

If You Want Your Pitches to Improve, Use These 3 Simple Tips

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When starting or running a business, most people will tell you that a high-quality pitch to investors or potential partners will sell your venture itself. The investors, partners and potential clients will line up if you're skilled with language and can tell a unique, captivating story and explain financial returns. So, the story goes...

That thinking is misguided.

The most extraordinary concepts in the world won't sell if no one knows about them. It lies on your shoulders to get out there and talk about your ideas and concepts – no matter how much they may speak for themselves. Your pitch is the power fueling the process of letting people know about your business or projects.

Most people think a pitch is something to be feared and avoided at all costs. It's those unknown moments when the world can come crashing down on you.

The pressure to convey everything about your hard work in a few simple sentences – or in a few short minutes – can bring people to their knees (literally, as they double over with fear). It's basically public speaking and only a rare handful like that.

The truth, however, is simple. Powerful pitching is a skill that can be learned, just as is good writing. The most

significant difference is that it may take years and years to become a skilled writer, but it may only take a few hours to become powerful at pitching.

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As someone involved in hundreds – if not thousands – of pitches worth millions of dollars, I know how true this is. I've been on both sides of pitches to (and from) the corporate world, production companies, studios, investors, and major television networks.

I used to think it was all about how polished my public speaking skills were. The real truth is that the talking piece is only one aspect of the bigger picture.

Several elements of a pitch bring great results, and it isn't all about how well you perform during the presentation.

You may have far more control over a pitch meeting than you think

I started focusing on the other parts of pitch meetings and saw the success rate of our business increase dramatically. We now have more than 11 TV shows approved by major networks and approval from more than 50 networks worldwide to be our affiliates. For every 15 TV shows we pitch, about 11 get approved, which is far higher than the industry average.

This broader view doesn't work in just the media industry – my insights apply to any industry, as I've seen repeatedly when I coach people on everything from phone accessories to artificial intelligence.

Today I want to walk through three simple ways to listen with your eyes and improve your pitches. Paying attention to any of these secrets will help you drive your big meeting closer to the direction you seek.

The complete list is a lot longer than three items, but pulling these three from my book, *One Sense Ahead*, is an excellent starting place to get you skipping happily out the door after a meeting.

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1. Pay attention to the body language of the people in the room

Are they distracted and looking at their phone or notepad or documents? This shows they have too much on their mind, and you need to be quick and brief to get their attention. Are they slouched back in their seats, showing they're relaxed but possibly not interested? If so, you need to have a powerful attention-getting distractor to get things rolling. Don't immediately launch into your rehearsed pitch.

Most people are so laser-focused on getting their point across about their concept or business that they forget the simplest of all pitching 'rules' – think more about the other person than yourself.

2. Pay attention to how the person across the table is breathing

Yep. You read it correctly: breathing. Who cares about that as long as the person is there?! I know that's what you're thinking, but the reality is that people tell you a lot about themselves by the way they breathe. Are they breathing through their mouth only? Or their nose? How ridiculous is this, you ask? I can hear you screaming at the screen or thinking it loudly in your mind as you want to stop reading my words... and yet... aren't you curious about where this goes?

I notice every detail about a person when I'm in a meeting with them, and it gives me clues on how to steer the conversation. You're the one doing the pitch, so it's to your advantage to be able to steer anything at all. If another person is in the "decision-making chair," their chair matters most.

So, back to breathing. If someone breathes fast, they're in a rush... physically perhaps but also mentally. That means you need to get right to the point. If they breathe slowly, they're a thinker, and they need to digest things... so talk slower. Watch for signs that they understand your message, and then move on. It's like a dance.

3. Look at people's shoes

If you're a woman reading this, you'll know what I'm talking about. When you hear high-heel shoes click-clacking down a hallway, you know the little rubber tip has come off the shoe (or has been worn down), and you hear the metal spike as it hits the ground. So annoying. But also a clear indicator of the type of person they are. They either work too hard or have too hectic of a schedule to fit anything else in... OR they don't notice the noise (seriously?), which means they are NOT a detail person... OR it means they don't take care of themselves often enough. If that stiletto is silent, you better be polished. They are.

Who cares, you ask? Well, you should. It's your job to understand the driving motivators of the person you're pitching to. If you don't know what motivates them, you don't know how to pitch to them. If you don't know how to pitch to them, you probably won't be able to sell them on your project. And ultimately, they have something you need, or you wouldn't be there in the first place.

So, when you listen with your eyes in a pitch meeting, you'll start to hear – or gather – a tremendous amount of information

you might have missed otherwise.

This concept is vital for increasing your confidence when you walk in the door. If you believe there's a chance for you to have some control – no matter how small – it helps eliminate a piece of the unknown. You want to be carrying the torch of control as much as you possibly can during the meeting.

If you focus on one, two, or all three of those things, remember that each helps you get closer to understanding the style of the person you're pitching to. When you know what makes another person tick, you get closer to your goal of having someone pick up your project.

The more often you do those things, the more people will appreciate your consideration. They'll love your professionalism because you're talking to them in a way they want to receive. The result? They'll pay more attention, thus having a greater willingness to work with you.

The best part of this whole concept is that you *can* increase your control over the pitching process by being very aware of the people in the room and how to best communicate with them... regardless of who's on the other side of the table, even if it's a prominent VC or investor.

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