

Pitch Checklist

How to Use This Document

Use this checklist to help you refine your drafts of your pitch presentation. Start by writing down a quick rough draft of ideas the presentation slides¹. Assess how well your draft addresses the points in the content and style sections below. Scribble down changes. Re-draft and repeat. Once you are reasonably happy with your draft, turn it into slides or other presentation materials. Then, rehearse the presentation by yourself all the way through. Check your presentation against the presentation checkpoints below, refine it and present it to your colleagues for some final feedback before your actual presentation.

Checkpoints

Checkpoints are divided into content, style and presentation.

Content

Use these points to check the content of your presentation. These will help ensure that you say what is required for your topic.

- Have you said *what* your project is?
- Have you said *why* it is important? You not only need to show that your project addresses an important problem but that your solution (goal) does it *better* than what is currently out there.
- Is there enough context given for the audience to understand the problem being addressed?
- Is there enough context give an audience an intuitive understanding of your solution?
- Is the content accurate?
- Is your solution feasible? Can it be done in one semester?

¹The quicker the better. You'll feel better having *something* on paper and you'll have something to refine

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- If your project can be extended have you defined how it can be extended?
- Are all the non-obvious assertions that you make backed up with references, or illustrative examples?

Style

Use these points to check the style of the written component of your presentation. Your written component might be slides, a prepared speech or writing on a whiteboard or some combination of these. Note, you should not expect your first draft to do well on all these points – that comes with refinement.

- Problem... how well do you convey the importance of the problem? Will the reader agree that the problem is annoying or important or just worth solving?
- Convey the interest in the solution. Is it fun? Does it make things easy? Does it add value? Does it save time? Does it make something safer or less error-prone? Does it reduce risk?
- Is your talk short? Think of what you want to say and say it clearly concisely and directly.
- Do you use examples, analogies, or stories to hook into your audience's background knowledge and experience? Is there some problem that everybody has faced that helps explain either your problem or your solution?
- Do you define the problem you want to solve near the start of the talk?
- Do you, at some stage, clearly define how your solution solves the problem?
- Do you clearly define the benefit?
- Do you have a short and clear theme that you can build on and return to during the talk?

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- Is your talk mapped out at the start and signposted so that your audience knows where they are and, roughly, where they are going?
- Do your slides avoid detailed small text that the audience can't/won't read?
- Do your presentation materials tell a coherent story? That is, your presentation must have a narrative flow and not appear to jump around semi-randomly.
- Will you use visual cues where appropriate?
- Do you use active rather than passive voice in your writing? For this type of presentation the active voice is better because it is more direct. For a quick summary of the difference between active and passive voice see: <http://www.englishclub.com/grammar/verbs-voice.htm>.
- Have you avoided jargon - or at least defined any jargon-words you use clearly?
- Do you finish with a recapitulation of your theme?

Presentation

Use these points to check *how* you are presenting the live component of your presentation. These points can only be addressed after you rehearse your talk for the first time.

- Is your presentation running on time? If it is long, is there content that can be removed or shortened without damaging the presentation?²
- Do you address the audience directly? Avoid standing or writing with your back to the audience for more than a few seconds at a time.
- Is your voice the right volume? Can you be heard from the back of the room?

²It is almost always possible to shorten a presentation. Very often you can leave out details without compromising clarity or truth. If more details are needed for a complete story you can always refer the audience to more complete source.

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- Do you point to or emphasise the part of the presentation you are currently addressing?
- Do you let the audience know where you are in the presentation? This can be as simple as saying “Now we have seen ... Next I’ll show ...” at transitional part of the presentation. Of course, this only works if you have already presented a quick road-map at the start of the presentation.
- Where possible, do you invite interaction from your audience? Ask questions, get a show of hands. Get them to complete a sentence. Do you use their response?
- Do you show enthusiasm for the topic?
- Have you rehearsed the presentation enough to be confident of the material? Being a little nervous about the talk is OK – even experienced presenters are nervous before their talks. Being comfortable with the material will help the flow of the talk no matter how you feel.