

The Pitch: content and staging

It's not what you say it's the **WAY** you say it.

Pitching calls for performance.

You're putting on a show that is scripted to highlight key points only, lifting and reinforcing your overall proposition. People are the heroes, not the charts!

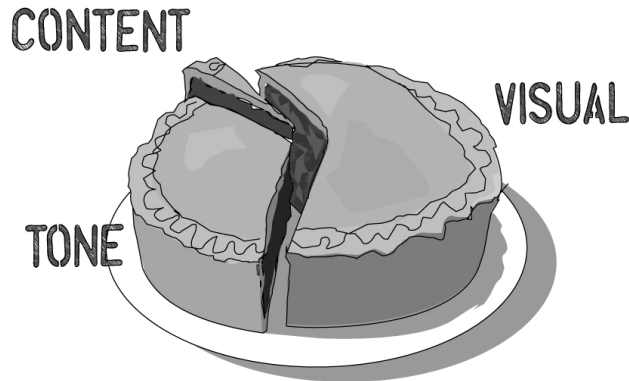
The document you submit should contain the detailed answer to the brief and satisfy the rational evaluation.

Pitching is about the emotional response.

"The essential difference between emotion and reason is that emotion leads to action, while reason leads to conclusions".

What makes biggest impact?

This pie chart slices up the relative effect of verbal (content) and non-verbal communication. Only 8% is verbal, 92% is tone and body language.



Two years ago five politicians pitched their speeches at the Tory Party conference. No-one remembers a word that any of them said. The way David Cameron said it, his body language, changed the face of British politics.

However, critically, before focusing his energy on the vital 92%, he decided what it was he would say and how he would structure it.

In pitches, especially where there may be several 'performers', content should be edited by one individual, finalised as early as possible-and then not 'tinkered' with.

Tell'em what you're going to tell'em, tell'em, then tell'em what you've told'em!

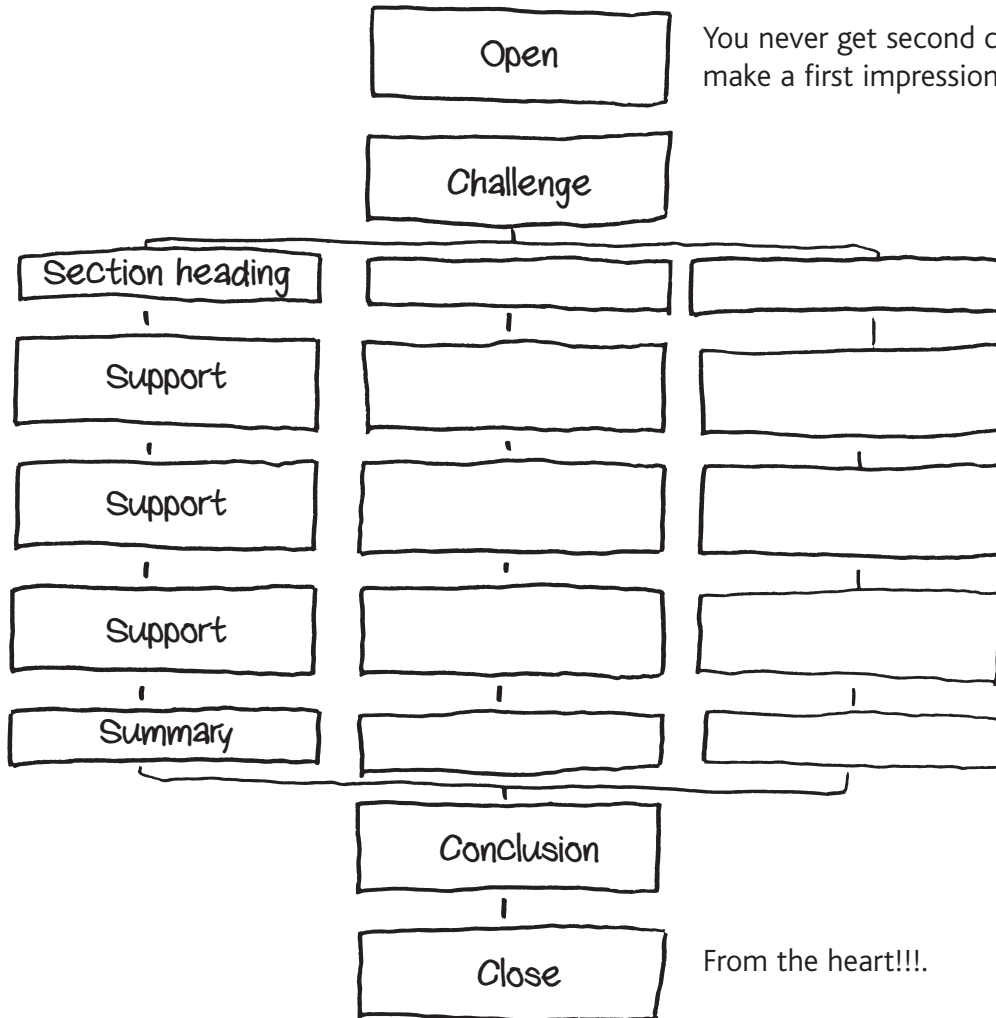
This old saying is a reminder that listening to a presentation is hard work! (Think back to the last one you sat through.) It's not like reading when you dictate the pace and the way you absorb information. Presenters owe it to their audience to make it easy, to make it simple.

