as much as I did, who were willing to talk about all these things and share all these things, talk about trial strategy, talk about the emotion we dealt with, and then go out for a beer after work and not talk about it and just know that we shared all this, that we had that connection, but that we could also let go of it a little bit together. That was what kind of got me through a lot of that.

Brian Beckcom: Now, you said something there that I think is so important, and your career as a prosecutor is in some ways similar to my career as a civil plaintiff's lawyer because I prosecute essentially corporations that commit torts, which are civil crimes. I've seen some really horrific stuff. I've seen 2-year-old kids burned to death. I've seen helicopter crashes and plane crashes. I've seen some things that, frankly, I wish I hadn't seen. But what you said, which really stuck with me was I've had people say, well, the word you used was compartmentalize. You got to compartmentalize things.

And I never thought, first of all, I couldn't do it. And second of all, like you said, I've always thought that if I want to be a good lawyer for my clients, just like you said, I need to emotionally be invested in the case. This idea that you need to be totally dispassionate, I think is a terrible idea. Maybe if you're representing an insurance company as some sort of insurance defense lawyer, well maybe then you wouldn't have any emotions about it. But if you really want to do a good job, whether you're a prosecutor or a civil plaintiff's lawyer, you better have some emotion about what you're doing, right?

Laurie Gilbertson: You need to. And when you think about putting yourself in the shoes of the people who were hurt, the people who you are aiming to help and to advocate for and putting all your blood, sweat, and tears into it, if you were in that position, do you want someone who's dispassionate or do you want someone who cares? Absolutely. And to form that connection, I mean, you and I dealt with, and you still deal with people who are coming to you at the worst time in their lives, most likely where they are vulnerable, they are hurt, they are emotional. So just to be able to get those stories out, to be able to know what kind of a case you have to be able to then move into legal strategy, you have to form that connection. You have to listen, you have to be curious, have to really think about asking the questions that will make people comfortable enough to share some of the most terrible details of tragedies and horrific things that have happened to them. That was never something I could be dispassionate about.

Be Passionate About Your Subject

Brian Beckcom: A matter of fact, I've told myself the second I get unemotional about these cases, the time I need to hang it up because like you said, these are real human beings that we're representing with, again, like you said, some of the worst times, if not the worst times in their life. And so if you don't feel passionate about that, you're in the wrong line of business. Lori, to me, is the perfect segue to one, in my opinion, one of the fundamental principles of speechmaking presentation giving and persuasion. And that is passion persuades. If you see a speaker go out on stage and they're just reading from a script and they're just saying, hi, my name is Brian Beckerman, I'm here to talk to you about leadership, you're going to go to sleep in about 30 seconds. But if that same speaker bounds onto the stage and has some energy and looks excited, guess what? That is infectious. And so to me, one of the fundamentals, we were talking about speechmaking and presentation giving. One of the most fundamental parts of that is you need to figure out a way to feel passionate about your subject. What do you think about that, Laurie?

Laurie Gilbertson: You've nailed it a hundred percent, of course. And let me add to your example. Hi, I am Lori. Let's talk about presenting. I have 15 slides. Let me just start reading them to you. And then it's death by PowerPoint and there's an hour that people will never get back. So yeah, there's so much that goes into a presentation before you bound onto the stage with all that passion and energy and just knowing what you're passionate about and what you choose to present on has to be a huge part of it. You have to get over that threshold. You have to be passionate about it. You have to be able to bring emotion to it. Even if you're assigned to speak on something that you may not initially feel passionate about, I was asked to speak on time management. I am a lifelong procrastinator.

I am absolutely not the person who should be asked to speak on this. And I did let the group know, are you sure? Are you sure? And they told me, well, we think you're going to bring a different perspective. I had to find a way to feel passionate about it, otherwise it would've just been terrible and boring. And I did that through a lot of research, through a lot of figuring out what effect does this have on me? How has this affected my life? How can I help people moving forward? What do I feel passionate about when it comes to this idea of how we figure out what to do with our time? And when you delve into it, there is so much to think about, and it's not about charts and calendars and tips and tricks. It can get pretty deep. I mean, I went into lots of stuff with having to do with your Buddha that's sitting right behind you all about life and being present. I mean, there's a lot to talk about that I found some passion. If I hadn't, it wouldn't have been a topic I could give.

Brian Beckcom: I am getting excited about time management just listening to you, but let's do this, Lori. So before we talk about the nuts, and by the way, this is going to be kind of a collaborative podcast because both of us have been giving presentations. I've been giving presentations since about 17 years old. You have been giving presentations for a couple decades at least. And so you and I are both going to give some opinions today about presentation, making the persuasion, giving speeches and stuff like that. But before we get into the nuts and bolts of it, let me say something that has been something that I've kind of, I don't know if you want to call it an insight or realization or what, but within the last couple of years, I used to think that the most important thing in the world was ideas or things like that.

I now am convinced that the most powerful force in the world, it's always been the most powerful force in the world, and it will always be the most powerful force in the world, is the power of stories. Stories are all we got, the stories we tell each other, the stories we tell ourselves. And so I've been really interested in how to craft a good story, how to tell a good story, things like that. For people that are wondering, why should I care about giving a presentation, I'm not sure I would ever need to give a presentation. My response to you would be giving presentations, convincing people, and telling stories to people is the most important thing that you may ever do. What do you think about that, Lori?

Laurie Gilbertson: I was waiting to see where you were going with that. And I was thinking exactly the same thing. Communication. Take out that you're giving a big presentation. Think about it as communication. It's the most powerful tool we have. What else do we have? I mean, we tell stories our entire lives. There is something called the Crib monologues. I don't know if you're familiar with it, but there was a researcher at Harvard who used to hear her little daughter who was two years old in her crib at night, and she thought she was a psychologist, said, oh, this is interesting. And she put a tape recorder in there to see, well, her language was, and she was shocked to discover that her daughter at two years old was telling herself stories at the end of the day to make sense of the world around. So this idea of story is ingrained in us. This is how we start to make sense of our world, and then this is how we ultimately communicate our ideas out into the world. So it's part of everything. It's not just a presentation on the stage.

