

# Top 3 Mistakes Marketers Make that Cause Them to Lose Credibility, Lose Sales, and Even Lose Their Job!

By Ellen Finkelstein

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Times are tough and competition is fierce. You need to get the maximum results from every marketing opportunity. But the way most marketers present their service or product to potential customers is self-defeating.

Do you have credibility? When you make a suggestion, do others accept it? Does your audience really understand what you're saying? The answer to these questions is key to your success, because those people determine whether or not your marketing is successful.

Here are 3 top mistakes marketers make that affect their credibility, and as a result, whether they get that sale.

## Top Mistake #3: Not Understanding What the Audience Really Needs

People buy from you when you meet a need or desire that they have. Therefore, you can't persuade people to buy if you don't understand what they want.

### Your prospective customers might not know what they want

Some people know they want your product or service. All you need to do is explain it and they'll buy. But that's a small percentage of the people who need your product. The rest don't know yet why your offering is what they need.

For example, let's say you're selling decision-making software that helps organizations analyze various solutions to determine the best one. Most people don't even know such software exists, much less why they need it. They continue making decisions in the same way, with poor data, risk/benefit analysis, and logic.

### What should you do?

You need to educate your audience, not about what you're selling (since they don't know they need it yet) but about what they need. You need to awaken their desire for your solution. You do this by discussing the problems they're facing, with examples of its consequences. They've made poor decisions in the past and would like to make better ones in the future. You can show them how that's possible.

Study the persuasive model so that you can lead prospective customers to the conclusion that they need to be your customers.

## Top Mistake #2: Unconscious Arrogance

That's pretty strong language, but it's true. Most people think only of their own point of view when they communicate. It's why managers are taught in business school to close the feedback loop when they speak—to make sure their audience really understands.

You need to think of the point of view of your audience rather than speak out what you want to say. This is hard to learn. Really, you need to unlearn years of bad practice.

### The damage of the self-centered approach

You've probably seen how this arrogance, or self-centered approach, can seriously harm an organization. How often have you seen managers fight to spend all the money in their budget, even when the money isn't needed? Or make proposals that require their department to grow, regardless of whether it's valuable for the organization as a whole?

You speak to potential customers. When you present in a self-centered way, the needs of your potential customers are not met. The results are lost sales.

What does self-centered mean in the context of communicating about your product or service? It means talking about yourself and your company before talking about your audience's problems. It means speaking from your level of knowledge or point of view, rather than from theirs.

### What should you do?

When you present, you need to put yourself in the shoes of the decision maker in the room. This is called an audience-centered presentation. You might be thinking of technical issues, but your audience may be thinking of long-term strategy.

You should know what your audience's priorities are, but if you don't, ask. When you know you'll be doing a presentation, ask what's important, what the takeaways should be. Action steps? Market analysis? Each situation is different, but you need to know the goal of the presentation from the point of view of your audience. Whatever you do, don't start by talking about your company.

## Top Mistake #1: Lousy Presentations

How many presentations have you attended that fit the description of "Death by PowerPoint?" Dozens? Hundreds? What do you do differently?

When you put up a bunch of bullet-laden, hard-to-read slides, full of text and incomprehensible graphics, you're sounding the death knell for your marketing. After all, what do you think of others who do the same?

I see these mistakes over and over and it hurts. You've seen them too. Haven't you cringed as you sat through a Death by PowerPoint presentation? Where do your skills stand?

## **The damage of lousy presentations**

When you display a slide that contains all or most of the text you're saying, you almost have to read the slide. Did you know that one of the top complaints of audiences is speakers who read their slides to their audience? They actually find it insulting! "I can read!" they tell me.

Research has shown that the brain doesn't multitask very well. (This research has been used to justify laws that outlaw speaking on cell phones while driving in several states.) When you display that text-heavy slide and start to read it, the audience reads the slide. During that time, they aren't listening to you, even if you're adding information not on the slide. Really!

They can read faster than you can talk. When they're finished, they turn their attention to you. What do they discover? You're talking about points that they've already read! Boring! So they tune out. You lose the audience while they're reading the slide and again after they're finished.

When you use illegible fonts and colors, or create graphs that can't be read ("I apologize that you can't read this, but I'll explain it anyway"), the audience gets angry and annoyed.

Audiences don't like to be treated that way. And it's embarrassing to you.

The result is a lousy presentation. The audience doesn't get the point you're trying to make. People don't appreciate what you're saying. Good communication is lost, with all its consequences.

## **What should you do?**

Learn how to create slides that actually communicate. Make them visual and clear. Put one concept on a slide.

Keep slide design simple. Above all, avoid bullets and lots of text. You can use handouts for detailed notes and data. Stay away from silly clip art and overdone animation. (If animation doesn't help make a point clearer, don't use it.)

Don't let the slides come between you and your audience. Don't turn your back on your audience while you read your slides. Practice so that you can present while looking at your prospective customers and create a relationship with them.

Read a book or take a course, if necessary. But make sure that your slides communicate clearly and look professional! Make sure that you have the necessary speaking skills.

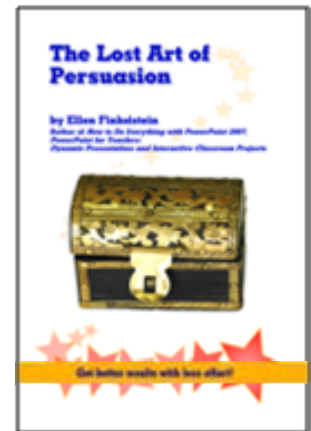
## Where do I go from here?

It doesn't have to be this way. I've seen the damage and I want to help. That's what I do. I've written so much about how to help people present more effectively and persuasively.

I've given dozens of seminars and webinars, too. But I realized that these efforts weren't enough, so I wrote a short e-book, **The Lost Art of Persuasion**.

*"Wow, Ellen, I am impressed! I really love the Cialdini reference, I love the point of having integrity in selling, non-obfuscation, etc , and of course I loved the knowledge of speaking to the listener. Well done! I think everyone who obtains this will find real gold inside. Oh yeah, the bit about having a purpose, and finding wealth through enriching the lives of others... priceless." - Tony Camero, Internet Marketer*

This book guides you through the principles you need to know about persuasive presentations—and it will change your business. It isn't expensive, so why continue to make the same mistakes over and over? You can have this e-book in a few seconds!



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