Manchester Community Central

A Perfect pitch

The pitch is your opportunity to stand up in front of a potential partner to secure support for your organisation. Most of the hard work will already have been done by the time you reach this stage of course – your research, the initial contact, the detailed planning. But this is the opportunity to sell yourselves and your services, and turn a prospective supporter into an eager and active supporter.

Using the checklist below will give you every chance of a successful outcome.

Are you prepared? Rehearse, rehearse, and rehearse. And then rehearse a bit more. Think what questions might be asked and practise your answers together.

Know your audience. Find out as much as you can about them beforehand, what they know already and what objections they may have to your proposals.

Develop your outline. Three words will keep you on track for preparing your presentation – beginning, middle and end. Another way of expressing this is introduction, development and conclusion. Don't forget the importance of connectors – a word, phrase or sentence that takes your audience smoothly from one idea to another throughout your presentation. Your introduction should contain an attention getter (a statistic, a quote, an anecdote or similar) and your conclusion a call to action. Use short words and sentences and speak in plain English.

Use cue cards, not a script. Reading from a script is a total turn-off for your audience. It creates a barrier between you and them and means you can't maintain eye contact because of the danger of losing your place. Cue cards are much more effective if used properly. You know your subject inside out and what you want to say so don't write out the whole script on cue cards.

Use your voice. The voice is a wonderful instrument – so use it. Don't drone on, mumble or gabble. Vary the pitch and the rate of delivery, enunciate carefully and remember to pause to give your audience time to think about what you've just said and you time to think about what's coming next.

Use your body. Your body is also an instrument for putting yourself across effectively so use it. Don't sit down or hide behind the table, don't fold your arms or put your hands in your pockets. Move; use your hands and arms for effective gestures, smile and show enthusiasm with the whole of your body, especially your face. Use your eyes to build rapport with the audience, to let them know that you are looking at them and expecting a response.

Relax. See yourself as successful and don't allow negative thoughts to enter your mind or talk yourself down

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The Elevator Pitch

A good way of practising your pitch to Business is what's known as the elevator pitch.

This works on the principle that you have no more than a minute – the amount of time you'd spend in a lift with someone – to tell them who you are, what you do and enthuse them about being a part of it. That's time for about 200 words.

It helps to think of your pitch like a short commercial. It needs to be clear, concise, and compelling. Come up with five core ideas:

- **Who you are**
- **How you help**
- **What you do**
- **Why you're different or better**
- **What you're looking for next**

Make sure that your staff, managers and young people participating can give the same elevator pitch fluently. Nothing sounds worse than contradictory descriptions or requests coming from the same source.

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Pitching to Businesses

Do's and Don'ts

Do tailor your pitch – don't send a generic letter to 'The Director' - it's unlikely to get read.

Don't be beige – it's good to demonstrate a business-like approach but don't forget to let your passion and enthusiasm for youth work shine though!

Do start small – get a foot in the door with a simple ask (like a meeting room) before you progress to a longer-term or more expensive request for support.

Do stress the mutual benefits – make sure you spell out how the business will benefit from being involved with your organisation and the common ground you share.

Don't do business with anyone you're not comfortable with – make sure you keep your trustees well informed of progress. Always consider the ethical implications of being associated with a particular industry or brand.

Do get your books in order – make sure you can demonstrate responsible record-keeping, especially if you're asking for cash or help with fundraising.

Don't give up – not everyone is going to be able to give you exactly what you want, but it's important to keep positive and keep on going. If you keep getting knocked back, change your approach.

Do keep talking – keep your supporters up to date on your progress and any set-backs. Agree some ground rules stick to them.

GOOD LUCK!