



THE NEW ELLIS GROUP

# Monday Monday

*Connecting the Dots with Karen Kaplowitz*



*Helping you create and reinforce the habits of successful career building,  
gleaned from my work as a business development strategist, trainer and coach*

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## When Presentation Skills Count

For lawyers planning important presentations, we invited Amy Kopelan, an expert on media and presentation training, to comment on common presentation flaws.

Picture this. You go to the theatre to see HAMLET and hear the leading actor say:

"To be or not to be, um, that is the, um, question." I don't know about you, but I'd want my money back. I recently rehearsed a partner from a major New York firm who was pitching new business and wanted to polish his presentation before meeting with the potential client. On paper, he had it down. Good script. Good message. But then, as he started to practice and roleplay, I heard it. He used "and" 28 times during his pitch. Yikes! Does it really sound that bad? Yes! "And" is a culprit that will not only distract the listener, but wear down your client who is trying to follow your core message.

The words "AND/ UM" are friends, but not yours!

Simply put, "and" is filler "weed" that strings out your thoughts, never allowing your listener to settle on a key point. Just when they think they've grasped what you want to say, you sadly dilute their understanding and attention by throwing "and" onto the pitch roadway. And, and, and, and....after a while your client will simply tune out.

What about the UM? The "Um" is the bad habit of what I call pausing aloud. You may think "I need a minute to think what I'm going to say next" but your "audience" hears "I'm not prepared. I'm not rehearsed enough. I don't really have a handle on things." The "um" can destroy your narrative and your ability to instill confidence.

Still not convinced? Go through your presentation and look for the long, run-on sentences with the tell-tale "and" – then chop the sentences in half. Start each new sentence with a vibrant or evocative word to open your new, shorter sentences.

**Here are the best ways to root out and zap these vocal habits so you don't falter in your new business pitch...or any other public speech:**

Step One: Write your presentation (of any length) with short, to-the-point sentences. Avoid those weak filler words. Use words that can have a punchy effect. Think of it as using verbal "bullet points."

- **Short**
- **Punchy**
- **Focused**

Step Two: Wherever you would normally insert or write an "and," in your text, resist the temptation!

Step Three: When you are rehearsing, (You must rehearse!) listen carefully to what you say. Or ask someone to listen as you rehearse. Are you using a lot of "ums"? Could your sentence be running on too long? Did you accidentally insert "and" where it didn't have to be? Correct it:

**End the sentence > Take a short Pause > Then Continue**

Good luck on your next presentation!

Amy Dorn Kopelan, a former ABC News Producer who helped launch Good Morning America, is Founder and President of [Bedlam Productions Inc.](http://BedlamProductionsInc.com) where she provides media and presentation training for senior executives, the legal community, and entrepreneurs.

The next issue of this newsletter will be on September 11. Enjoy the Labor Day holiday.