How do you get your kids to go to bed at night? How do you communicate with them? You're thinking even of kids, you start out, you're telling them bedtime stories. It's something that's really a part of

our lives. And think that people can get intimidated by the idea of storytelling and maybe think you have to be this epic storyteller. You have to be so experienced, you have to know exactly how to craft it perfectly. And that's just simply not the case. There can be a great story told in 30 seconds that has your beginning, your middle, and your end. The speaker tells you why it's important to you and why it's important to the teller and why it should be important to the audience. And they can do it and nail it in 30 seconds. And people can do that. It's just really a matter of thinking about it and embracing it. People remember things more when you tell stories. They connect with you more when you tell stories.

Brian Beckcom: The other thing that's nice about stories, I think sometimes when people are giving speeches in public, they're worried, am I going to be able to remember what I want to say? If you're telling a story, you don't have to worry about that. I mean, the story is easy to tell. You don't memorize it. I mean, there's a famous story about a trial lawyer named Joe Jamell who got a multi-billion dollar verdict probably three decades ago. And if you read the transcript of what he said to the jurors, it's not good mean, but when you heard it, he told stories and it was persuasive enough to convince 12 Texas jurors to give multiple billions of dollars. But the other thing I would say about stories, Lori, is as someone who has degrees in computer science and philosophy as well as law, I've been super interested in consciousness.

What consciousness is a hard part of consciousness? I'm a long-time meditator, and I don't know if there is a way to think, I don't even know that the human mind works without stories. So in other words, every single time you perceive something, you tell a story about it in your head. So if you look outside and it's raining, what do you, oh, the story is, it's raining. And so stories are not only one of the most important things in persuasive, I think they are the most important thing, at least in terms of how your brain, and that's also why I think, Lori, that when you tell stories as part of a speech, it's so much easier for people to listen.

Laurie Gilbertson: One of the things when you're presenting, you want your audience to leave with something, a feeling, an emotion, learning something, whatever it may be. I also became really interested in the power of story. And I knew it worked much like you said, from telling them for many decades. And I'll go back even further, probably from about the time I was five when my parents said I wanted to be the next big actress. I would go around doing all this stuff and putting on plays and telling stories that way. So a long time, but recently I was really interested in, we know it works. We know it's so important, but why? And so researching some of the neuroscience of it and some of the reasons why these stories actually do stick with us and why something like this 2-year-old in her crib at night telling herself stories resonates with me is because there are neuroscience reasons why stories stay with us. There are lots of studies out there that can give you percentages of how people remember facts more when you tell them in stories. And while that's all very interesting, all you have to do as a presenter is tell a story and see how it connects with your audience and the neuroscience. You don't need to know the neuroscience to do it. You can just see that it works and everyboy can tell stories.

Brian Beckcom: The other nice thing about stories, if people are interested in, there's archetypes for stories. So for instance, there's Joseph Campbell, who I'm sure you're familiar with, wrote a book

called The Hero's Journey. That is about the archetypical story about the hero who goes out, leaves his home, he goes out, he faces a number of challenges, and he overcomes the challenges. That story you can find in basically every single action movie ever, right? I mean, so his point is you can find that these stories tend to have a pattern to them. They tend to have, they repeat themselves. And so I'll tell you, Lori, one thing that I've been trying to do, and I want you to talk about this please, is I've had to give quite a number of speeches recently, both as a trial lawyer and in some other capacities. The first thing I do when I'm preparing for a speech is I try to think of what stories would be good to illustrate the point I'm trying to make.

Steps You Need to Take to Give a Presentation

Brian Beckcom: Talk a little bit about your process before we get to the nuts and bolts of actually giving the presentation. Talk about the process that you use initially. Somebody comes to you and says, I want you to give a presentation on X topic. What do you do first?

Laurie Gilbertson: Okay, well, first of all, I have to think about that idea of the passion that we talked about. I'm a quick learner. You want me to talk on something, I can go online, I can read some books, I can get good at it. I could probably go out and do it, but is it really the right topic? Is it something I'm passionate about that I feel that I could go out and do a really great job on? So that's number one. And then I start to really kind of turn it around in my head of what is going to be a really creative way to present about this topic. And I probably so ingrained on me maybe in you as well, from being in front of juries and judges so much is that that idea of how am I going to start this? And the idea of how am I going to end this are the first things I think about that starting strong and ending strong and being creative with that. So I start thinking about that. So for example, I gave a presentation last month on public speaking.

What I did was I thought, well, that is a bit of pressure, but let me as an example, use some of the techniques I'm going to talk about in that presentation so that people can see them working. And so what I started thinking, what are kind of my top few things? I like to start to think in numbers. It can be when you're giving a presentation, I think can be very overwhelming to think, oh my gosh, I have to talk for an hour. What am I going to talk about? How am I going to do this? So I like to start thinking three is kind of a nice number, five's a nice number. If you have a lot of time, you can even go to 10 things. But what are the things I want to share? Another thing I do that doesn't really start when I'm asked to do something, but it's something I do all along, is when I see something interesting or I think of something interesting, a graphic that speaks to me, a video, someone telling an amazing story we've talked about, I keep a file because I know I want to use them one day.

When I'm asked to give something, I'm able to kind of go to that and think, oh, this is where I can use it, or this is where I can use that. So that's how I get started, kind of that blank slate and I start kind of plugging things into it without having a real serious structure. That's how I get started. I'm curious as to how you get started.

Brian Beckcom: It’s a very similar process actually. And it might not surprise you to know that I have a note that I keep with stories on it too. Me too. And by the way, I want to mention this too, Lori, to

everybody. So when we're talking about stories, we're not just necessarily talking about once upon a time type stories, we're also talking about metaphors and analogies and nowadays memes, which are just shortened version of stories. And so what I do, Lori, so I'll give you a concrete example. You just gave us a concrete example. So I was asked to give a speech by an Air Force colonel last year to a bunch of Air Force officers about leadership. And the reason I was asked to give speech is the colonel was a friend of mine and he had listened to my podcast and they were doing a two day leadership present or a seminar for the Air Force, and he wanted a non-military person to come give this speech.

And so my first thought was, why in the bleep would an Air Force officer want hear what a lawyer had to say about leadership? And so that was the first question I asked myself. And what I did was I used the podcast and I got up on stage and I told, I said, I'm a lawyer. Why would you guys want to listen to a lawyer about leadership? And I said, you're not going to listen to me. You're going to listen to the people I've had on my podcast and I'm going to play clips and we're going to pretend like this is a trial. And I said, I'm going to present a case to you. I think there are five fundamental principles of leadership, and I'm going to bring witnesses, and the witnesses are going to be the people I've had on my podcast. And at the end of my speech, I want you to vote on whether I prove my case.

