

CH₄EMISTRY LESSONS

From initial contact through to the final shoot-out, the pitch process is demanding more time and resources.

The increasing impact of procurement requires more detail and hard input to deliver Request for Information and Request for Proposal. At the same time the `soft' chemistry meeting is called for more frequently.

This seemingly innocuous meeting can be critical to the final decision and yet it is often approached with the least preparation.

These lessons can improve your chemistry.

1 CHEMISTRY MATTERS

- + Often the client's chemistry brief is vague and lacks a fixed agenda.
- + The temptation is to treat the meeting casually, with no planned approach.
- + Chemistry is all about bonding. The prospect wants to get a sense of your culture, your personality, your people - and how well you would work with their team.
- + A good chemistry meeting can win the business before the pitch. The same holds true of credentials which are often chemistry under a different name.
- + Therefore treat them as THE pitch.

2 DESIRED REACTION

- + If there is no specific brief, you must decide how to achieve a successful result
- + Will the prospect have enjoyed an involving, challenging, fun experience?
- + Will the team be seen as bright, knowledgeable, interested and passionate?
- + Will the client have formed a positive impression of our culture and personality?
- + Will two or three differentiating characteristics have been registered?

3 RIGHT ELEMENT(s)

- + The right people! Plan casting in line with your understanding of the client people, their personalities. (Not just by relevant experience.)
- + People in right numbers. Don't outnumber the client. When dealing with one client only then start meeting one on one and introduce team members gradually.
- + The right team work. Clients search for team signals, overt and covert. Get together in advance.
- + Critical: people who LISTEN, not just talk.

4 H₂O MEWORK

- + Effective chemistry demands thorough homework. Even an initial chemistry meeting should be treated as THE pitch.
- + Carry out basic research into the client. Visit outlets, try products, review competitors etc.
- + Gather personal info on the clients coming in. Current roles, previous jobs, anything to help conversation.
- + Be ready to discuss any case histories that are relevant, which quickly dramatise specific topics or strengths.

5 PREP THe LAB

- + Create interest in your meeting room. Aim for an engaging, surprising environment.
- + Consider dramatizing any insights into your group energy, work in progress, great photos, casting session etc.
- + To outsiders the business of creative communication is exciting, let it show. Avoid a neutral presentation format.
- + To avoid a formal interview setting, include anything that helps create an atmosphere and an experience.

6 GET PHY*Si*CAL

- + Avoid PowerPoint if you can. It can reduce the people impact.
- + Have props ready to enliven the conversation - product, magazines, editorial features, great photos, boards that illustrate results, quotes etc.
- + Plan movement around the room to add dynamism and oxygen, avoid being static.
- + (Some props may never be used, it's all about being prepared.)
- + Chemistry is about the people.
It's not what you say it's the way you say it.

7 SPONTANEOUS CO₂MBUSTION

- + Break the ice at the start, get the welcome right. Meet in reception to start the dialogue before the meeting.
- + Try to avoid immediately sitting down on opposite sides of the table, generating a 'them and us' start to the meeting.
- + Important to work on putting everyone at ease, and capturing their interest from the word go. Make time beforehand to be creative.
- + You never have a second chance to make a first impression!

ROLE OF Co⁺NDUCTOR

- + Chemistry meetings by nature maybe un-structured but someone needs to conduct, and take the lead.
- + Some clients may lead (and dominate) throughout, others will be passive and take no initiative. (This may be because they are nervous or inexperienced).
- + The conductors' role is to "manage the spontaneity". Giving the client space to talk is critical to this. How would they like the meeting to be run? Make sure there is space for the client to talk throughout.
- + The conductor must manage the in-puts from the rest of the team, keeping the pace right and the energy level high.

CATALYST (2+2 \rightleftharpoons 5)

- + Catalysts help make things happen and create positive reaction.
- + Great listening can do this. Be prepared with relevant topics, points of view and issues that flatter the client and demonstrate interest and imagination.
- + In advance prepare some “killer insights”. Get ready to introduce these to stimulate the conversation.
- + Insights are best when relevant to their consumer. These can be based on informal research and interviews (N.B take care over insights into clients own business).

EX²PERIMENT FIRST

- + Unlike a full pitch it's difficult to rehearse chemistry. However you should try.
- + Suggest a meeting of whole team the day before to review all the ingredients listed here.
- + Decide who conducts, who will champion specific topics or areas of expertise. What cases might you introduce.
- + What kind of great questions will impress the client and stimulate the conversation? What are the tricky question you might be asked?
- + Finally have you answered all the specific questions assuming there is a brief?