

# The Big 5: Why Executives Table an Issue

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**Most people get what they deserve! If they do a good job of presenting their idea, they get what they deserve.** If they do a poor job, they also get what they deserve. This is what one COO I coached said at a recent lunch. My question to you is did you get what you felt you deserved when you left a meeting with a senior leader. If not, perhaps you were doomed because of the **Big Five – the top reasons Executives table an issue.**

- **Poor preparation.** One Exec said, “I can always tell when someone isn’t prepared. They stumble when I ask them questions. They also don’t seem to anticipate that I will need proof.” Another Exec said, “I loathe when people waste my time and aren’t prepared.” Think about the last time you tried to sell an Exec an idea. How long did you spend preparing? Did you do more than throw a few slides together? Did you sit down ahead of time and try to figure what questions will be asked or what analyses might be requested?
- **Faulty Strategy.** A Director of Innovations at a technology company said, “I am all about big ideas, but I have to follow your argument. You can’t be jumping all over the place, leaving me to figure it.” When you meet with an Executive, could the person easily follow your logic? Do all of your points lead to the same conclusion?
- **Lack of Clarity.** Steve Jobs once said, “Decisions are easy when ideas are simply explained, but you have to work hard to get your thinking clean to make it simple.” Some of us over-talk an issue. We use a lot of acronyms. Our sentences are very complicated with lots of phrases and clauses. We often make up words. Nouns are turned into verbs and vice versa. Ask yourself, “Is your argument clear and simple?”
- **Dubious Benefits.** I coach a VP who interrupts people right up front if the benefits to

a proposal aren’t apparent OR relevant to her priorities. Her famous line is “Yeah, so what! Why should I care?” People reporting to this Executive know that they must link ideas to things that are top of mind for her. They cannot speak in generalities. Do you support any benefits with metrics? Are they tied to what is important to the Executive?

- **Lack of Confidence.** “Unconfident people scare me. I wonder why they are in charge.” This is a comment I hear frequently. People who show they are nervous rarely get a positive result. One Executive said, “Act like you belong.” Executives just want to have a conversation. Confident speakers look people in the eye. They don’t read from their notes or slides. They don’t rush. Having a carefully thought out message is, of course, important, but give the same amount of attention to how you will deliver it. Do you practice out loud? It will surely make a difference.

Getting what you want and deserve from a meeting doesn’t happen by accident. It should never be left to chance. Avoid being disappointed by paying attention to what Executives feel is important in a conversation.

**Question:** *What insures that you will get what you deserve? 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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