

Pitching Your Business



How well do you describe what your company does? There are few sales tools more valuable than a concise, interesting “pitch” that gets listeners as thrilled about your company as you are. It’s something you need to use when you’re making a sales presentation, seeking financing, networking at an event, or even just chatting with a neighbor.



Creating a great pitch is not as easy as it sounds. And even if you have one that you think works, it may be in need of fine-tuning. Often, you’re too close to the details of your company to remember what will **interest others**. Or you’ve described your company so many times that you start to sound robotic. Successful pitching often comes down to a matter of **content and style**. First, you need to pare down what you do to a few succinct sentences that someone unfamiliar with your business or even your industry can quickly grasp. Those words then need to be delivered with **passion and verve** that convey your **excitement**.

Follow these guidelines to develop or refine a pitch that sizzles:

Open with what makes you unique

Start your pitch with what sets your business apart – your unique selling proposition or USP. You need to **break the ice quickly**, so avoid describing yourself in run-of-the-mill terms. “I run a food store” is not nearly as compelling as “I sell gourmet foods from local artisans and regional, organic farms.” Some people start out with a tagline – a **memorable phrase or wordplay** that focuses interest and quickly encapsulates their company’s vibe. For example, a company that database segmentation and prospecting for clients might say, **“We mine business data to find the gold.”**

Focus on problems and solutions

Every successful product or service solves some kind of problem. Consider the market need that your company fills. A **successful pitch** conveys this as a story with a happy ending – the problem your target market faces, and how your company’s approach **alleviates that pain**. Clearly lay out the benefits you provide – remember, it’s not how a product or service works, but **what it does** for the person who will buy it. Convey the ways you help customers save time, save money, be more productive or lead easier lives.

Provide proof

Interweave relevant facts into your pitch to support your claims, prove your benefits and show your success. Tell your prospect how much repeat business you generate or **how much you save a customer** who signs up for your service. When appropriate, cite sales numbers, distribution and customer relationships or statistics that demonstrate market potential. If you’ve been recognized with **awards or other honors**, mention them to back up your claims.



Different Pitches for Different Audiences

There are number of situations where you’ll need to describe your company. Here’s how to tailor your pitch to each audience.

Situation	Strategy
Sales call	Begin by asking fact-finding questions to hone in on the prospect’s needs. Then describe how your product or service can solve their problem. Back up your claim with facts that demonstrate a track record of success.
Funding opportunity	Your message should contain four key items: a description of your business idea and the market opportunity, your revenue model and the investment you’ll need, how you’re different from your competition, and your leadership team. The last proves that you not only have the vision but the expertise to execute your idea.
Networking event	Start a conversation by asking questions – it’s natural to be curious about someone you’ve just met. Take time to listen for clues about what is important to each person you talk with. Your goal should be to establish a relationship, not clinch a sale.
“Elevator pitch”	When you meet someone casually, you have 30 seconds (or less) to capture his or her interest. Prepare a statement containing only the bare bones of your message plus your tagline. Practice this to perfection. You may also want a similar version for emailing to prospects or as an intro to a cold call.

Be tangible

Don't get caught up in jargon, acronyms, clichés or meaningless terms. Avoid sounding like a technology manual or a self-help guide – this can make you seem dull, boring and out of touch. Instead, **express your benefits** in a way that can be understood by the “man on the street.”

Show your passion

The perfect pitch **appeals to the emotions**, not the intellect. You **need to connect** on a very real level with your audience. Use emotion-laden terms to describe why your business makes a difference. Think back, as well, to what got you excited about starting your business in the first place – that story can often **communicate the passion** and delight you feel about your company.

Practice, practice, practice

Spend enough time **practicing** your pitch so it sounds unrehearsed. That way, when you use it, your delivery will seem effortless and natural. Go through your pitch with someone who doesn't know much about your business – a friend or a colleague in another industry, for instance – to **get some unbiased input**. You'll find that pitching gets easier with time. And, if you think of yourself as a storyteller – who just happens to be telling a business story – you can **relax and enjoy yourself**.



Finding and Sharing Your Passion

When describing your business to someone new, you want to be more like a proud parent showing off new baby pictures than a pitchman pushing product. It's your passion, enthusiasm and connection that make a pitch memorable. How do you keep the energy after the 200th repetition?

- **Make it personal.** Explain what motivated you to start your business or describe what you love about what you do. Discuss how your customers or clients have benefitted.
- **Show feeling.** When relating your message, use emotion-packed words to generate excitement and passion. *My customers help build our business by referring new business to us. I'm so grateful for their faith in us.*
- **Tell a story.** Everyone loves a tale, and it makes it easier to remember you and your key points. Relate an anecdote about a company with a similar problem to theirs and how your solution helped them.
- **Keep it current.** Try weaving in a newsworthy item or an emerging business trend appropriate to your audience.
- **Provide backup.** Cite meaningful statistics to reinforce your message. *We sold three times as many widgets last quarter as we did a year ago.*

Whatever you do, let your personality shine through. And remember, no one knows your business the way you do. So go out and tell your story.

Prepare Your Pitch

Get Ready to Engage Your Listener



Use this worksheet to develop a concise, winning pitch for your business.

Remember:

- Personalize the information to your audience
- Avoid jargon and clichés
- Develop a flow that makes the biggest impact
- Say it in a way that's comfortable for you

1. What do you do?

Explain what your company does:

2. What makes you unique?

List some ways you are different from your competition:

3. Who is your product/service for?

Review the characteristics of your target audience:

4. What need do you fill?

Describe the problems your target market faces and how your product/service solves it:

5. How do you earn money?

Provide an overview of your revenue model:

worksheet continued

6. Who is on your team?

Discuss the unique experience of members of your organization:

7. How have you helped a customer?

Illustrate your benefits with a specific example of how you've solved a problem:

8. Why did you start your company?

Think about the reasons you opened your business in the first place:

9. What gets you excited about your company?

Make an inventory of why your business is important to you:

10. What else do you need to do?

Focus on the purpose of your pitch: what information do you need to provide to close your pitch and move to the next step: