## Open data advocacy

Opening data can be valuable for any organisation. Whether to drive innovation in the business, develop a clearer picture of operations or improve products and services, a growing number of private and public sector organisations now benefit from publishing and using open data.

However, opening data might require a change in the culture of an organisation. Most organisations are configured to protect their data resources, even when the benefits of openness outweigh the costs. The key to overcoming this resistance is clear: effective communication of the benefits that open data can bring.

This module will prepare you to deliver a tailored pitch for open data that highlights value and addresses risks.

In this module we'll explore how to:

* Structure the perfect pitch
* Identify different audiences for your pitch
* Tailor your pitch to different audiences

## The five components of the perfect open data pitch

Creating an effective pitch for open data requires five elements. When brought together, these create a clear, compelling case for action that can be used when seeking management approval, budgetary and resource support and downstream use and reuse. The pitch should be delivered in 90 seconds or less.

The five components of the perfect pitch are:

1. What it is – the problem you are solving for your users
2. What it can do – a tailored description of the benefit
3. Where it's helped – a relevant, quantified proof point
4. Why it's best – justification for why it beats other options
5. What next – a realistic decision that can be taken on the spot

Below we explore each of these components in more detail.

## What problem are you solving?

You should start your elevator pitch by outlining the problem you are solving for your users: the value proposition.

The value proposition of a business is central to its business model. This is equally relevant in the private and public sectors. Without a strong value proposition, the organisation – whether a large corporation, startup, local authority or charity – does not have justification to keep delivering its services.

Top tip: think of your value proposition as the abstract or executive summary of your solution. Keep it short, keep it snappy and use a list of three.

For example, open data can enhance your business' reputation, improve your customers' experience and diversify your product portfolio.

## What open data can do

There are many general arguments for using open data, but a strong pitch needs to be closely tailored to the priorities and concerns of the audience of the pitch and the decision maker.

In most cases, this can be determined from their professional context. Below we examine four common roles, coupled with the most relevant benefits of better use of data.

### Leadership

Leaders in an organisation are most likely to be convinced by the arguments that open data can help **drive innovation and growth** within the organisation, and **improve services** for users.

### Operations

For those in operations roles, **reducing costs** and being more efficient are priorities. Open data plays a crucial role in resource-saving by enabling a faster exchange of information.

The ability to access, use and share data across multiple platforms and between numerous organisations eradicates the time and cost normally associated with acquiring valuable datasets, one by one.

### Product or marketing

Those in product or marketing roles will respond best to the potential of open data to **improve products and services**.  More consumers are coming to expect a custom experience, which can be satisfied through greater provision of open data to complement the product function.

### Communications

For those in communications roles, open data can seem irrelevant to their work. The key message that resonates with communications professionals is that opening data can help to **improve the reputation** of an organisation. Open data can help to maximise opportunities for media exposure in support of promoting organisational priorities, and complement existing media channels.

As open data is easy to verify, it also increases trust that the article is not 'spun'.

## Where open data has helped

The next step in the pitch is to introduce real-life examples of where open data has already helped. In this section, we explore some existing case studies, grouped by the benefits identified in unlocking value from open data.

### Driving innovation and growth

Open data drives innovation and growth in businesses by revealing opportunities to enrich products or services and make better business decisions.

Finnish company Vainu [maximise lead generation and sales](https://blog.vainu.io/open-data-helps-you-target-right-companies-at-right-time/) by using open data, whereas in Spain BBVA offer the [competitive edge using data analytic services](https://www.bbvaresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/DEO_Jun16_Cap3.pdf).

Open data stimulates innovation and growth by removing barriers to data's access, use and shareability.

### Improving service delivery

Open data can help organisations to improve services for users. Organisations enable their users to make decisions based on easily comparable data and information.

Available in over 400 cities across the world, Austrian-based [Bike Citizens](http://www.bikecitizens.net/) are combining open data from cycle schemes and maps to improve the urban cyclist’s experience.

Open data is being used in the Netherlands by GoOV to [reduce the barriers facing disabled people](http://www.go-ov.nl/) by allowing them to book transport and navigate their area more easily.

Czech company DATLOWE have created a comprehensive [Drug Encyclopaedia](http://lekovaencyklopedie.cz/EncyclopediaApp/#home;lang=cs) as a guide for patients and medical professionals to easily compare ingredients found in medication.

### Reducing costs

Open data can help businesses to reduce their costs and be more efficient in their operations.

Swedish music-streaming giant Spotify and the UK’s BBC both use [open data service MusicBrainz](https://musicbrainz.org/) to complement their services and enhance user experience without having to invest in maintaining the catalogue themselves.