And I said, I'm kind of nervous about doing that. I don't want to lose the case, especially since I had no opponent. But what I did is I turned that speech, I'm comfortable in the courtroom and I'm comfortable putting on legal cases. And so my thought was, I'll reframe the speech and make it about a trial, which everybody loves lawyer movies, they're some of the most lawyer TV shows, some of the most popular TV shows ever. Movies have been about trials and things like that. And so that's how I reframed the speech. And then I started looking for stories to tell. So for instance, and by the way, I gave this speech a year ago, and I remember this, it was yesterday. Why? Because it's a good story. So I said, I flashed this picture of this Russian dude in front of on the screen when I was given this presentation.

I said, can anybody tell me who this is? And nobody knew who it was. And I said, this person is the reason we are all here today, like everybody in the world. And it was a Russian submarine commander who during the Cuban Missile Crisis, was essentially in a position where based on the rules of the Russian military, he was supposed to launch nuclear weapons against the United States. And he thought that there was something off about the orders that he had received or not received. And so he hesitated and didn't do it. And it turns out it was a false alarm. But I mean, we were this close to a nuclear war with Russia. And so that is the person that saved us. And I was trying to illustrate a point in the speech, but of course I could have easily said something like, it's very important if you're ever confronted with a very difficult situation that you think about it and maybe you pause and hesitate everybody's immediately asleep, or you can illustrate it with the really powerful story that illustrates your point. So that's kind of how I like to start speeches, is I like to look for a framework in which to tell the speech, and then I like to find little vignettes or stories throughout the speech that I can kind of sprinkle in there that'll add some entertainment to it, for lack of a better word.

Laurie Gilbertson: What you did there was you showed them, you didn't tell them and make them go to sleep with that story. And that was a story. I have these top 10 tips, and I think you nailed every single one of them there, which of course you did, but you made it interactive. You turned what you might've perceived as a weakness, which was why did you want a lawyer here to talk to you about all this? And you turned it into a huge strength by calling it out and then turning it into a trial, which how fun is that? I mean, like you said, why has law and order had 25 seasons and they're getting ready for another one because people love those stories. So you made it fun. You were bold, you were creative with it. I mean, it's just a great way and a great framework to get started with everything.

And then you also did something that I think can make people nervous when they're asked to do something is how am I going to be comfortable doing this? And they feel like, well, it's always done this way where you get up and you read your slides and this and that. Well, no, no, we don't do it that way anymore. And you can do it in any way that you are comfortable and you decided you wanted to do it as a trial. I mean a super comfortable place for you. I mean, you'd be comfortable anyways, but that's your natural habitat and you did it.

Overcome Public Speaking Anxiety

Brian Beckcom: I want to be totally and completely candid about a very dark, deep secret that I have had from basically my entire professional career. I don't think I've ever admitted this publicly. I've admitted this privately to some people. And by the way, what I'm doing right now is creating anticipation. That's a story I'm about to tell, which I think is another good technique in giving speeches, is creating, leaving some gaps basically in the story. So the audience has some anticipation, but in any event, there's something I'm a little bit ashamed of, but I think I'm not the only person that feels this way for many, many years up to and including today. I get nervous before I give a speech still, and I sit there, and this is the story that I tell myself, Lori, is what in the hell is wrong with you?

You are almost 50 years old, you've been given speeches for 25 years. Every one of them has basically gone fine, but still before every speech I sit there and start going, man, what if the words don't come out? What if you can't speak? What if you start sweating? They say people are more afraid of public. That's the number one fear people have above and above death. And so what advice do you have for people? And there's a lot of people like this that are just like, I'm too nervous to do this, or How do I deal with the nerves of speaking in public? What do you tell people about that?

Laurie Gilbertson: I tell people the nerves are not bad. If you're not feeling nerves, it means that you're not excited and that it's not important to you. And kind of like you said with trials, when you aren't feeling that emotion anymore for what you're doing, you probably should be doing something different. I have the same deep, dark secret. I mean, I get nervous. You do. I was nervous before I signed on for the podcast with you. Totally. So I'll tell you, I think you can turn it into something. And something that I tell people is it's about reframing it. It's about reframing that it's, oh, I'm so nervous. And what if everything goes right? Well, oh, instead of I'm so nervous, how about I'm so excited, I'm

so excited. So just changing those words that you're saying to yourself, the story that you're telling yourself can change that a little bit.

Another thing has to kind of do with those Buddha behind you. And I have a meditation practice as well, not as regular as I would like it to be, but I'm working on it. Just a few deep breaths can change everything going on in your body and your mind. And when you tell yourself, the reason I'm feeling these butterflies and that everything feels a little strange is because I'm a little nervous, but I'm also excited and because that is my body's reaction to what's going on in my head. And then you have a little more control over it and you can say, okay, let me take a few deep breaths that will calm your body. Let me tell myself I'm excited and just give it a try. Another thing that I find helps with the nerves is that if when you're getting out on that stage, what is going to come out of your mouth in the first 30 seconds, if you know it so well because practiced it and you've memorized it, that calms your nerves because you don't have to think about something really going wrong.

I mean, maybe you'll trip over a few words, but just knowing, just being prepared, just having practiced that for that very beginning gives you a little bit of a buffer time. It can almost feel like an out-of-body experience sometimes when you're up there. So let that out-of-body experience, just be one. Let those words come out, let that introduction be great, and by the time those words have come out, your body will start to calm down. That is what I found every single time I got in front of a jury to give an opening statement. I found that once I got those first few words out, the nervousness would just fade away because nothing terrible happened. So okay, I could continue. And the last thing I'd say about that too is if you are someone who is really nervous about public speaking or presenting or communicating in any way, think about how you can start small. Think about how you can start in places where you feel comfortable, where those nerves might be a little less or where your audience is going to be super, super friendly to you, someone who knows you, they're there to support you, and how you can start really small, right? Mountain climbers. Don't start with Everest. You don't start as a trial lawyer trying homicides. You start as a trial lawyer, maybe trying a shoplifting case. Start small so you can kind of build up to be able to handle those nerves a little better.

