

# Pitching to win: You have too many slides!

You're pitching to a major client, and you know the time of the Pitch: Monday 5th, 10am for 60 minutes.

So, how many slides should you prepare? Content is key, the more information you provide, the more likely that some of that information will be relevant to your audience. Right?

How many slides should you include in a pitch?

In our experience, many organisations don't ask this question. When we have pushed for an answer, we have heard as many as 240 slides. Take a second to think about that: 4 slides a minute. That is almost so fast that the client would not be able to read each slide.

Some organisations believe the slides need to have every word that they will say. Let's consider that: if

every word you say is on your slides, then there is no need for you. Just send the slide pack and let them read your words.

To win, create two documents a persuasive pitch and a detailed document you can leave with the audience to read after the pitch. One is a presentation; the other is documentation. If you want to win the pitch, don't try to pitch with a presentation of your documentation.

In a pitch, what will persuade your client? An avalanche of PowerPoint slides, some stylish slides designed by an advertising agency or something else? We suggest something else – you and your team. That's right it's you and your team they want to see. When they say they want to see you, they don't mean





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they want to see you read words off a slide.

In a pitch the client is asking two questions:

- Do you know what you're talking about? A question not answered by reading slides.
- Could they work with you and your business? Another question not answered by reading slides.

You will answer these two questions best when you interact with the client.

***"Too often, sales reps simply regurgitate their presentations and expect to land the sale. It doesn't work."***

- Harvey Mackay.

### What's the most persuasive way to pitch?

Limit the number of slides, so each slide takes about five minutes to present. You should have about a minute worth of content on each slide, then explain the content by giving real examples of other clients or work. The client will see that you know what you are talking about. Doing this will allow your experience to shine through.

Limiting the number of slides will also force you to choose what is important to your client. If you include all the information, then the client needs to decide what is important. However, human brains can only hold a maximum of seven items at once. If you limit your slides, the client has more chance of remembering your message. Including more information makes it harder for your client, which is never a good idea.

Some of the latest research on neuroscience shows that when we make it hard for a person, they are unlikely to take the time to change their mind. That means, if you make it hard, then your competitor wins!

Finish your session with a question and answer session where you cover off any other topics of interest to your client that you didn't include in your presentation. This improves your credibility because your client sees that you really do know your content.

#### Plan for less presenting

Whatever time you're given, don't use it all to present. If you have 60 minutes, plan for a maximum of 40 minutes presenting and 20 minutes questions.

#### Limit the number of slides you use

How many slides in 40 minutes. We recommend five minutes for every slide – so that would be just eight slides.

#### Put in the hard work

Fewer slides means more work for you. More work deciding what is relevant to include.

#### Prepare for topics not included

Have a flipchart and pen so you can draw and write to explain any other topics.

### What will the client think?

No client ever said, "please show me more slides". In our experience, the client will simply say "thank you".

They will thank you, because like us and probably you, they have sat through far too many pitches with far too many slides. You and your team will stand out as professionals in a world with far too many amateurs.

With fewer slides, you spend more time interacting with your client. You will build a rapport and show your experience and credibility. Therefore answering the two questions that led to the meeting in the first place:

- Do you know what you are talking about?
- Can they work with you and your business?

Stand out from your competitors and make it easy for your client to say 'yes'. ■