

To Win a Pitch, Execute Simple Things Better than Your Competition

By Joey Asher

joeyasher@speechworks.net

So Fred and Bob are on a hike and they come across an angry bear. Tearing back down the trail, Bob stops and begins changing from his hiking boots into his running shoes.

“Why are you stopping?” Fred says, in a panic. “You can’t outrun the bear with those shoes.”

Bob looks at his friend and says, “I don’t have to outrun the bear. I just have to outrun you.”

The story illustrates how to win competitive new business presentations, also known as “beauty contest pitches.” You don’t have to deliver a perfect presentation. But you do have to deliver presentations that outrun your competition. Winners focus on five fundamentals: propose solutions, be simple, be interactive, be passionate, and rehearse.

Focus on Solving Your Client’s Problem

When I was little, the Fuller Brush man would come to our door, open his case and say, “Do you need any of this?” Most firms do little more with their own pitches. They describe their capabilities and experience. The implied question is “Do you need any of this?”

But great sellers bypass capabilities and focus on proposed solutions to the prospect’s problems. If your prospect faces a lawsuit, don’t just tell about your experience. Propose a strategy for winning the case and preventing the problem from recurring.

Keep your message simple

I spent a day in Florida recently listening to construction firms pitching to build an elementary school in Boca Raton. The pitches were jumbled messes with nine points or more.

Most sellers have too many points and their messages are too complicated. Separate yourself by making three simple points. Ask yourself “What are the three things that are the most important thing for the prospect to remember.”

Be Interactive

Clients constantly tell us that “We knew things were going well when the prospect started asking us questions.” The best pitches *prompt* questions.

Say, “This presentation is only 20 minutes long and we have plenty of time for you to ask questions.” Ask your prospect what you would like to know if you win the business. “One of the questions that we have for you is ‘What is your tolerance for the risk on this matter? Are you willing to get involved in a costly litigation?’”

Be Passionate

Most presenters speak like they're reading the telephone book. Stand out from your competition by speaking with passion. The client must spend a lot of time with the winners. They want to like you. Smiling and showing enthusiasm helps set you apart as human being and not another "weenie".

Rehearse

"We can always tell which teams have really rehearsed and which teams haven't," one decision-maker told me.

Most presenters don't rehearse. They flip through slides or meet with their team members and "go over what we're going to say." But rehearsing is saying it out loud from beginning to end. If you're well-rehearsed, you will separate yourself.

Beat the competition by executing fundamentals. Focus on solutions. Keep it simple. Be interactive. Show passion. And rehearse. Do those things well, and you'll win plenty of business pitches.

Joey Asher is President of Speechworks, a selling and communication skills coaching company in Atlanta. He has worked with hundreds of lawyers and with dozens of firms helping them grow their business and connect with clients. He is the author of "Selling and Communication Skills for Lawyers" and "Even A Geek Can Speak." He can be reached at 404-266-0888 or joeyasher@speechworks.net. His website is www.speechworks.net.