

TOP 10 TIPS TO WIN MORE SALES PITCHES



1.

DO YOUR RESEARCH

You need to go into the sales pitch knowing almost as much about the potential customer as the customer knows about themselves.

Doing your research thoroughly will undoubtedly help you gain credibility in the eyes of a potential customer.

Key sources for research will be the company's website, social media feeds and the LinkedIn profiles of its key people.

If it has a mailing list option sign up for the mailing list.

You may not need to use all of the research you discover during the sales pitch but having it to hand should it be needed either during the pitch or during any question and answer session will be advantageous so it is worth spending the time doing it.

2.

MAKE IT EASY TO SAY YES

You have to ensure that whatever you are proposing will be easy for the potential client to actually buy from you.

This may sound very obvious but companies generally tend to overlook barriers which they don't see but which clients do when it comes to buying products or services.

If you can spot any obvious barriers in your own buying process that you think might put the client off then address them during the sales pitch.

You want to ensure that the client is thinking 'If I like the idea of buying from this company it will be a seamless buying process - everything from placing the order to receiving delivery of the product or service.'

3.

WHO ARE YOU PITCHING TO?

Always find out as much as you can about the people you are going to be pitching to. Even if you just have their names you should be able to find them on something like LinkedIn or on the company website and establish their job role and therefore get a feel for their influence on the outcome of your sales pitch. Many people making sales pitches often fall into the trap of thinking that the person with the biggest job title present at the pitch is the person they need to influence the most. That is not necessarily always the case. Forward thinking CEOs will often look to their colleagues for guidance and advice on whether to go ahead with the purchase so think about the various stages of your sales pitch and who you need to influence the most. Make it feel as though that part of the pitch has been constructed for that particular person.

This is why it is always good to arrive early and if you can take the opportunity of introducing yourself to all the people representing the potential client before the pitch begins. There may be a casual coffee time to do this this meet and greet. This is valuable time as it will enable you to get a feel for the personalities of each person and potentially get a steer as to what they are thinking in terms of the type of product or service you are offering so try and meet all of them not just the CEO.

This early building of relationships is important as people buy from people so if you can establish before and during the pitch a rapport with the key people you are pitching to that will help influence the outcome because not only are they looking for great value, a great product or service but they will also be looking to work with people they think they will enjoy working with and be easily able to work with.

4.

WHAT IS YOUR DESIRED OUTCOME?

You need to establish at the very onset when planning for your sales pitch what you want the ideal outcome to be.

Once that is established then everything in the sales pitch needs to be influencing and helping achieve that outcome. This will help you ensure that you don't include stuff in the pitch that is not needed. Be ready to be a ruthless editor when it comes to the content of your sales pitch.

There is a great temptation to over indulge in your pitch information about yourselves, how great you are, how many awards you have won etc... what I refer to as the 'drum banging' bit. It is fine to 'bang the drum' but you need to do it selectively and you need to avoid doing it too much at the start of your sales pitch.

Start the pitch by referring to the desired outcome – so for example an obvious outcome would be that you want to win an order, so you might like to start your pitch by reminding the audience as to that is the purpose of your being.

'Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you this morning. Over the next 15 minutes we are going to share ideas with you that address your desire to (whatever the problem is) and which we hope will result in you wanting to work with us.'

5.

WHAT ARE THE OTHER SIDE THINKING?

One of the great tactics of negotiations is being able to put yourself in the shoes of the other side so try your best to fully understand what those you are pitching to really need, what their motivations are and what they are likely to agree or not agree to.

The same applies to a sales pitch. The only reason you have been invited to do your pitch is because your audience (your potential new client) is hoping that you have a solution to a particular problem they need to solve or a job they need to do.

In that respect they are probably hoping to hear ideas that will help them.

This is another good reason for ensuring that you focus your sales pitch on precisely what is needed and avoid the temptation to give them the full 'kitchen sink' approach – which is a combination of your A-Z of products and services surrounded by lots of drum banging about how great you are.

Being able to put yourself in the shoes of your audience will be hugely beneficial when it comes to planning your sales pitch and therefore delivering it successfully.

The more you can get into the mindset of the potential customer the more beneficial that will be.

6.

WHEN A PITCH BECOMES A NEGOTIATION

It is good news if this happens because it means the potential client is sending signals of genuine interest in acquiring your product or service. The key is recognising that there is a switch needed from sales pitch to a negotiation. This could happen at any point of the sales pitch and therefore you need to be ready to be flexible. There is a danger that you get so focused on delivering the entire pitch that you miss the signals and you plough on regardless just focusing on getting to the end of the sales pitch.

So what are those signals?

It could be as simple as a question that emerges during the pitch about delivery for example. If you are talking about delivery and the potential client asks a question around something like 'Would it be possible for you to deliver to us within 24 hours rather than the 36 hours that you are talking about?'

That to me is a huge signal of interest and one in which you are suddenly in a potential negotiation which could accelerate the path to a successful outcome.

If you simply turn around and say yes that would be possible and then carry on with the sales pitch the moment has gone. Instead you need to be addressing what has been raised and turning it to your advantage. So for example you might say 24-hours is not our normal delivery range but if you were to reach an agreement with us over certain volumes of product then I'm sure that we could offer 24-hour delivery. And perhaps follow that with a supplementary question which confirms how important the delivery is: 'Am I right in thinking that 24-hour delivery would be something that would be really important for you to have?'

