

Life's a Pitch!

By
Mariette Edwards

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Whether it's a job interview, a movie script or convincing your investors their faith in you is well placed, life's a pitch. But are you getting the results you want from every pitch you make? □

"I hate the idea of selling", an aspiring author told me recently. □ If getting my books published means I have to sell, I'm going to rethink my goal." □ This author's opinion about sales is quite common. □ Many creative people feel that "sales" is a dirty word. □ But substitute the word "pitch" and suddenly the process takes on new meaning. □ When you are pitching, it's personal, it's important; it's compelling and persuasive. You become powerful, agile, heroic, a champion. You've got passion. □ You've got heart. You're on fire!

Pitch vs. Sell

What makes the process of "pitching" so much more attractive than "selling"? It's simply your emotional, visceral, non-thinking *connection* to the idea of it. And therein lies the secret to every perfect pitch.

Connection is the secret

Connection is the secret to delivering the perfect pitch. □ And, connection can happen in an instant. □ Consider this five-word pitch Steven Seagal made in presenting his idea for the movie, "Under Siege":

Die Hard" on a boat.

Short and yet it contains all the essential elements of the perfect pitch, Seagal creates a vivid image his audience (the money people) can immediately connect with. It hits them where they live—in their pocketbook. "Die Hard" was a big money maker. Tying his concept to a proven winner hitched his pitch to a star. No wonder he got the money! □

What does this have to do with your job interview, investor meeting or the promotion you want? □ Every perfect pitch has the same five key connecting points the "Under Siege" pitch has. Here's how to use them to launch *your* star.

The five key connecting points to delivering the perfect pitch

Know and leverage what your audience wants. Your opportunity for delivering the perfect pitch is hidden in the gap between where your audience is now and where it wants to be. Ask BIG questions to uncover that gap.

I met an ad exec recently that had just pitched a concept for an on-line ad campaign. He knew going in that the client was concerned about the size of his agency but he didn't factor that into his pitch. He went to the pitch alone and left feeling the next presenter (with four colleagues) showed up as a larger and more stable company. He could have easily done the same thing. Instead, he spent the pitch trying to convince his audience that his business was bigger than just himself (which it is). The client never heard the rest of his pitch because they were so focused on *their* key issue. He knew his audience but he didn't use what he knew and so he never connected.

Frame your pitch in terms of results. People buy results. Pitch your background, experience, vision, concept or idea in terms of the results you have produced or in a way that incorporates a result that matches your audience's objectives. Shift your point of view to see the pitch from the other side. What's most important to them? For example, a landscape designer who wants to move into a new career in environmental advocacy pitched the results she achieved in fund raising and citizen advocacy as two connecting points with her target audience. Research the problems and challenges the company or industry is facing and the trends that are impacting their business, then craft questions that showcase how much you know and understand the economic climate and that suggest you are the right person to fill their gap. You can uncover a lot by asking this simple question: "If I were to be hired for this position, what would you want me to accomplish in my first 90 days?" (You can download a list of ten questions to ask on your next interview from the Free Resources page on the Star Maker web site at www.starmakercoaching.com.) □

Create vivid images. Make your pitch come alive with vivid images that stir the senses and build an emotional connection. The broader the range of sensory involvement you create, the more connection you will make. Put your audience in the pictures you paint by using the three elements of every good story: setting, situation and solution. Practice your stories until you can tell them with confidence and ease, inserting them effortlessly where they can enhance your message.

Keep it short and sweet. Resist the temptation to say too much. Talking too much breaks the connection. Instead, focus on creating short easy-to-remember sound bites that convey key concepts while stirring an emotional response. Spend time on developing an opening that captures your audience's attention and rivets them on the rest of your pitch. That doesn't mean you have to come in singing and dancing. A stunning statistic or a heart-warming quote can be very effective. Leave plenty of space for audience comments, questions, and reactions.

Pitch when people are ready to buy. Timing really is everything. If you have the solution to a problem you know your audience has, that's a great time to schedule a pitch.

Timing can also mean time of day, day of week, time of year. Pay attention to the cues your audience gives you about timing so you can use them to maximize your results.

Are you a major league pitcher?

Connection is the key to creating the perfect pitch. That connection only happens when you are *communicating* with your target audience. To become a major league pitcher, become a better communicator. Start by assessing your communications skills.

ARE YOU A MAJOR LEAGUE PITCHER?

Directions:

On a scale of 1-10 with one being low and ten being high, rate yourself on the following?

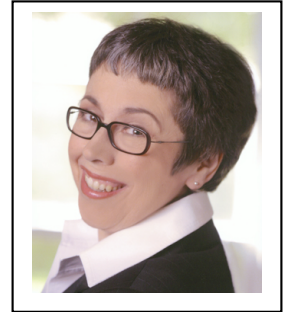
- ___ How well do you come across? (How would others describe your communications style?)
- ___ How well do you listen? (How well do you hear what is being said and not said?)
- ___ How well are you understood? (How well do you phrase and articulate your thoughts or concerns?)
- ___ How well do you choose topics to talk about? (In conversation, how appropriate are the topics you talk about most?)
- ___ How well do you converse? (How well do you have fluid, two-way conversations?)
- ___ How believable are you? (How authentic is what you say?)
- ___ How positive are you? (How do you make people feel about themselves?)
- ___ How do you affect others? (What impressions do you leave with others?)
- ___ How effectively do you communicate? (How easily does your communication cause the results you intend?)
- ___ How aware are you? (How sensitive are you to the communication process?)

If your communications skills aren't what you'd like them to be, resolve right now to do what it takes to become a perfect "10".

Knowledge is power! The more you know about pitching to win, the better your chances for achieving your goals.

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Mariette Edwards is a business and career strategist, consultant, speaker and writer. Mariette publishes Star Maker, a free monthly on-line newsletter dedicated to your professional and personal success. Visit her web site at www.starmakercoaching.com for more information.
<mailto:mariette@starmakercoaching.com>
www.starmakercoaching.com



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