Techniques to Loosen Up

Brian Beckcom: Are you a mind reader by chance? What you said about reframing nervousness as excitement? I mean, that is absolutely precisely the advice that I've been trying to tell myself for about two or three years now. I forget where I saw that. But essentially, and this is fundamentally important, so I want to really flag this hard because I know there'll be a lot of people that get nervous before giving speeches. What Lori's talking about is essentially if you really evaluate what is going on in your body physiologically when you're nervous, there is no difference physiologically between being nervous and being excited the same, you have more adrenaline, you have more energy, you maybe sweat a little bit, same exact thing. And so the sensations you're having in your body, it's about the story you're telling yourself about those sensations. So I used to tell myself the story that when I got sweaty and energetic and shaky and my palms got sweaty before a speech, the story that I was telling myself was, I'm nervous.

And what Lori's telling everybody, and I agree with 110% is you can tell yourself a different story about that. You can tell yourself that, man, I'm about to go out there and knock this out of the park. I'm super excited. I'm super passionate. The reason I'm sweaty is because excited to get out there and share these thoughts with people. So that is an absolutely wonderful bit of advice. The other thing you mentioned, Lori, was, and you referenced the Buddhist in the background, is breathing. And that physiologically, again, you can really control a lot of your physiology with breathing. And so proper breathing, there's different ways to do it. There's box breathing, there's nasal breathing, things like that. But there are some things you can do to kind of calm yourself before you give a speech. Let me talk real quickly about a couple other ways.

These are little techniques or tricks or whatever you want to call 'em for people. If you still have problems before you give a speech, you can imagine your audience naked. I've actually done that. That works. It sounds absurd, but when you do that, you immediately forget about your own nervousness. The other thing that I have found pretty neat is, and this is especially effective as a trial lawyer, but I think this works for presentations generally, is when you're given your speech, pretend like you're talking to one particular person in the audience, and you can look at that person during certain times of your speech. And of course, it's helpful to find somebody that has positive body language as opposed to somebody that's crossing their arms and leaning back and frowning at you. Find somebody that's giving you some positive body language and then give the speech to them.

Now, you don't want to sit there for an hour, obviously and stare at one person. So you got to kind of move your attention around from place to place. And then the last technique I've heard, and this was I went to a Jerry Smith trial Lawyers College. This is where I learned this. I actually learned this technique from an actor, an acting coach. And what he had us do is he had 12 people line up and he had us give a speech to these people, but as we were giving the speech, we had to reach our handout and shake the hand of the person and continue to give the speech, and then we would shake another person's hand. And the idea was to try to create a connection, like a connection between each person. So you don't want to actually physically shake people's hand, but the idea is pretend like when you're giving the speech that you're reaching out and you're shaking the person's hand, and then you move to the next person and you shake that person's hand. So what do you think about those techniques and what other techniques do you have for kind of loosening up and making it so the nerves don't take over quite so much?

Laurie Gilbertson: It's really interesting, the shaking Hands and Jerry Spence being one of the all time trial greats. So that's really interesting. I'm going to have to give that one some more thought. But it does really bring up the point that it is all about connection with your audience and the fact that it is about connection with your audience is another thing to think about with the nerves. It's not about you, it is about them. And that's kind of another, along with the I'm so excited. Another kind of mantra is it's about my audience. It's not about me because of course, we get nervous and we think one kind of really deep reason that people get really nervous about public speaking besides how they're going to sound. I mean, it really goes down to vulnerability and rejection. You're just really afraid. You're up there super vulnerable, you're giving it your all, and people could reject you or judge you, and it ultimately boils down to that.

Or at least I know for me and for a lot of people I talk to, that's what it boils down to. You can mask it in the fact that you think your words aren't going to come out or it's not going to be good, but it ultimately comes down to something deeper psychologically. So to kind of combat that, you think about, it's not about me, it's about what I'm sharing with this audience and one way also with nerves, and this is the kind of plan B for when all else fails, when all else fails and the words aren't coming out and you have cotton mouth or whatever it is, and nothing's coming out and you're freaking out on the stage and you can't remember anything. It's kind of a sophisticated technique, but I think it really works. Call out the elephant in the room. Everybody's going to see that you're really nervous. Everybody's going to know. So instead of hiding it, how about making that connection with your audience by sharing it? What about, I'm talking really fast. I am so nervous, I'm so excited to be here. Let me take a deep breath and start again. How about just making them part of that story with you, because then I mean, what better connection than sharing that vulnerability, kind of breaking that wall between you? It's almost like shaking hands figuratively with your audience there.

Brian Beckcom: I can't tell you how much I love that. That is deeply profound for a lot of different reasons. I thought because you moved to Denver that you might say, well, just take a weed edible before you give a speech.

Laurie Gilbertson: Or just give a bunch to your audience, then everyone's going to be happy.

Brian Beckcom: Even better. That's a great idea. No, I'm just kidding. And you know what? What's amazing, and I'm sitting here taking notes because I'm learning from you too, but even before you said this, right here at the bottom, it says they want you to succeed. I had written a note about five minutes. And so most decent human beings, when you're given a speech, just think about it. You see somebody go up there, they look nervous, they're sweaty, they look like they're not going to be able to do it. They're struggling at first. What's your immediate thought? Your immediate thought is, man, I feel for this person. I really want 'em to succeed. And so people want you to succeed. Most people want you to give a good speech. And if you get up there and say, Hey, look, and by the way, Lori, I've done this in trial. I don't do it anymore really because it's not true, but if it is true, I'll do it. But when I was a young lawyer and I was nervous as hell, I mean, I'd get up there and I'd say, look, I can't tell you how nervous I'm right now.

I'm a younger guy. I'm not as experienced as this lawyer over here, and I got this person's future in my hands and I'm super nervous. So if I do something that offends you or you don't like, please, please don't hold it against my client. I'm just doing my best here. And the important part about that, Lori, I think there's two things about this beautifully profound thing you just said. One is don't fake it. People will know if you're faking it. Don't pretend like you're nervous if you're not. And number two, like you said, honesty, authenticity. People love that because there's so little of it. And if you're just honest with people and candid, ‘Hey, I'm nervous right now, people will love you for it.’

