

Credibility Busters

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Listeners on a call or web session make instantaneous decisions about the speaker's trustworthiness. In fact, they often feel they have a clear read within seconds. Be aware the following missteps can be costly and can inadvertently "bust" your credibility.

- **Sounding bored.** Inflection in your voice is critical because listeners can't see your face; nor can they look you in the eye. Vocal variety is your best persuasive tool. It's your calling card! With inflection, you convey that what you are saying is important. It tells the listeners to pay attention. A lack of inflection says you don't care, are tired and would prefer NOT to be talking to them.
- **Being unfocused.** The first words out of your mouth are important. Be clear and straight forward about why listening to you is critical or helpful. Be clear about any action steps you will want from them as you close. Have strong transitional statements between your key points. Listeners need to follow your logic easily. When listeners hang up confused, delays occur and decisions are stalled.
- **Not knowing who you are.** People like to know they are talking to the subject matter expert or a person who knows their business. If you are hosting a web session, you can easily state your title on the title slide. *John Doe, Senior Project Manager for XXX.* If you are talking on the phone to a customer, you can subtly interject your credentials as the conversation progresses. For example, you can say things like, *"In my twenty years of being a banker..." "In working on site in your organization, what I discovered..." "As a broker, like yourself, for seven years..."* Listeners appreciate knowing your level of experience, any advanced certifications, or your research in a particular area.
- **Interrupting.** Allow yourself to be interrupted, but do not interrupt others. People need to voice their concerns without being shut down. Listening all the way to the end of a statement takes discipline, real discipline. Our natural tendency is to want to respond quickly. Wait, pause, take a breath. It will demonstrate you are thinking, instead of reacting.
- **Not being able to answer their questions.** People always have questions. Anticipate what those questions might be and come prepared with the answers. Every time you say *"I'll have to get back to you,"* OR *"Can I put you on hold,"* it erodes credibility.
- **Having filler words, like "um" or "ah," etc.** Filler words chip away at credibility, particularly on the phone when the listener can't see you. They suggest that you really don't know your "stuff," that you are making things up. Speaking in short sentences will help to eliminate these pesky non-words.
- **Not substantiating your claims.** Listeners are used to people speaking in platitudes. *"It will save you a lot of money." "The return on investment will be quick."* People need the data and facts. Be ready with case studies or proof points. Know what customers will stand as references. Have their contact information available.
- **Not being consistent.** Get your facts straight. Listeners don't want to hear one thing from you and another from someone else. Know what a policy covers or doesn't cover. Know how your product compares to a competitors'. Nobody wants to buy a product or service that doesn't do what they thought it would.
- **No follow-up.** Continue to build the relationship after you make the sale or close the conversation. The number one complaint our organization hears is *"Once the deal is signed, we never hear from the person again."* If you show you value the relationship, customers will continue to bring you business and continue to refer others.

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Building credibility with customers is your #1 responsibility. It is particularly hard to do when your primary interactions with this person are over the phone. Mistakes are easy to make when we make or take call after call or conduct meetings virtually. To influence people and win their support and cooperation, work hard at building credibility.

Question: *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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