

Improving your Pitches and Presentations!

In my role I get exposed to lots of presentations and pitches - so I thought I'd offer you some pointers for when you next present. Some of these tips seem obvious (but sadly not practiced enough) and others less so. So, whether it's a one minute presentation at a networking event, or a 1 hour pitch for a life-changing contract, pick out the ones that will help you personally.



Preparation

Prepare - and early! Never leave it until the last minute. Never 'wing it' - it shows! Research your facts, stats, case studies - anything that will help make your pitch more engaging and informative.

Practice

When was the last time you practised? Did you film yourself? How was your timing? Who do you respect that could watch you? What habits should you eliminate? What should you do more of? How can you make your style more engaging? Train your brain!

Get in state

Nerves are natural but you can take steps to minimise them. Ask yourself... How much value can I give today? If you can, talk to the audience informally before the start of the presentation - it will help you relax. Remind yourself you're there to give them the benefit of your experience, knowledge and expertise. And remember - although these might be hardened professionals, no-one will be thinking "I hope this guy is rubbish". They may not buy from you, but they want you to succeed on a personal level.

Non verbal communication

It's true that most of your communication will not be with your words. Your audience will notice how you're dressed. They will notice how your facial expressions reflect or not the words you're speaking. They will notice your body language. So yes, no folded arms and keep hands away from pockets! Use a range of voice tones to keep your content fresh.

Content

A one way sales pitch is likely to work less and less nowadays. It really is better if you're NOT doing most of the talking - it's just not engaging enough. So, even if the meeting is billed as a presentation by you, open up a two way dialogue early..."before I start if it's alright with everyone I'd like to ask you a few questions, is that OK?" The less they expect this, the more impact you will have -

providing you carefully craft those early open questions to give you exactly what you need.

Structure

You'll need to manage the presentation so that you include the following...

1. Clarity - who you are and what you do
2. Credibility - set out why you're worth listening to ("you'll benefit from 18 years experience in the xyz sector")
3. Their pains - home in on the problems they have
4. Your solutions - what you are bringing to the table
5. Pre-empt their objections
6. The next step - How do they want to go forward

Be sure to talk in "You" language - for example avoid "we do this", instead "you will get"

Questions and answers

Many presenters ask for Q & A's right before the end. This leaves them vulnerable as, if someone asks something distracting or even damaging, this might be the lasting impression your audience has. Put your Q & A's near to, but not at the end of the session - then you can answer them and go on to conclude the presentation by hitting them with your powerful closing message.

Hope this helps!

Until next time,

Leigh



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