Laurie Gilbertson: When you say that pretty much every decent human being wants you to succeed. They really do. And if there is someone in that audience who has their arms crossed and they're looking at you, first of all, don't assume what they're thinking. I've had people walk out of presentations where I thought, oh my gosh, what did I do? Only to have them email me later to say,

that was awesome, but I had to leave early. So I've learned not to assume anything. But also if someone's intimidating you or making you nervous or you feel like they're not one of those decent people who want you to succeed for whatever reason, focus on someone else. You don't have to try to win people over. You do what you said. You find that kind of one person, two people in the audience who make you feel kind of warm and comfortable, and you focus on that connection, and that's where the vulnerability and the connection can come from.

Brian Beckcom: Look, and not to use a Southern or a Texas, I don't know if this is a Texas saying or not, but there's always going to be turds in the Punch Bowl. There are always going to be people like that. And I know you've experienced this in or dire of voir dire. It was jury selection, depending on where you're at. We pronounce it differently. But basically for people that aren't lawyers that don't know about this, at the beginning of a case, you pick your jury, there could be 50, 60 hundreds of people. I've had jury panels where there's like 250 people to choose from, and there's always going to be butt holes. That's just the way it works. So literally, and I know you know what I'm talking about, Lori, avoid our process. The audience actually speaks back to you. So you can be going, who here thinks that it's okay to bring a lawsuit for personal injuries?

You're always going to have a couple people go, I think that's bad as idea ever. And I think you're greedy. And the insurance companies have sold me all this propaganda. And even though I don't know anything about anything, I'm believing the propaganda. And I think lawyers are terrible. And of course, that's the same person that as soon as he gets her's going to hire a lawyer immediately. But the point is, you're always going to have turds like that, and that's okay. And what I found is everybody else in the audience is kind of looking at themselves going, boy, this guy's a real asshole. I really wish he would shut up so I could listen to the speaker. And so what I try to do in those circumstances is kind of just essentially ignore the person, for lack of a better word, because I know that I'm not the only one that thinks they're a turd. You know what I mean?

Laurie Gilbertson: Right. Or you could make a mistake as I did in one drug trial, a narcotics trial, and one of those turds ended up on my jury, and during summation, he literally put his arms in front of him and turned his back to me. And I was like, oh, oh.

Guess that's done. But it is not your job as a presenter to think, I'm going to get out there and within the first two minutes, everyone is going to be fully loving me. Hopefully, they will. But don't give yourself more issues by taking any of that personally. Just keep doing what you're doing when you're up there, because they're always, like you said, they're always in such a colorful Texas way. They're always going to be those people out there.

How to Use Visual Aids to Make an Impact

Brian Beckcom: We've talked about what I think may be the most important thing about giving a speech, and that is having some passion about it. We've talked about the importance of stories. Now I want to talk a little bit about, if you don't mind, Laurie, the actual crafting of the presentation, and in particular the use of visual aids. And so most speeches nowadays, you don't have to use visual aids in every speech. If you're a good storyteller, you can basically paint the story in people's minds

yourself. But most of the time when we're given speeches, we're using some sort of visual aid. So what advice do you have for people, for example, that are given PowerPoint or keynote presentations or people that are going to give presentations that have some visuals to them? What do you say about that particular piece of a speech?

Laurie Gilbertson: If you are going to use them, a visual, a graphic, a video. If you are going to use it, make it good. Don't just put up some little animation because it's fun to do, but it isn't really relevant. Doesn't really have to do with anything. Don't put up a graphic that doesn't really have to do with anything. This is your tool to make an impact. This is not just something you throw in. So make it have an impact. Make it actually be relevant to what you're talking about and make it have an impact on your audience. They can be incredibly powerful, even in terms of breaking up a presentation in terms of keeping up your audience's attention during it. There are lots of ways to do that. And one of those ways is with visuals. So say you're talking for a few minutes, you put up your visual like you did at the leadership presentation.

Does anyone know who this man is? So you've shared a visual, you've created anticipation, you've created a space for interaction and connection with the audience, and then you've created a segue into a story all with one carefully chosen picture that had to do with exactly what you were talking about. That's the way you want to use it. Otherwise, they don't have any power and people stop paying attention to them. That would be my number one advice. My advice too would be to do what I do. And what it sounds like you do too, Brian, is to keep an eye out for things that resonate with you. Keep an eye out for visuals, for videos, for memes, any little thing that might strike you when you are on social media or you're reading the news or you're reading a book, maybe it's a passage and you want to blow up a quote and put it up there. That's a great visual. Any of those things that makes it so when you actually are planning and preparing, you kind of have that arsenal there already. So I have found some of my favorite visuals and videos that way, not searching them for a presentation, but just gathering and curating things that resonated.

Brian Beckcom: One really, really great source of that, and I love that suggestion, Laurie, one really great source of material is advertisements, because that's what the advertisers are trying. They're trying to persuade people. They're trying to tell a story with pictures. And so you can find a lot of good visuals in magazine advertisements and advertisements online and things like that. The other thing I'll say about, so I don't know if you know Edward Tufty. He's a Yale professor, so you got to look him up, Lori. So

He's written two or three books on basically the presentation of quantitative data. And so he has an example of how, I don't know if you remember when the Challenger space shuttle crash and all the astronauts die. They went back after that, obviously and tried to figure out why it happened. And one of the reasons Tuffy said it happened is because the NASA engineer that gave the presentation about the problem before the spaceship blew up wasn't clear enough in what he was trying to communicate. He gave a PowerPoint presentation that nobody really paid any attention to, and so they didn't catch the problem. So what Dr. Tuf was trying to communicate there was how critical it is to communicate clearly. And so I want everybody to pay careful attention to what I'm about to say. And that is because, Lori, I know you see this all the time.

A PowerPoint presentation should not be death by million words on the slides where you literally just have your speech essentially on each slide. Why shouldn't it be that way? Well, number one, it's boring as shit. And number two, it's impossible for your audience to listen to what you're saying and at the same time read what's on the screen. And so it's one or the other. Either they're reading the screen and they're not listening to you, or they're listening to you and they're not seeing what's on the screen. That's why stuff like images, pictures, if you show a picture, totally different story pictures, people can look at a picture quickly, tell themselves a story about it, and at the same time, listen to what you have to say about the picture. So just to use a concrete example with this Russian sub-commander, I didn't put a bunch of words. Admiral Vadi, the Russian guy. Does anybody know who Admiral Vadi? I just put a picture of a person. And so you look at it. Who's that? I'm interested. Who's that? Brian? So the images work together. If you're going to use a quote or words like you said, Lori, my advice to people would be to show the quote and then pause and give people a chance to read it before you start talking about it, right?

