

# Do You Care Enough

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*“Doing the best at this moment puts you in the best place for the next moment.” — Oprah Winfrey*

“I was busy” is an excuse many of us use when we don’t do our best. When you carelessly prepare or deliver ideas, your listeners may end up confused, and consequently, your organization may miss opportunities or leave money on the table. You may also jeopardize your brand and future promotions. A bad impression is difficult to erase. Consider the following and ask yourself, “Do you care enough? Are you doing your best? Do you need to change anything?”

- **Do you adequately prepare by looking at things from the other person’s perspective?** Do you understand what your listeners find important, their priorities? Do you consider their attitude and knowledge level when putting together your message?
- **Do you prepare by creating slides before you have a firm strategy?** If you start your preparation by creating slides, invariably you will include slides that are slightly off topic or too detailed for what the audience requires. Your slides need to tell a carefully woven story.
- **Do you provide a framework, a strong opening and close?** Listeners need an overview of what you are going to discuss and why it is important. They also need a wrap up that clearly defines any action steps.
- **Do you know what proof listeners will need in order to be persuaded?** Is it a graph of the earnings, quarter by quarter? Is it an assessment of the risk or opportunity? Is it an understanding of how your product compares to a competitor’s? Listeners aren’t easily convinced. You need to bring the proof!
- **Are you sure?** Data and facts need to be accurate. Guestimates are not good enough.

Proof read slides or Excel charts very carefully. Never say “yes” to something you think is probably correct but you aren’t 100% sure.

- **Do you leave it to your listeners to figure it?** Don’t just throw information or numbers at your listeners but tell them what they mean in the whole scheme of things. Will marketing need to cut back? Will sales need to grow their pipeline? Without proper context, your listeners may struggle to understand.
- **Do you have examples or stories to make your ideas more visible?** People need examples. They need to see that others are doing what you are suggesting. They need to visualize how this idea will work in their environment. Have you ahead identified what examples or stories to include?
- **Do you plan moments of interaction?** Do you invite questions? Listeners want to be heard. While we know this on the one hand, many of us only ask for questions at the end of any presentation.
- **Have you anticipated the tough questions?** Did you write them down and figure out the best way to answer them? Have you put slides into an appendix in case you need them to elaborate on a point? Tough questions can catch you off guard. You shouldn’t be surprised when people ask tough questions. They don’t want to make a mistake.
- **Have you practiced out loud?** When you say something out loud for the first time, you are wordsmithing. Not only will you stumble over word choice, but your explanation might be too wordy. Also, you can sound unsure. Practicing out loud in front of your mirror will help you put your best foot forward.

Being busy is not an excuse your listeners ever want to hear. When you speak to them, they want it to be worth their while. They need to see value. It is never okay to waste busy people’s time.

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***Question:** What might be something you need to change in order to show you care about your listeners and value them? 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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