

Promise Never to Commit these Presentation Crimes

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They say there are three presentations we give: The one we planned to give, the one we actually gave, and the one we wished we would have given. A lot of us leave a presentation wishing for a “do-over.” What can destroy a good outcome are the following “Presentation Sins.”

1. **Not being prepared.** When a speaker walks in the door unprepared, it almost always shows. Inevitably, the person will not be able to answer questions correctly, or the individual will deliver a generic message, one not focused on the listeners’ issues.
2. **Looking unprofessional.** Many of us work in a business casual environment. Some presenters show up more appropriately attired for a sporting or social event. Even if they do not comment, the audience will notice plunging necklines, short skirts, scuffed shoes or wrinkled anything.
3. **Going too deep.** Most of us love what we do. We are excited to share everything we know. However, our listeners may prefer an overview, rather than the unabridged version. Not analyzing your audience can cause you to misstep here.
4. **Appearing “cocky” or arrogant.** Listeners make instantaneous deductions about a speaker. Often, the person’s mannerisms, facial expression or tone of voice cause the presenter to come across in a negative manner.
5. **Sounding unsure.** If your voice is marred with lots of filler words, “ums,” “ahs,” and “you knows,” listeners will put the skids on giving you a thumbs up. There is no doubt about it, non-words chip away at a speaker’s credibility.
6. **Having scattered eye contact.** Listeners are like your mother or grandmother. For them to trust what you say, you must look them in the eye. Scanning the room or having a love affair with the floor or ceiling will make listeners anxious about trusting you.
7. **No follow-through.** If you promised to send the slides ahead or if you committed to doing something, but didn’t, your reputation will suffer. Obviously, it is better to under-promise and over-deliver.
8. **Talking to or reading from the Screen.** Many speakers use their PowerPoint slides as their notes. They often end up reading directly what is on the screen. Listeners quickly become annoyed or bored. They can read and often more quickly than you. Additionally, if everything is on the slide, and you aren’t offering anything new, listeners prefer that you email them your slide deck. They would rather not attend another meeting.
9. **Arguing, defending or putting down.** Listeners have questions and sometimes, they offer opinions that are unfair or not true. Arguing is never a good idea. While you may win your point, others will notice your defensive stance or the unprofessional way you responded.
10. **Over-answering or repeating.** Sometimes, you may notice resistance from your listeners. When this happens, speakers can easily go into too much detail or repeat their answer multiple times. Listeners have very little tolerance for this approach.
11. **Not honoring the time commitment.** Whether your time allotment is 15 minutes or one hour, be sure to honor it. People are busy and have other commitments they need to attend. Remember when speaking to an executive, time is their most precious commodity.
12. **Acting nervous.** No one trusts someone who acts nervous. Ahead, make sure you have

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analyzed your listeners and have crafted a message that answers their issues. Then, practice. Do a dry run. During your presentation, pause and breathe at the end of sentences. Let nervous energy out through strong gestures, sustained eye contact and facial animation.

Making a presentation is challenging. By avoiding these twelve missteps, you will improve your odds for being successful.

***Question:** When you give a presentation, what is challenging for you? What worries you the most? We're interested in your reaction to this article. Click [here](#) – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.*

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