Basically, if anybody listening to this podcast, if you go and listen to a PowerPoint presentation, and every single slide is nothing but words, the person you're listening to hasn't for sure had Laurie as a coach and probably hasn't had any coaching at all when it comes to public speaking. So what do you think about that, Lori?

Laurie Gilbertson: Oh, I mean the PowerPoint, it is not your notes to read to people. It's not what it's for. And a real threshold question for anything that you are going to put on a slide to show to your audience even a question before you even start creating any kind of PowerPoint or whatever it is, do you need it? Do you need it? Do you need it for that presentation? Is it something or is it a crutch to you? So that would be my first point. Second is exactly what you said with the words. There is no better way to insult your audience's intelligence and ruin the connection you have with them than reading to them kind of saying, I don't trust you to read this and know what it says. Also, I don't have the self-discipline to stop talking and be comfortable with the silence and let you read it.

The Power of Silence

Brian Beckcom: What a great point, Lori. I think that's the fifth time I've said that. But what you said about silence is so true. There's this famous lawyer, he's dead now. He died in a car crash about eight or nine years ago, but a famous lawyer in Houston who gave a speech. One time he had it reported, and here's what he did. They introduced him, and then he slowly walks up on stage and adjusts the podium and he's adjusting his notes. And this goes on, it seems like forever. It was probably only like 30 seconds or a minute. He kind of, I'm sitting there and everybody in the audience is going, when is this guy going to say something? Right? Fricking genius because people are just on the edge of their seats and he did this totally consciously, and every trial he would get up there and do the same thing. And so you just talked about the power of silence. And silence speaks volumes, number one. And number two, silence also can be used as a persuasive tool or as a tool to create some tension or some anticipation. So talk, that's such an important point, Lori. Talk a little bit more about what you tell your clients about the power of silence.

Laurie Gilbertson: Embracing that pause and embracing that silence is so powerful. It's like having white space on a piece of paper when you're breathing, a breathing reading. See now I'm talking too much and I'm ruining my words. It just gives your brain a little bit of a break. There are studies that show that people pay the most attention after humor and silence. So there's a reason for it. And I use an example in one of my presentations of someone who did something similar to the lawyer you're talking about. A few days ago was the anniversary of the shooting at Marjorie Snowman School in Parkland in Florida. And one of the students who was a victim of that shooting spoke on the National Mall at a huge rally. She got up and she stood at the podium and she didn't say anything. Thousands of people, a 16-year-old girl, she did not say a word.

People were thinking the same thing. What is going on? Why is she not talking? Is she overcome with emotion? Is she okay? And people kept coming up to her, are you okay? Are you okay? And she kept waving them away, and she did that for six minutes. Then her timer went off and she said, I stood here for six minutes. That was the amount of time it took for a gunman to come in and shoot all the people at my school. Her silence was more powerful than anything she could have said. And yet this young girl was able to take this huge opportunity that she had in front of all these thousands of people ready to listen to her and make the most powerful statement she could with silence. And that's all she did. She spoke about three sentences and walked off. I mean, I kind of get chills thinking about it. You're getting chills hearing about it.

When you watch it, and I use it in presentations, it really shows people the power of silence. So I also encourage people to do something maybe not quite as dramatic also and on topics that may not carry that much emotion. Certainly it's that when you're starting a presentation, walk to where you want to be. Take your breath, use that eye contact with your audience and just pause before you get started because you're creating through that silence, that anticipation for your audience to look at you and think, what's she doing? And is she ready? And she certainly looks very ready up there. Now let me get myself ready, and then they're going to be listening. So it can be scary. People like to fill the silence. They like to fill it. So I just encourage people to use it and try it. And I always hear from clients who actually try it, how much it really works and how good they feel doing it.

Brian Beckcom: Another way you can use that, and this is not necessarily in the speech making or presentation making capacity, but for the lawyers listening, I've had times where I've asked adverse witness series of questions, and then they'll give me an answer that's totally preposterous or sounds horrible or something. And what I used to do when I was young and immature is I'd immediately follow up, yes, yes, yes. You said blah, blah, blah. Now if I get the witness to say something that really helps my case or makes them look really bad, I shut up for about five to 10 seconds basically. Because what you're doing without saying anything is you're putting an exclamation mark and you're letting the jury think about what did that person just say? Did they just say what I think they said? Oh my God. Whereas if you immediately start speaking after somebody says something like that, don't, their brain doesn't have a chance to kind of catch up. So that's another, so the point is there's a lot of different ways you can deploy silence to be extremely powerful in a presentation or a speech or any sort of persuasive environment. Well, Lori, let's move on. We could literally sit down and have a two-day seminar about this.

The Most Effective Way To Start a Speech

Brian Beckcom: I do want to make sure and hit on some of what I think are absolutely critical things that people both know about and put into practice when they're given presentations. And so you mentioned this earlier on in the podcast, the notion of primacy and recency. And so psychologically, people remember the first thing they hear and they remember the thing they heard most recently. And the stuff in the middle is oftentimes kind of mushed together. And so the first 30 seconds, the first minute of it, it's just like writing a paper or doing some blog post or video online. You have a finite amount of time to really capture people's attention. So Lori, first of all, what do you think about that? And second of all, what do you tell your coaching clients and the people you talk to about what you do in that first part of the speech? What is the most effective way to start a speech?

Laurie Gilbertson: You set a finite amount of time. The science shows it's about two to seven seconds to grab someone's attention. That is incredibly finite. So that introduction, that starting is so important. So what I tell clients and the people who when they find out that I'm a communications coach, coach immediately say, oh, how do I make my presentations better as if you can just give 1, 2, 3. What I do tell them is that the easiest way to make your presentations better, to make any communication better is to really think about that hook, that introduction in the beginning. And there are so many fun, bold, creative ways to bring people in to your communication. So you can ask them a question, you can use a really interesting statistic. You can tell a story, even a short one, really powerful. If you want to really have some fun with it and it works, use a prop for something.