In Slovenia, winegrowers are using open data to help them [make smarter growing decisions](https://www.evineyardapp.com/) with eVineyard, whereas in Hungary, a [revolution to stop food waste](http://filab.hu/2016/05/saving-food-2-0-2/) is underway, built on open data and collaboration.

### Improving reputation

Open data can help improve the reputation of an organisation. As the data is openly available, it helps to increase perceived neutrality and trust among the public that the results are not ‘spun’.

In the UK, open data helps Provenance to [inform consumers about the origins and journeys of their purchases](https://www.provenance.org/), and in Bulgaria, citizens can analyse [open election data](http://opendata.yurukov.net/elections/).

### Saving the planet

Open data is helping us to tackle one of the biggest environmental problems: air quality. Using open weather, air quality and traffic data, ‘CityTrees’ in Germany can [reduce air pollution within 50 metres by 30%](http://www.perspectiveglobal.com/lifestyle/citytree-by-green-city-solutions/). In Greece, [Envi4All](http://envi4all.eu/#/) makes it easier for locals to find out about air pollution levels in their area.

To find more examples of open data being practically applied, take a look the European Data Portal's [report on the reuse of open data](https://www.europeandataportal.eu/sites/default/files/re-using_open_data.pdf), or browse the growing [list of use cases](https://www.europeandataportal.eu/en/using-data/use-cases).

## Why open data is best

This is the part of your pitch where you can explain your value proposition in more detail. Don't worry about repeating yourself. Repetition is key.

The first time you said your value proposition, you wanted to catch your audience's attention. Now you have their attention, and you've explained the benefits for them, you can explain your solution in more detail.

This is also your chance to justify why your solution is better than the alternatives. You can give competitive examples if relevant, or examples of where data has been shared with positive consequences to emphasise your point.

Use a list of three for maximum impact, and remember: repetition is key.

## What next?

The final element of the pitch is to leave your listener with a clear action.

Listeners want to be able to take action in response to a pitch. Your task is to create an action that allows them to immediately say yes (or no) without needing to think too much about it.

### On the spot

Make sure that your listener can respond to your action on the spot. If they need to consult others or consider your action for a while, it is too big. The ideal is an action that is small, clear, and moves the agenda forward.

### Clear expectations

Make sure that you set clear expectations for what you are asking. Aspects such as timeframe, resourcing and potential impact should all be central to managing expectations.

If the listener feels that the timeframe or resourcing constraints limit the opportunity, they may even be able to help. Being open and reasonable will help the listener to become engaged in your pitch.

### Reasonable requests

Only ask for budget or time that is reasonable, given the level of expected return. If your requests are unreasonable, you are unlikely to get a positive answer.

### Examples of good actions

​​​​Good actions don't have to be groundbreaking. Examples of good actions include:

* getting a date in the diary for a follow-up meeting with more people
* commitment to read and respond to a case study relevant to their interests
* commitment to send you a feasibility assessment for your solution

## Are you ready to advocate open data?

## What are the five elements of the perfect data pitch?

**The five elements of a perfect data pitch include...**

* the problem you are solving
* a tailored description of the benefit
* a relevant example
* a realistic decision that can be taken on the spot
* a complicated description designed to impress
* a big decision in order to succeed

**That's right!**

The perfect pitch should be structured around the following five components:

1. What it is – the problem you are solving for your users
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**Are you sure?**

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## What is a value proposition?

**A value proposition is...**

* the problem you are solving for your users
* an estimate of the value of a solution
* how much money you will get

**That's right!**

The value proposition is the problem you are solving for your users. The value proposition of a business is central to its business model. This is equally relevant in the public sector.

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## What can open data do?

**Which argument for open data is the most appropriate in a pitch for the Head of Operations?**

* Open data can improve the reputation of an organisation
* Open data can reduce costs
* Open data can drive innovation

**That's right!**

Reducing costs and being efficient are priorities for those in operations roles. The ability to access, use and share data across multiple platforms and between numerous organisations minimises the time and cost normally associated with acquiring valuable data.

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## What next?

**You should end your pitch with...**

* an action that enables on-the-spot decision making
* an action for your listener to take to their manager
* an action for your listener to think about for a few days

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At the end of your pitch it is vital to create an action that allows your listener to give an answer immediately. If they need to consult others or consider your action for a while, the action is too big.

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## Open data advocacy

Opening data can be valuable for any organisation to make more effective use of their resources. However, most businesses are configured to protect their data resources, even where the benefits of greater sharing outweigh the costs.

Clear, effective communication of the benefits is essential to capture imaginations and gain trust and understanding. In this module, we have learned how to deliver a tailored pitch for open data.

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