



## Do your job as if someone is watching

The only thing worse than painstakingly creating a complicated business deliverable – be it a deck, a report or a financial model – is doing it on a projector or TV in front of your colleagues or clients.

*“Can we center that text? Is that box vertically aligned in the middle?”*

*“Is that Arial? I think we should use Arial...”*

*“Do those boxes align and are they distributed equally?”*

*“What RGB color are you using? Does it match the color scheme?”*

Sounds familiar, huh? It’s practically a daily occurrence in the world of client service where co-development of work products and building consensus on key messaging is job number-one. Though sometimes frustrating, the documents always come out of these collaborative sessions better and more refined than when they started. The collective intelligence of those in the room is imbued into the end-product. And better yet, the person in charge of the document learns the standard of quality desired by

the group and becomes more efficient at creating better deliverables.

Last weekend, I went out to dinner and sat at a bar overlooking an open kitchen. My vantage point allowed us to directly see what one of the hot line cooks was making. There was a row of twelve diners all watching cooks in charge of different dishes on the menu. My cook was in charge of scallops, sweetbreads, and octopus. He moved with precision as he turned out gourmet works of art all night. The dishes not only looked beautiful, they tasted amazing. The cooks were overseen by a sous chef and an expeditor who directed the cooks to “double-time” and “watch your seasoning” (among other things, I am sure). I was so impressed by the care and extreme detail that went into every dish by everyone who contributed to it. It was an amazing choreographed act of culinary quality.

As I watched dish after dish leave the kitchen, it occurred to me that whether we’re working on business documents or creating delicious food, the quality of the end-product is better when someone is “watching.” When we have an audience, we care more; not just about the end-product but the precision of the process it takes to create the end-product. There’s a level of accountability for our actions when we do our work in front of a crowd of observers.

In business, the audience is often our boss, our clients, our colleagues, or a variety of other stakeholders whom we serve. But unless we are revising a report on a projection screen, our work products are generally produced in an asynchronous back-and-forth review cycle of: create, review, feedback, revise, review, feedback, revise...and so on. Now, of course in the business world it is neither practical nor healthy to have an audience (boss, peers, client, etc.) peering over your shoulder watching your every move. But imagine if you changed the phrase “*do your job as if someone is watching*” to “*do your job as if someone cares,*” or “*do your job as if someone is invested in the outcome.*” Suddenly, we feel an obligation to do quality work for our bosses, clients, colleagues, etc.

What if we, as business professionals, always did our work as though we were being watched by those who care about the outcome just like cooks in an open kitchen? Would we take short-cuts or cut corners?

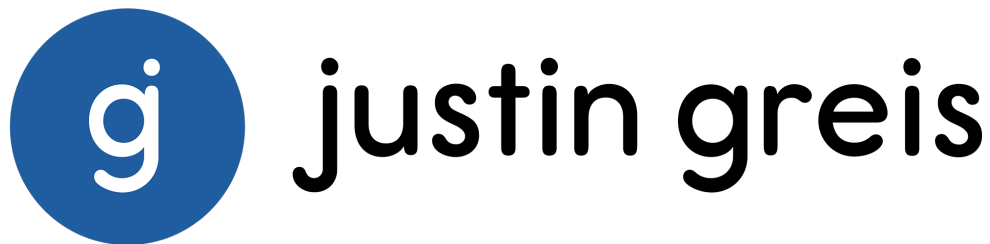
Would we automatically think about fonts, alignments, and color schemes? I believe the quality of our work goes up if we know someone cares about it. Whether it's caring about the presentation, aroma or the taste of a dish or caring about the wording, graphics or formatting of a slide; the quality goes up when we have an audience (or set of stakeholders) who care about the outcome.

Overly simple? Yes. But that's the point!

If we did our work as if someone was watching, just as these cooks do, I believe the overall quality would increase and the number of review cycles necessary to achieve a high quality product would dramatically decrease. All too often we pump out work without consideration of our audience. Imagine if cooks did that; I doubt the restaurant would be around for very long.

Next time you are working on a big deliverable or important report, pretend you are cooking for a panel of Chopped judges. When you do your job like someone is watching the result will be nothing short of a Michelin three-star deliverable.

*Order up!*



hi, i'm justin  
(nice to meet you)

I post weekly **professional insights** and **personal stories** from my life as a management consultant, a dad, and an eternal optimist.



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