Use a picture much like you did with the picture of the admiral, anything that is going to be a bit unexpected and that is going to show your audience that you are thinking about them, that you want to make this interesting for them, that you want to bring them in right away and that you are going to connect with them immediately. There is no worse way to start something than, hi, I'm Lori, and today we're going to talk about presenting. So let me put up my slides and let's get started. You've just wasted a huge opportunity to make that impression. And I also tell clients, think about what you want people to immediately think about you when you get up there. Do you want them to think you're funny? Great. Use humor if you can use that. I'm not very funny. Maybe once every six months my kids write it down and they're like, great mom, tell another joke in six months.

I really envy the people who can be funny. But if you can use humor, use humor. If you want to use silence and start in a really powerful way, you can do that. If you have something, you can use something interactive. There are lots of great tools out there. Ask somebody, well, what do you think of when you think of time management? Give me three words. And then you can have a great tool that'll make a word cloud and then all of a sudden things start popping up on the screen and people get to see what everyone else in the audience thinks. And then you can pull out a few of those words, talk about them, and then you think about a way that you're going to use them in the end for that recency part. But do not let that opportunity go to grab your audience right away.

Brian Beckcom: I love that. So let's just run through a little exercise. So like Lori just said, she gave a speech not too long ago about giving speeches, and there are multiple ways to start a speech like that. So Lori just gave the example of probably the wrong way. ‘Hi, my name is Brian Beckham and

I'm going to talk to you today about how to give a speech that's probably not the most effective way to start a speech.' How about this? Instead, walk up on stage and say, 'There are 3,578 ways to start a speech. Does anybody know what the best way to start a speech is?' And then shut up for a second and look at your audience. Now you've captured their attention, right? Or you could say something like, what is the number one mistake most people make when giving speeches?

And then shut up for a second and see what you're doing there. Like Lori said, the first one was an example of a question. The second one was an example, maybe more of a statistic, or maybe I got those reversed. But the point is, you want to do something to peak your audience's attention. Another way to do that, and I think Lori mentioned this, is flash up on the screen, the number 96% or something like that, and look at it and then say 96% of the people in the world are more afraid of public speaking than they are of dying, or some really interesting weird statistic. And so the point Lori's making everybody is don't get up there, introduce yourself by name and then start talking about what you're going to do. Do something with some energy. Do something that captures people's minds. If I ask you a question that's basically I'm capturing your mind for a brief period of time.

So if I ask Lori on this podcast right now, 'Hey Lori, where'd you get that picture behind you?' Now, Lori's mind, whatever she was thinking about has now it's switched to what I want her to think about, namely where she got that picture that's behind her. And so by asking people questions, you can temporarily hijack their attention and focus it on what you want to focus it on. So for example, in my leadership speech, I said, I think there's five fundamental principles of good leadership, and I think they're fundamental across the board. And I'm going to talk about those five fundamental principles during this speech. And now people are like, Hmm, I wonder what they are. I'm curious to know. And so what I'm doing is I'm basically capturing their attention.

The Most Effective Way To End a Speech

Brian Beckcom: Lori, what about the flip side of starting a speech? What about ending a speech? What recommendations or what do you tell your clients about how to finish a speech?

Laurie Gilbertson: Well, first of all, I think you're a mind reader as well, because you nailed the way that I start that speech, which is with the Jerry Seinfeld joke about public speaking being the number one fear of people greater than death. So at a funeral, you'd rather be the person in the coffin than giving the eulogy.

Brian Beckcom: I had forgotten about that, but that is awesome. That is great.

Laurie Gilbertson: It's a good one. So what I tell people about thinking about where they want to end is that it's much the same as starting. You can use a lot of the same techniques, the things that you just shared. All of those ways are really great ways to end. It is also a huge opportunity and much like people are afraid, I get clients who say, what do you mean I don't have to introduce myself? What do you mean I don't have to say my name? And I tell them, you know what, when you're speaking, you have someone introduce you. People are there, they know who you are. They've read your bio. You don't need to give it to them. So people think that because always done

that way, that's how they have to do it. You've got to kind of break out of that mindset. And I say that the same with finishing something.

How many presentations have you been to where it ends with ‘Okay, that's all I have. Anyone have any questions?’ It's the worst. So you have this huge opportunity. You have done this great introduction. You have been so bold and creative, you've done all these great visuals, and then you're at the end and you're going to just turn over that opportunity to end really strong, to questions that someone in the audience may ask. You've just turned over control of your presentation to someone else. Not that you shouldn't do questions, you can do questions separately, but you want to end in a way that leaves people leaving that room with the emotion you want them to have. Do you want them to feel inspired? Do you want them to feel that they've just learned so much? What do you want them to feel? What do you want them to do?

Give that some thought and then craft that ending. One of my favorite things, my favorite techniques to do is to bookend the beginning and the end, almost like bookends on a shelf. So they relate to each other. So you come back maybe to something you talked about in the beginning, and then you bring your audience back to it at the end. And let's say you had them share three words in the beginning. One of the things I like to ask, sometimes I ask people what's on their bucket list when we're talking about time management and they share some things, then we share. Well, one of the reason people don't often get to a lot of these things is they think they don't have time. And then I end with something about the bucket list in time and how they're going to go out now and do all these great things on their bucket list. So you bookend it and it also shows your audience you care about them. You've thought about this, you want it to make sense, and you've thought about how you want them to be leaving that time with you. So that is my advice. Do not give up that opportunity. I mean, if you just peter out at the end, that is not good and don't do it.

Brian Beckcom: You know what I did in my leadership speech? Like I said, I made it into a tron. At the very end of the speech, I had 'em vote on whether I'd proved my case. And I said, so y'all are the jury. Did we prove our case? And every single person raised their hand and I said, see, unanimous verdict, yeah, we win. So anyway, but I think the point is a great one. You want to end with a bang, and there's a number of different ways to do that. You can challenge people. Now, what are you going to do with this information you, like you said, you can do it in a number of different ways, but the point is you want to maybe leave people with something, either a challenge or a question or a task to do or something to think about.

