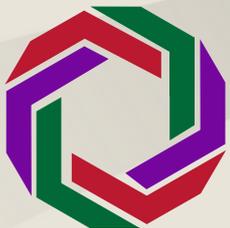


7 Reasons Pitches Fail



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7 Reasons Why Your Business Pitches Fail

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Every day businesses lose millions of pounds, euros and dollars and damage their brand and reputation in the eyes of clients and investors because of poor business pitches.

There's lots of reasons why. Poor presenter delivery, failure to capture the audience from the start, too logical, too much content, the presenting and supporting teams are not aligned, wrong structure, lack of research, lack an ability to engage. I could go on but I'll spare you the full details.

After over 20 years of speaking on global stages and hundreds (if not thousands) of workshop presentations live and online, I've noted down just 7 Reasons Why Your Business Pitches Fail. Hopefully, they'll trigger some insights for you.

Reason 1: **Poor Research**

Prior to the pitch too little research was done. There is no real understanding of the audience's needs or interest. Perhaps you've done this presentation a 100 times (always a warning sign) and are assuming (also a problem) what the audience or client needs.

Business is dynamic and constantly changing. Depending on the industry you serve, things can change weekly. Case in point, Covid. Who knew we'd face a pandemic and have to learn to present in the digital space?

But global pandemic aside, find out what has been happening with this audience or client since either you last pitched to them or in the weeks/months leading up to your first pitch to them. What's topical, who's moved jobs, how has their client base or market changed?

I recommend a pre-pitch conversation to assess these factors, find out who will be attending and exploring through a structured 'values conversation' what is really important to them and why.

Align your pitch with their greatest need and you'll win every time.



Reason 2: Wrong Attitude

You hear you have to make a pitch or speech and suddenly you're thinking lectern, podium and you get all formal and serious. You determine to awe them with science, facts, figures etc. In short, you decide to prepare a monologue. Bo-ring.

Effective pitches and speeches are never monologues, they are dialogues. Even if the questions are rhetorical and you're pitching to a large group of people, they are answering them in their own heads and they are engaged in a conversation.

What makes a good conversation? Turn taking, question/response, story, humour, a shared experience.

With smaller groups, think presentation and facilitation. Engage them, help them become a part of the proposed solution. The more you can bring the audience into a collaborative and shared ownership mode, the more likely you are to win the pitch.

Reason 3: Poor Opening

Research indicates that we have less than 5 minutes to gain an audience's or investor's attention. Then we lose them and the pitch. Bummer.

I've coached firms to audit their pitches and speeches that initially took 5 minutes just to get the presenter's intro done.

You may have heard we live in a world where people's attention span is decreasing. Not so. People are perfectly capable of long periods of attention, provided they care about the subject matter. The challenge is not the loss of attention, it is the increase in distraction.

Therefore the opening lines of your presentation or pitch are key. There are only two real ways to grab and hold an audience's attention. Ask a question or tell a story.

A good question (I call them Questions of Consequence) will grab and hold an audience's attention, as will a good story (because the people start to follow the arc of the character and experience their challenges and wins along the way).

Both require extensive work to create and build but done well they always deliver the Audience's attention. In today's world share of quality attention equals share of wallet or influence.



Reason 4: Poor Structure

The vast majority of pitches and presentations that I see follow the traditional structure, WHO we are and WHAT we do and WHY you should use us. They've already failed the 5 minute test.

Here's the harsh reality of life. Your prospective clients or audiences DO NOT CARE who you are. Not until we make them care.

Therefore starting off with explaining to them WHO you are is a guaranteed way to shut them down. Too many of our pitches and too much of our language is Us-centric not Them-centric. Besides which, they already know enough about you because you're sitting in their offices having been invited to make the pitch.

Start your pitch with WHAT we can do for you and not WHO you are and watch the Audience light up.

Reason 5: Too Logical

Logic never sells. Emotion does. Logic only justifies the emotional decision after the fact.

Therefore try not to make your prospective clients think too much, rather make them feel. Up to 90% of our business decisions are driven not by logic but by emotion, what we feel rather than what we think is how the big decisions get made.

However if you look at the reasons pitched to a prospective clients as to why they should your services, they are often entirely logical. I often see classic USPs (Unique Selling Points) being pitched as the value a prospective client will get from working with a firm.

"We give you access to our senior partners". "We're a one-stop-shop" (love that one) "Our people are the most experienced in the market" .

They're not values or benefits for the client, they're a quiz. What they are saying is you work out the value for yourself and the prospective client is saying to themselves "I just don't have the time or the interest."

This can be overcome by learning how to develop what I call PCRs or PCE's (Points of Compelling Relevance or Engagement). Learn how to create those and not only will you win more pitches, you'll stand out from the competition.



Reason 6: **Too Much**

This is a common error, especially when it comes to subject matter experts (accounting, finance, tech, medical etc). They just put too much content on their decks.

I understand why. It's a crutch. They know that if they get nervous or lost they can just turn around and read the screen. However so can the audience and they invariably will.

The audience will read ahead, the result being that they are now usually at a different part of the presentation than the presenter. Not good, not when you want to hold their attention not lose it.

The audience's focus on the screen also deprives the presenter of the ability to build rapport, credibility and trust with the audience. They lose the relationship and usually the pitch.

I'm not even going to go into when the presenter puts everything on the screen and then turns their back to the people they want to engage, and reads the screen, word for word.

Reason 7: **No CTA**

A CTA is a Call to Action. It's ideally placed at the end of the pitch when you have summarised the value of your offering to the audience. First remind them of the value, then make a request.

At the end point of a presentation (provided it has been a great pitch) is when the audience is at its most impressionable and open to taking action but usually they need (and are seeking) some guidance from the presenter or speaker.

So the CTA is your opportunity to get a result from all your hard work. Be clear as to what it is and make it easy for the audience to agree to.

Is it about setting a date for a further meeting, taking things up to a more senior level, getting the chance to propose, finalising a delivery date, getting the paper work out of the way, starting a pilot project.

The list of possibilities are endless but they must be relevant to the presentation and easy for them to make a decision on.



Sometimes an entire pitch is just to get that CTA agreed and I'm still amazed at sitting through pitches that never ask for something in return.

Hopefully these 7 Reasons Why Business Pitches Fail have stimulated some thoughts for you. If you'd like any professional help in creating, designing, building a pitch or auditing an existing pitch give me a call. Often just a few hours together can turn a caterpillar into a butterfly.

After 20 years and hundreds of events of speaking on global stages and delivering workshops, I've picked up a thing or two and can save a lot of time and can help radically increase your chances of success of pitching and winning.

About the Author:

Sean is an award winning speaker, professional communications coach and author who has run hundreds of workshops in leadership and business development communications and spoken at events in Asia, the Middle East, Europe and the USA for the last twenty years.

He continues to be surprised at the poor quality of pitches and presentations, decks, speeches and delivery that senior management, marketing, partner, investment, sales and business development teams have shown him in that time.

More importantly, the business opportunities that are regularly lost and the reputational damage that happens as a result.

Then he started thinking about how, by helping businesses improve their pitch and delivery to win just 10-15% more of their presentations and pitches, or transform a keynote or 'all hands' delivery into something of real impact, the difference that would make to their bottom line and the value to the brand and presence of the presenters.

So PitchPartner.pro his pitch development service was born.

Call him today to arrange a coffee to discuss how he can help you develop and deliver the best winning pitches ever. <https://calendly.com/seanweaver/a-virtual-coffee-call>