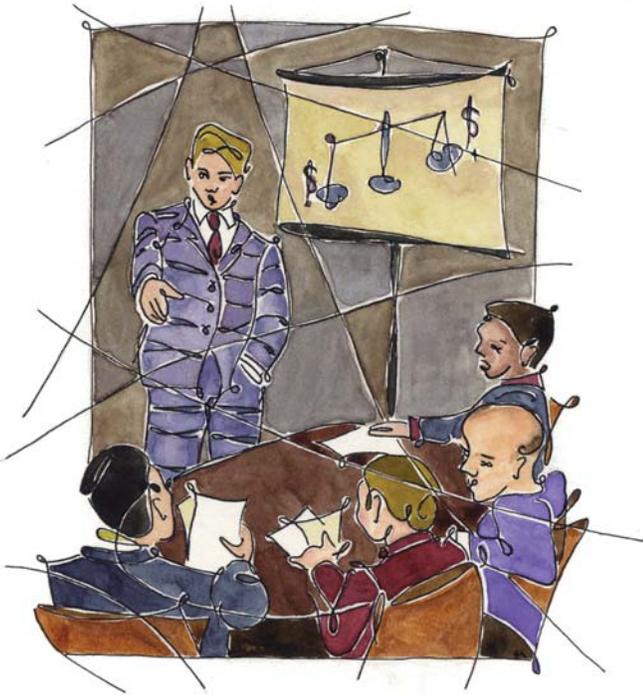


Speaking *with* Conviction

A U.S. CPA runs the only speaker's bureau that features convicted fraudsters



BEFORE Ohio CPA Gary Zeune (pronounced zine-ee) introduced convicted fraudster Webster Hubbell to the Texas Society of CPAs in San Antonio, he first showed them a cartoon. It depicted a bank president watching two robbers hold up a teller. “Amateurs,” the president observed derisively.

“Who are the only people who can steal from you blind?” Zeune asked the gathering, rhetorically. “People you trust.”

Zeune then brought out Hubbell, one of the star members of the speaker's bureau, The Pros & The Cons, that Zeune had founded in the mid 1990s. A former law partner of Hillary Rodham Clinton and an associate attorney general in the Justice Department during Bill Clinton's presidency, Hubbell once had the trust of the highest powers in the U.S. But during the Whitewater investigation, Hubbell was discovered to have bilked his former law

CPAs present spoke of the important perspective he brought to Zeune's presentation on fraud. “I didn't even realize all the consequences that go along with a fraud like that,” accountant Cari True said.

FROM THE FOX'S MOUTH

For Zeune, a highly experienced forensic accountant, teacher and lecturer on fraud, the presence of former fraudsters such as Hubbell bring a credibility to the many presentations he makes around the U.S. “If you want to build a better henhouse,” he says, “you don't ask the chicken, you ask the fox.”

Zeune came up with the idea of a speaker's bureau about ten years ago when he read the book *Faking it in America*, about Barry Minkow, the teenage wunderkind who founded ZZZZ Best Carpet Cleaning. Minkow spent more than seven years in jail for defraud-

ing banks and investors of about \$400,000. The result was an 18-month prison sentence and a terrible fall from grace.

Following Hubbell's presentation, many of the

ing banks and investors of about \$100 million through his publicly traded company. Zeune contacted Minkow and convinced him, and Minkow's parole officer, to have the former felon accompany Zeune on his fraud awareness and detection lectures. The result was so successful that Zeune began recruiting other convicted fraudsters to join his fledgling speaker's bureau.

The Pros & The Cons now boasts about a half-dozen regular speakers. They are paid, and they can keep their fee unless they have a restitution order against them, as Minkow did.

“If I say this is how fraud's committed, it's like trying to describe to someone what it's like to drive a Formula One racing car without ever having actually done it,” Zeune says. “Webster and Barry and the others have done it, so they quickly get the audience's attention. And when they talk about the price they've paid — Webster still gets physically ill when he tells about the day he had to admit to his children what he had done — it has an incredibly powerful impact.” ■

Gary Zeune, CPA (gzfraud@mindspring.com) is based in Columbus, Ohio. A complete list of his ex-con speakers can be found at www.bigfoot.com/~gzfraud.