

Women Lawyers Need to Exude More Confidence, Federal Judge Says

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By [Debra Cassens Weiss](#)

Women lawyers need to exude more confidence in the courtroom, even if they have to fake it, according to a Pennsylvania federal judge.

There are few differences between great male and female lawyers in the courtroom, three judges said at a program at the ABA's Women in Law Leadership Academy in Philadelphia on Thursday. But they identified some things women could do better, the [Legal Intelligencer](#) reports in a story reprinted by New York Lawyer (reg. req.).

Being confident in the courtroom is one way women lawyers could improve, according to U.S. District Judge Norma Shapiro of Philadelphia. "Women in general lack the confidence that men seem to have in the courtroom," she said. And if lawyers don't have confidence, jurors and judges will also lack confidence in their arguments.

Shapiro said confidence grows with experience. But new lawyers may have to fake it.

She cited an example from her own days as an associate at the law firm now known as Dechert, the story says. A partner came back to the office after losing a request for an injunction and asked Shapiro, who was the only lawyer available, if she knew how to appeal. "Absolutely," Shapiro answered, although she should have said "no."

Shapiro contacted a woman lawyer in court offices who helped Shapiro with the appeal and got her an appellate panel that afternoon. The appeals court issued the injunction. "So that's how you show confidence," Shapiro said.

U.S. District Judge Barbara Lynn of Texas said the secret to showing confidence is developing your own courtroom style—and style doesn't mean wearing a short skirt or a low-cut blouse, the story reports. The goal is to be noticed for your argument rather than your outfit.

Lynn recalled one jury that sent her a note asking a woman lawyer sitting at the end of a table to keep her legs together. Lynn dispatched her law clerk to deliver the request to the lawyer.

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