The Key Tip in Delivering a Presentation

Brian Beckcom: Lori, we've talked a ton, we've talked about passion stories, memes, analogies, which I think are super fundamental to giving a good presentation. We've talked about how to start a presentation, the power of silence, how to end a presentation. We could talk forever about how to structure it, what software to use, how to use it and all that stuff. But what I'd like to do instead is I'd like to ask you, what other important tip or tips do you give your clients that we haven't talked about when it comes to giving speeches and presentations?

Laurie Gilbertson: Well, I'm going to say the number one, two things. I'll give you two. Number one, be yourself. Much like you said, love that. Don't try to be someone else. We learn as trial lawyers. What works for us? What feels authentic, what works? I am sitting down, but if I stood up, you'd say I'm five foot two, I'm not very tall. And there are things that I can do in the courtroom that work for me. I had friends, one friend who was very tall, very large man when I was doing trials, and he could do things that I wish I could do, but if I tried them, I'd look ridiculous. I did things that he would look ridiculous doing. So we all have things that are so unique to our communication, and I think people can probably see even listening to this, that you and I speak the same language.

We have so many things that are so similar, and yet we each have our own styles that work for us, that we've honed, that we've gotten used to. If you are going to have to spend time when you are presenting or communicating, trying to be someone else, you're taking away the energy that you could be spending, being passionate and being yourself and being effective that way. So my number one thing is please don't be anyone else. Be yourself and make use of your strengths. Even when you think you have some weaknesses, make those into strengths and really hone in use those. So that's my number one and my number two is something that people don't often want to hear. It's not very exciting to hear. It's something though that we learn as trial and that every presenter should do.

Laurie Gilbertson: Prepare and practice. As trial lawyers, we want to be the most prepared person in the courtroom. It's the only way we can sound like we're thinking off the top of our heads and responding to things and make it sound okay. You have got to prepare. You have got to know what you are going to say, not scripted. I recommend kind of scripting that introduction, scripting that conclusion because that gives you the freedom within the presentation to react to your audience, to speak in a natural way. But you have got to prepare. And the second thing is practice. When I tell people how much I practice a presentation that I've probably given 15 times, they are astounded. But I say I need to do that. So I feel comfortable and confident giving it, even though I could probably give it in my sleep practice, no matter whatever works for you, if it works getting in front of a mirror, do it. If it works, just kind of saying it at your desk in front of your computer, do it. But you have got to get the words out of your head and out of your mouth to hear what they sound like. You've got to do that. You cannot just do it in your head and think, oh, I have it all and it's going to all be good. And I've gone through it in my head. You have got to say the words.

Brian Beckcom: Practice, practice, practice, and maybe even practice in front of a mirror. It's so weird that you said be yourself, because that is literally the number one thing I write on the top of my legal pad before I give an opening statement is be yourself. And that's because I used to not do that. I mean, I remember there were times early on in my career that there were lawyers that I would look up to and then I would try to emulate those lawyers and it wasn't me. And inevitably I lost those cases. So I started saying, you know what? I'm just going to be the person I am. And if that's not good enough, that's not good enough. But frankly, it's really the cases really aren't about the lawyers anyway. It's about the facts and the evidence and the witnesses. But it is truly the exact phrase I put at the top, I say be yourself, be yourself, be yourself.

So what great advice. The other thing, practice, prepare, and practice you. It's just like any skill given speeches given presentations. The more you do it, the more you practice, the better you get, the less

you do it, the less you practice, the less you improve. And so those sound be yourself and prepare and practice. Sounds cliched, but it's so, so true. So Lori, the last question I have for you is this. What kind of people, so you run a consulting business where you teach a variety of different people how to give speeches and presentations. What kind of people do you look for in clients? What kind of people should seek out your particular types of services?

Laurie Gilbertson: Well first I would say people who are ready to do the work, because if you're not ready to do the work and you're not ready to devote some time to really developing who you are as a speaker and working on some of these techniques that we're talking about, it would honestly just be wasted money. Don't do it. You got to do it when you're ready. I work with mostly executives, entrepreneurs, founders, and trial lawyers. So I actually do trial coaching for lawyers who are starting to go into, usually younger lawyers starting to go into the courtroom. And for those people it's people who just want a little extra support, often solos who don't necessarily have professional development in their firms and whole departments to help them out. And they want an expert to come along with them and be that sounding board and be that person they can talk trial strategy with or talk about order of witnesses or how to do an opening, how to do a closing.

For my communications work, I do work with a lot of founders who are in startups and they want to get the story out of what their company is doing, and they really want to craft it and get used to telling it and figure out really the best way to communicate that into the world. And then I also do work with some younger people who really are ahead of their time in discovering the power of communication, and that's really fun too. So anybody who feels like what they are interested by what we've talked about today and they're ready to roll their sleeves up and start to do the work. Those are the people who I really love working with.

Brian Beckcom: Well, I'll tell you, I've been a practicing trial lawyer for over 20 years now, and there's parts of my game that I'm still working on. So for example, six months ago I told a lady that I work with who's a trial consultant, I said, I need help on damages on communicating damages in cases. And Lori, I want to talk to you offline because I think I may want to hire you to help me out with some weak spots that I have in my own presentation skills, some areas where I want to improve, but tell people where they can find you online if they're interested in learning more about you, learning more about the company and you provide, where's the best place to find you?

Laurie Gilbertson: You can find me at my website. It's Tribeca Blue Consulting. Tribeca is the neighborhood in New York where I used to live. Stands for Triangle Below Canal. Those of you who don't know kind of all the neighborhoods in New York City, so TribecaBlueConsulting.com, there's a form right on the website. And if you'd like to continue this conversation, I would be happy to hear from you. You can contact me directly and I'm also on LinkedIn at Laurie Gilbertson and I'd love to connect and let me know you've heard me on Brian's podcast.

Brian Beckcom: Thank you so much for your time. This was an awesome show. I think there's going to be a ton of people that are going to be super interested in what you have to say, and I just can't thank you enough for coming on the show.

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About the Author

Brian Beckcom is one of the nation's top trial lawyers. He is also a widely published author, including multiple books and hundreds of articles. Brian's interests include technology, consciousness, meditation, physics, mathematics, history, language, stories, narrative, memetic theory, leadership, persuasion, quantum gravitation, computer science, and more. Lessons from Leaders podcast features national leaders, including military officers, national business experts, judges, spiritual leaders, and other guests who have shown leadership during difficult times.