The key point here is to be listening carefully to what the audience are saying, as well as what they are not saying, which is often transmitted in the form of body language.

This leads us neatly on to tips 7 and 8

7.

CLARIFY AND CONFIRM THROUGHOUT

Sales pitches often fail through misunderstanding or incorrect assumptions.

That is why it is important throughout the pitch that whenever the potential customer asks a question, make an observation or comments on something that you have introduced that you both clarify what they are raising and then confirm how important it is to them.

Doing that throughout the sales pitch will be really useful, and will form a key part of your pitch summary so you need to be flexible and be able to adapt as the pitch unfolds.

Tip 8 covers who's doing what when there is more than one of you on the pitch.

One of the key roles in a team pitch is having someone doing the clarifying and confirming.

My favourite clarification phrase is 'Just so I've got this right can I confirm that what you're saying is....'

8.

WHO'S DOING WHAT ON YOUR SIDE?

If there is more than one of you from your company involved in the sales pitch one of the key things is to establish who is going to do what. Not only will this help you deliver a smooth sales pitch but it will also send a message to the potential client that you are a team that works well together. Sales pitches can go disastrously wrong when there is more than one person involved in delivering them simply because everybody starts to pitch in and it can become very disjointed even chaotic.

Work out when you are preparing the pitch who is going to do what and put your people in the roles best suited to their knowledge and sales pitch abilities.

Most pitches have 4 key components:

- The introduction/opening
- The core messages
- The summary
- The management of a question and answer session and the agreement of the next steps

Agree who is going to undertake each role. Often if there are two people on the pitch one of them would do the first and last bits and the other person do the bits in the middle. If you have a third person then their role could be notetaker, ensuring that all comments and observations are recorded as well as notes about the body language of the potential clients. The notetakers role becomes particularly important when ensuring that something a client has raised isn't ignored or missed especially if it forms a vital part of their decision-making process.

Having clearly defined roles is important, and particularly important if your CEO is part of your sales pitch team because, and with no disrespect to the CEO, they often say 'I will sit on the sidelines in case I'm needed' but then can't help themselves and they tend to pitch in and take over which can be really unhelpful if you have prepared the pitch to go in a certain way. 'Managing upwards' on your team as part of your sales pitch preparation will be beneficial!

9.

REMEMBER TO FOCUS ON THEM NOT YOU

In a sense this is a bit of a summary of most of the points raised above.

Your sales pitch is not about you.

It is about your potential client and how you can help them solve whatever problem or need they have through your product or service.

Most of the tips we have covered so far reiterate that thought from the content of your pitch to the way you handle interjections and have an understanding of the motivations of the people you are pitching to.

You will increase your chances of sales pitch success if your potential client feels as though you really care about helping them deliver the desired outcome and that you are not just there to win a piece of business, in effect to close a sale.

10.

DON'T FORGET TO AGREE TO THE NEXT STEPS...

Sales is all about momentum. You can deliver a fantastic sales pitch but if you fail to agree the next steps you will quickly lose momentum, and with that the chance of success. As part of your preparation you need to carefully think about as mentioned above the desired outcome and what you want everyone to do next.

You need to lead on this and not hand it over to the client to make a decision about what happens next.

Clearly depending on the complexity of what you are offering and the likely timescales will determine the level of urgency for what happens next.

Regardless of all of that it is important that if you are going to be successful you have a plan for maintaining momentum that the client agrees with.

And don't forget to practice your sales pitch...

Running through your sales pitch a couple of times will increase your chances of success. Practising is particularly important if there is more than one of you delivering the pitch. You want to be comfortable about who's doing what and when and without practice you risk making a mess of that on the day.

And my final top tip is that if you have a specific timeframe within which to deliver your pitch, practice delivering the pitch in around 80% of that timeframe. This will give you a bit of a buffer on the day if you get interrupted during the pitch by the client, or indeed you end up elaborating on a point in a way that you didn't do in practice.

If you don't practice and you don't win the sales pitch then don't blame me!

11.

ENJOY!

**IF YOU ENJOY YOUR
PITCH SO WILL
YOUR AUDIENCE!**

If you clearly enjoy your sales pitch there is a very good chance your audience will enjoy it too. And as we tend to hire people we think we would enjoy working with, then you enjoying your pitch bodes well for your audience engaging your services.

Good luck !

If you need help you to deliver awesome presentations or winning sales pitches here are 3 ways I can help you:

1. Company programme for between 4 and 8 delegates - a half or full day training programme which is highly interactive with a focus on understanding all the key components of a great presentation or sales pitch and then practising the delivery.
2. Key Presentation Delivery - working with you and your colleagues for around 3 hours over 1 or 2 sessions on the delivery of a planned forthcoming key presentation or sales pitch.
3. One to One Coaching - An individual three hour programme designed to help you :
 - Overcome nerves about public speaking
 - Deliver a forthcoming presentation or sales pitch
 - Prepare and deliver a keynote speech.
 - Create and deliver your 'elevator pitch'

You can reach me, Trevor Lee, on 07785 390717 or email via trevor@trevorleemedia.co.uk.