This means being highly selective in what you say, not just condensing the document. What must they remember? What are the essential, differentiating and unique elements that dramatize your proposals?

To decide read, and read again, the brief; review against evaluation score sheet(if known) and your assessment of the prospect. Who decides , how and when, what is their agenda(personal not just corporate),what is the competitive position.

Signpost content.

Plot and shape the content like a play, with three, no more than four, 'acts' each with two to three 'scenes' all clearly 'signposted'.



Storytelling.



Assume a total blackout on pitch day, no light to read your notes, no light to show charts. Panic NOT. If you have prepared with 'signposts' and a 'visual plot' you will be able to communicate the content- the 8% -efficiently. Try it.

Still in the dark and you want to add drama, tell them a story!

Storytelling is the most neglected area of pitch stagecraft yet good stories or anecdotes will stick in the mind long after the charts. They provoke thought whilst engaging and entertaining the listener, and they will listen.

Source them from everywhere, personal experience, surprising customer insights, case histories (more memorable in story form), history, real life TV, but prepare them in good time not as afterthoughts.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The people on stage are the heroes, they are the show. Prioritise time and energy to lift the 'way they say it' (cf. Cameron). Good rehearsal time is your best pitch investment and is never wasted. Move up through the performance gears.

Rehearsal One. Is the content (8%) clear and easily within time, are signposts working, are visuals aids not crutches, are handovers seamless, are you a team not a sequence?

Rehearsal Two. Get to grips with the 92% 'visual and tone'. Think positions, who sits where, break up 'them 'n us', listen out for pitch and pace and pauses, look for movement and energy, stand rather than sit, work on interacting.

Rehearsal Three. Aim for more naturalness and ease, genuine sense of team. You are no longer 'talking at', instead you will be listening, engaging one to one. Confidence can be boosted by individual rehearsal.

PowerPointless

Beware the ubiquitous PowerPoint. So easy and efficient that every Tom, Dick and office supply company uses it. All delivered with relentless PowerPoint. Would you be able to differentiate one from the other?

If you must PowerPoint (lack of time a usual excuse) simplify the words: less is more. They are only an aid (check the blackout test). Don't adorn every chart with scrap art but be selective using only brilliant pictures that are worth a thousand words.

Replace the PowerPoint with imagination.

Consider all the senses and how you can engage them – with music, demonstration, flip charts and boards (less passive than screen) product samples, video if short and not 'vampire', graffiti walls... Switch from presentation to enjoyable experience.

Pitching is theatre.

At its best staging a pitch is theatre. It calls for an idea that creates a presentation experience that is out of the ordinary.



There is no magic formula but a simple one. It needs a decision early to do something special, time to be imaginative and time to prepare and rehearse.

Ambitious staging is tougher in the client space-often in fixed time slot, across immovable board room table seemingly designed to diminish presenting teams. In this context any staging that sets you apart will be particularly rewarding.

When pitching 'at home' you chose the stage-your office, a bar, the street, a garden-and choreograph the show your way.

“The Critics”

“Never a dull moment, crisp dialogue throughout”

“An opening scene that will stick in the mind”

“The whole cast clearly enjoyed themselves and so did the audience”

“Clever use of scenery heightened the drama”

“Their energy was infectious”

“A truly memorable experience!”