

Speechworks

ASHER COMMUNICATIONS

Pitch to Win:

The Five Fundamentals of Great Sales Presentations

In any sales pitch the key issue is this: how can your firm distinguish itself from the competition during a short presentation? Many businesses work hard to show themselves as the “best” by focusing on their outstanding resources, experiences, and technology.

But we try to help our clients understand that their prospects aren't usually looking for the “best” firm. They're looking for a *feeling* for which firm will be the *best partner for the project*.

No single thing will give your prospects that feeling. The key to connecting with a prospect in a presentation is executing five sales pitch fundamentals: focusing on the business problem, narrowing the message to three points, presenting with passion, leaving plenty of time for Q&A, and rehearsal.



Fundamental #1:

Focus Solely on the Prospect's Business Problem.

Prospects care primarily about their own business problems. The best pitches focus on solutions to those problems. Dump the firm history. Dump the slide on your world-wide offices. Dump the graph of your firm's business growth. No one cares!

Software firms should show how your system will help the prospect save time and money. Insurance brokers should focus on how to lower the prospect's risk. Financial services companies should demonstrate how to grow the prospect's pension fund.

Example:

An architecture firm knew that the prospect's biggest concern with a new parking deck project was simply getting the required approvals. With that in mind, their entire pitch was centered on one idea: "we will design a parking deck that will get the required approvals and actually be built."

How do you find out about your prospect's business problems? You ask. Say something like: "Before our presentation, could we talk briefly with you to discuss your goals?" If you

can't do much discovery before the pitch, do everything you can to identify your prospect's hot buttons.

Distinction Factor:

Less than a quarter of sales pitches propose serious solutions to the prospects' problems. Executing this element alone will separate you from three quarters of your competitors.

Fundamental #2:

Make Three Memorable Points and Illustrate Them with Success Stories.

Most pitches are quickly forgotten. Listeners can rarely repeat the core messages of a pitch five minutes after it's done. That's because most pitches deliver a jumbled message with no clearly identifiable points.

The first question we ask our clients before a pitch is this: "Assuming the prospects won't remember much, what three things do you really want to stick in their heads?" Of course, your three points should be listener-focused (See Fundamental # 1).



Example:

An insurance broker pitched to a client that wanted to lower its "Total Cost of Risk."

Here is what he said:

"There are three core messages I'd like to focus on:

- Risk management policies and procedures to minimize your Total Cost of Risk;*
- Implementation of your Policies and procedures; and*
- Monitoring your policies and procedures."*

Illustrate each of your points with memorable success stories that illustrate how your proposed solution for this prospect has worked for other clients.

Distinction Factor:

The overwhelming majority of your competition will have no simple structure to their pitches. Executing this element will separate you from 90 percent of your competition.

Fundamental #3:

Show Passion for the Opportunity.

One of the most important judgments that a prospect makes when listening to a pitch is whether they simply like you and your team. A major key to winning over your prospect is showing passion. And that passion must be apparent in your face and your voice.

A Vice President for Construction for a large food company told me that the decisions in "bake off" presentations "boil down to personal chemistry. We know that everyone is qualified to do the work. At the presentation, we're looking for someone that we like and that seems enthusiastic about the work."

Distinction Factor:

Few presenters speak with any real passion. Executing this element will separate you from three quarters or more of your competition.



Fundamental #4:
Involve the Listeners with Lots of Q&A.

The presentation went great. They kept us in there asking questions for 30 minutes longer than we'd expected." We hear that all the time. Interactive presentations allow your audience to really gauge what you're like and how you approach your job.

To ensure that a presentation goes well, make it an interactive conversation about client needs. Reserve half of your time for Q&A. Ask for questions. If no one asks questions, prime the pump by saying, "One of the biggest questions we get is..." If that doesn't work, ask the audience questions. Don't let them just sit there and listen.

Distinction Factor:
This element will separate you from 100 percent of your competition. How you answer questions will show off your unique intellect and approach to your prospect's problems.



Fundamental #5:
Rehearse like hell.

Most sellers don't rehearse. And it's a shame because rehearsal is the easiest way to separate yourself from your competition. Decision-makers constantly tell us that they can easily tell which sales team has rehearsed. Usually one firm comes across as substantially smoother than the rest. Caring enough to rehearse sends a powerful message to the prospect about your commitment to helping them.

One of our clients once asked us what they should do if they don't have time for everyone to rehearse as a team. We responded, "Lower your expectations of winning."

Distinction Factor:
Executing this element will separate you from two thirds of your competition. Rehearse as if your cash-flow depended on it.

Conclusion
A great sales pitch makes the prospect think, "This team will be a great partner on this project." No single element can get your prospect to think that way. Instead, you must execute several elements well to give that overall winning impression. Execute these five elements well and you'll win more than your share of pitches.

About Us

Over the last 20 years, Speechworks has helped clients win more than \$1 billion in new business. Our two-day workshops are mandatory training for many of our clients' sales teams. We also conduct special custom programs aimed specifically at coaching sales people in how to create and deliver sales pitches that win business. If you're interested in learning more, call us at 404-266-0888 or check out our website at www.speechworks.net.