

October 2016

Toni Dach: What Forensics Did for Me

Toni Dach

Follow this and additional works at: <http://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/speaker-gavel>



Part of the [Speech and Rhetorical Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Dach, T. (2016). Toni Dach: What forensics did for me. *Speaker & Gavel*, 53(2), 49-51.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly and Creative Works for Minnesota State University, Mankato. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Speaker & Gavel* by an authorized administrator of Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly and Creative Works for Minnesota State University, Mankato.



Alumni Corner

Toni Dach: What Forensics did for Me

Ohio University Forensic Alumni (1999-2003)

Toni Dach



Toni is a SAS Software Specialist in the Enforcement & Compliance division of the U.S. Department of Commerce. Before becoming a code nerd, she was a Senior International Trade Compliance Analyst with the same agency, and trotted the globe protecting U.S. industry from unfair trade. She competed for Ohio University from 1999-2003. Her favorite event was and still is extemporaneous speaking, since you're allowed to nerd out in that event. Her favorite moment was when a judge finally recognized and rewarded her brilliance in using economic theory to explain legislative initiatives in Extemp. She realizes most of you are nodding off at the thought of those "exciting moments."

Because Toni is a government employee it is important to note that "All views expressed in this article are those of Toni Dach's and do not reflect those of her employer."



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. This Article is brought to you for free and open access through Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly and Creative Works at Minnesota State University, Mankato. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Speaker & Gavel* by the Editor and Editorial Board of *Speaker & Gavel*.

Proper APA citation for this article is:

Dach, T. (2016). Toni Dach: What forensics did for me. *Speaker & Gavel*, 53(2), 49-51.



Toni Dach: What Forensics Did for Me

Toni Dach

International Trade Compliance Analyst/SAS Software Specialist
International Trade Administration, Enforcement & Compliance
Washington, DC

***ALUMNI CORNER:** The forensic community is filled with alumni who will tout the benefits they received through their participation in intercollegiate speech and debate activities. As directors of forensics programs face battles for budgets and sometimes for their program's very existence, having a collection of published testimonies about the positive influence of forensics can be a tremendous help. To that end, Speaker & Gavel is setting aside space in each issue for our alumni to talk about how forensics has helped them in their professional life. These are our alumni's stories.*

Keywords: forensics, benefits of forensics, Alumni Corner

It's 10:05 AM on a Tuesday. I'm standing near the front of a computer training classroom looking over my coworkers who have come for a technology training session. While their computers boot up, I guess at what is going happen in this 90-minute session, the 10th of 22 training sessions I will lead in just eight weeks' time. I see the chatty long-time friends who have situated themselves together near the front of the classroom, eager to chat about their weekend. I see the shy but sharp "mechanic" who has grabbed a computer in the middle of the room and will both help those around him and ask good questions. I see the "new guy" trying to prove he's sharp and attentive. And I see the coworker who doesn't really "get" our technology coming to the training for the second time and trying to hide in the back corner of the room.

As their computers boot up, I introduce myself and my assistant, a fellow SAS software specialist. Everyone in the room has met us before. While their ancient computers continue to boot, I try to make the training interesting by offering candy to anyone who can give me a good reason why we're moving to server-based SAS. I get all four of the answers I have on my PowerPoint slide, and I hand out the requisite candy bars.

This all seems boring, but, for a moment, consider what it means to be in front of that classroom. While the training became more interesting once those computers booted up, I was tasked with making both the wait for the computers to start up *and* the training interesting and useful. How, exactly, does someone become comfortable leading training or presenting to a dozen or more of their peers or superiors? For me, forensics gave me the skills to present as confidently as I do.



When I first tried out for the speech team in high school, at a school with a highly competitive team, I tried out for Lincoln-Douglas debate. That audition had me saying that I'd rather my mom die in a car crash exercising her right to not wear a seatbelt than allow government intervention in private choices. Oops. I won the debate but lost the war, and the speech coach thought I would probably do better in extemp, foreign because I had an interest in international affairs. And I LOVED extemp. I did it for 3 years in high school and 4 years in college, and I'd do it again if you asked me nicely. Please, ask me to pontificate on an academic topic with 30 minutes to prepare with reliable sources at my disposal.

Over those seven years, I came to love other events, as well. Rhetorical criticism/communication analysis is still a favorite because of the thought, research, and analysis it requires. I love a good persuasive speech that compels me to think about the facts of something and take action on it. I've even had amazing interpretation rounds where I tell my professional friends, who never competed in forensics in any form but came to judge on my invitation and fell in love with the activity quickly, that I could barely decide who was the best, worst, and middle in a round of stars.

All of this seems romantic, but it comes full circle to that classroom just a few months ago. I am trusted to lead training sessions and present to just about anyone because I have the public speaking background I cultivated in those seven years of high school and college competition.

When I started my job at the Department of Commerce, I met with my boss's boss on my second or third day, to welcome me. He told me that he had Googled me, and he was especially impressed that I had been on Ohio University's Forensics team. While there were some doubts when it came time to present to the Assistant Secretary for Enforcement and Compliance, International Trade Administration, but I was eventually given the opportunity and was able to present without a hitch. When that presentation finally happened, my boss and his boss asked me "how I did it" when the meeting ended, and I said it was no big deal to talk for 15 minutes on a topic I had been studying and writing about for the last six months. "This isn't the biggest audience I've ever spoken to," I said. I admitted that the drink of water I took was when I lost my place but they said they didn't notice my pause.

After several years as an analyst, a position on the SAS team became available, and my superiors knew I was the right person for the job. Yes, I was nominated because I demonstrated skill in SAS programming, but a big part of the nomination was because I could communicate complex technology concepts to my coworkers and gain their trust because of my interpersonal communication skills.

It's been three years since I joined the SAS team, and the communication skills I gained competing in forensics in high school and college have never failed me. I can lead a training of



10-20 peers, help a coworker better understand our basic programming, explain complex and unique programming in “lay” terms, and even lobby our leadership for funding for the technology we need to complete our mission. I truly believe I would not have the confidence, poise, research skills, or presentation skills to do everything I’ve done in the last decade if I didn’t participate in forensics.

Communicating clearly and confidently is important, no matter your major or career path. The only official communication class I took in college was INCO 101, introduction to public speaking. Forensics made this economics and international trade specialist turned technology specialist a confident and competent communicator. The skills forensics teach and enforce are valuable no matter your career path. Just ask anyone from an international trade compliance analyst to the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Enforcement and Compliance.

