

James Caan - 6 steps to the perfect business pitch

IT goes without saying that if you want to succeed in business then you have to be able to deliver that perfect pitch. Whether it is about bringing in new investment or winning that vital contract, knowing how to sell yourself and your business can make all the difference between success and failure.

“During my time I have seen plenty of sales pitches, the good, the bad and the downright awful, and it never ceases to amaze me how people ignore some basic and very straight-forward guidelines”. – James Caan

1. Tell a story

No one likes to be bored into submission and it can really help if you can present your idea in an interesting and entertaining way. I find one of the best ways to pitch is to think of yourself as telling a story. As well as making it more engaging, it will help to underline what you are able to deliver. The story should focus on a problem and how you can solve the issue with the minimum of fuss and disruption.

2. Prepare to win

Delivering a pitch should never be thrown together at the last-minute as an afterthought, it should be the culmination of weeks, of detailed planning and preparation. Too often people trip up in the heat of the moment and are then surprised when their pitch falls flat.

3. Pay attention to the detail

One of the worst things that can happen to you when pitching is getting caught out on details. A credible investor or business person will have a good eye for detail, no matter how big or small. Check, double-check and then check again for any discrepancies in your figures and business plan.

4. Take ownership

From the outset, there should be one owner of the pitching process who can oversee all preparations and is ultimately responsible for the content. This can be particularly important when a group of contributors have worked together on the business plan. Too many voices can often lead to confusion and dilute the message.

5. Avoid death by PowerPoint

Being good with technology can come across as professional but don't go over the top. The number of slides and graphics should be kept to a bare minimum, 5-6 pages is a good rule of thumb. People are more interested in you and what you've got to say rather than how well you've put together an all singing and dancing presentation.

6. Remember the purpose of the pitch

Most important of all you should never lose sight of why you are pitching. Your pitch has a very specific purpose which must never get lost in the details. If your aim is to secure funding then you need to ensure that you have covered all the ground and not left any questions unanswered. By being focused you give yourself the best chance of beating your competitors to the main prize.