

# PITCHING YOUR BUSINESS WITH IMPACT

## *How to cut through the clutter*

By Kim A. Page  
Communication Expert, Trainer and Speaker

*As a trainer who delivers presentation workshops as well as pitching sessions, I am sometimes asked, isn't it really the same thing? An understandable comparison, of course, but pitching distinguishes itself by some specific criteria, just like a 100-meter sprint is different from a marathon, requiring a different preparation and practice. While a presentation can be delivered with various kinds of objectives, such as giving reassurance after a stormy incident or clarifying a process that needs to be applied, the pitch is delivered with the purpose to convince someone of your Unique Selling Point.*



### **PITCHING SITUATIONS**

The situation most of us think of when we hear the word 'pitch', is an entrepreneur who has worked on a business idea, pitching it to investors for funding. However, we are actually using the same pitching skill set in many kinds of situations. When we are in a meeting and we want to convince our colleagues of an idea, when we want to show the best of ourselves in an interview, in casual situations at networking events, or when we persuade our children to do their homework... Pitching is everywhere!

What these situations have in common is a need to get our message through in a short timespan, leaving no doubt about the benefits of our offer and the results that our idea or product will bring.

### **SYNTHESIZE, SYNTHESIZE, SYNTHESIZE**

We are living inside an information overload. Every conscious moment during the day, our minds are processing input and messages, as we are swimming, or more accurately, drowning in data. In this landscape, information itself has lost its value. There's too much of it and whatever we need to find out is only a click away.

The real diamond in today's economy is the ability to get our message through, competing as we are, with a vast abundance of content. Attention is the new currency.

As opposed to analyzing, the skill that is generally the one to be taught and rewarded in

educational systems, the ability to synthesize has become the distinguisher. We need to be able to see the big picture and draw out what is relevant for a particular situation and audience.

When we pitch, brevity is key. The recommended timespan is between thirty seconds to two minutes. A pitch is not a chance to say all the things about our product or idea. It's our opportunity to say the few, most important things, enough to make the listener trust us and want to hear more.

### **AUDIENCE AWARENESS**

Think about the way it feels when someone is lecturing us about a topic we happen to be specialists in. The effect is a strong dislike. In an age of information overload, we hate being exposed to things that are redundant to us. When we prepare our pitch, the first thing we need to ask is: What does the audience, or this particular person, need, what is relevant to them?

The more we know about our audience, the better we can fine-tune our pitch: Did our listeners choose to come, are they here voluntarily or involuntarily?

What is their level of pre-knowledge, is our content too complex or too simple?

Will they be skeptical or curious to our message, what is the reputation that came before us, or the entity we are representing?

What is the physical framework like, what kind of space are we in - sound levels, lighting, seating, amount of people, technical aid?

### **VISUAL AIDS**

If we choose to use PowerPoint slides, they need to be just that. Visual. A picture is worth a thousand words and an effective slide adds a visual component that the spoken word cannot convey, connecting the audience to their right brain and opening for emotional associations. For inspiration, 'Slidology' by Nancy Duarte is an excellent idea source. More often than not, the slides used in the TED Talks are examples of PowerPoint slides that work well, and the talks usually have a good amount of slides, being fewer rather than many.

### **COMFORT ZONE AND CREDIBILITY**

When preparations are done, the final step is the pitch delivery. This moment will decide whether the audience believes in us or not. And for us to be able to convince, we need to expand our comfort zone, so we can be ourselves.

We need to do something that makes people remember us and we need to use our emotions so they feel with us. We can use an introduction or an anecdote about why this is important to us, or a story about what in the world would be changed or better or different when our product or service is around.

If we can explain the problem and why our idea solves the problem in a way that our grandmother or children can understand - we're there. By connecting with our passion and saying it as it is, we have reached our moment of sharing, leaving the audience with sparks in their eyes and an understanding of the difference our idea, product or service will make in the world.