

# Are You Prepared?

By Judith Filek—President  
Impact Communications, Inc.



The number one reason that presentations fail is a lack of preparation. Whether you are giving an update, making a proposal, suggesting a solution or speaking at a conference, it is critical that you do your homework and understand your listeners and what you want to accomplish. It is not okay to say you were too busy. So what should you consider?

**Your listeners:** Are they experts? Highly technical? Seasoned salespeople? New hires? Potential buyers? Potential employers? Lab mates? Peers? An Executive team?

**Their responsibilities:** Have they been in their position a long time or a little time? Obviously, if speaking to someone new to their position, spend more time on setting the context or bringing them up to speed. Where are they located? Are they out of the country, in another state or down the hall? If they are in another country, be sensitive to cultural differences. Create rapport. Show you know something about their country. What is going on politically, holiday-wise or weather-wise?

**Their priorities:** What are their immediate priorities? What are their long-range goals? If you are not sure, talk to others. If this is an Executive, review Annual Reports. Be sure to link your information to their priorities in your prepared remarks. It will demonstrate that you have done your homework and have been listening.

**Their knowledge level:** Do they know a lot, more than you or very little? Is what they know correct? Incorrect? When speaking to experts, you should focus less on the background and more on data.

**What they do not need to know:** Is it the details? Is it the exact numbers? Is it the process? It is important to know what will frustrate or bore them.

**Their attitude:** Are they receptive? Enthusiastic? Concerned? Frustrated? Downright skeptical? If the attitude is skeptical or if they are frustrated, be sure to acknowledge it upfront in your opening remarks. Do not ignore feelings.

**Your goal:** Think about after your meeting. What do you want your listeners to do with the information you share? Approve it? Become curious? Learn something new? Understand? Begin to utilize the information? Make an approach a priority? Always be crystal clear on what you want to accomplish and what you want them to do with the information. If this is your one chance in front of them, resist telling them everything you have learned. Their interest in your topic is not the same as yours.

**Their potential questions:** What questions do they need to be answered in order to make a decision or follow a procedure or mandate? Always, brainstorm the questions your listeners will have ahead of time. Practice the answers to those questions out loud. You will sound more confident and surer. People often use the way you handle their tough questions to determine whether you are knowledgeable.

A lot rests on preparation. Don't think you know. Really analyze your listeners. Do the work and you will feel more confident and increase the chances of a positive result. Also, think about how much time it will take to repair a bad presentation.

*Question: What preparation steps do you take? We're interested in your opinions. [Click here](#) – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.*

*Continued on page 2*

*Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their presentation and telephone communication skills. It is not what you know but how you communicate it that makes a difference. When you have to have impact, phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our website, [www.Impact-CommunicationsInc.com](http://www.Impact-CommunicationsInc.com).*