



Field Department Resource

The Perfect Pitch

Asking Groups of People for Money

Pitching can be petrifying. Face it, we are combining our two favorite activities: Public Speaking and Asking People for Money. Yeah, this will work. Our nervousness can lead to disaster. But as with other things that make our nerves wrack, we can produce success with proper planning and preparation.

1) What's the Plan Stan?

Make sure you have got one and all those involved know it. Determine who is going to do what at the event prior to the beginning of the event. You should seek to do the pitch when approximately 80% of the people are in the room. Keep tabs on the check-in desk to determine the level of attendance and try to read the room. If you wait too long people will use the pitch as a reason to leave.

2) Pitch Practice Makes Perfect Pitches.

If possible, try to run through the whole show like a wedding rehearsal. Actually say what you are going to say so that others involved can get a sense of the flow and perhaps give you pointers. Things always sound better in our minds, make sure you hear it from your mouth before the crowd does. If a member of your pitch posse says that they are going to make it up once they are up there or they want to surprise you, say, "Thanks for thinking of us, but Bob over here is going to do it this time."

3) Not just butts, but the right butts in the seats.

A pitch only works if the prospects and the pitch match. You have to do the legwork in advance to ensure your prospects are in the room. Once the pitch begins you have to keep them out of the bathroom and away from the food long enough to hear what you have to say. Shepherds are always helpful in tracking down lost lambs.

4) Like a Fine Wine or a Good Date, Balance Emotion and Logic.

Donors give for emotional and logical reasons and a pitch has to appeal to a donor's left and right brains in about equal measures. Emotion will help them decide to make a gift. Logic reassures them that they're doing the right thing. Then the brain can release the arm muscles and pledges are produced.

5) Help! I Can't Get Off.

A good "hard" pitch creates a momentum that can't be stopped. The only way that a prospect can feel relief is to become a donor. (Sometimes it is the only way a donor can get out of the locked door.) Momentum is based in urgency and pressure. Your momentum should mirror the type of pitch. A "hard" pitch needs more momentum; a "soft" pitch can ride a slow moving freight train.

6) Be brief... No Rose Bowl Parades.

Three to four people should do the trick. One person can successfully do it alone or you can use a cast of thousands, just make sure 997 don't have speaking parts. Those with speaking parts

should be front and center from the very beginning until the bitter end, no running off stage when you finish your part. Like a Greek chorus, doo-wop group or backup singers, we support each other, look our prospects in the eyes and provide a broader connection for the crowd.

7) You Have to Do It All.

All fundraising includes each of these parts:

1. Who You Are
2. The Organizational Story
3. Mission, programs and services (Logical) Use Numbers
4. The personal testimonial (Emotional) the Sob Story
5. Imagine a World...What is the Future
6. How Can the Donor help and what do they get for helping
7. Ask for the Money (A donor or the most respected person in the room should do the ask.)
8. Thank and Congrats
9. Next Steps

You have to cover all this territory to be successful. You get to decide which parts are going to get more play based on the momentum you are seeking to generate.

8) Give First then Gab about It.

Every person in front of the group, including clients, should have made a financial contribution to the organization. Everyone should be able and want to say "and that is why I made my contribution."

9) Plant a Seed... Have a Plant.

Try to pre-arrange a couple of people to make a contribution during the pitch. It gets the ball rolling. If at least one could be a first time donor that is great. Try to space out the plants so they don't all call out at the beginning.

10) Deploy the Troops.

Often, whether a donor makes a gift is based more on whom is standing next to them than how the pitch is going. Try to position your staff, board members, and donors friendly to your organization next to your strongest prospects. Assign them to prospects before the event begins.

The Prospects: The people you think should be making a contribution may need some egging on.

The Plants: The people you know are making a contribution. Re-enforces their relationship with the organization.

The Pedestrians: The people who are wandering through your event with no intention to give. Try to keep them occupied and away from Prospects during the pitch.

11) Gush at Gifts as You Go.

Make a point to thank each person as they make the contribution. Try to use their name and shake their hand. Give them a small token for each pledge right then and there.

12) Trot Out the Organization.

Show the programs and services of the organization in the faces of those that you serve. People generally give to people...then videotapes...then photographs...then print.

13) Prop Up the Pitch.

Use items that help prospects make connections. Reintroduce them to their checkbooks and credit cards. Pass out pledge-forms and brochures. Hold up publications from the organization,

photographs of the organization's clients or work, and even Ross Perot charts if they help visualize your point. If it is a capital campaign bring architectural drawings or a brick or a window or even dirt.


14) You're not Auditioning for Leno.

Humor is great but don't lose the point in a rambling comic routine. You're doing a pitch so make sure you ask for the money. Use humor only when you need to break the tension in the room.

15) Tally as You Go.

Have someone else keep track of dollars and names. You need to be able to focus on momentum and prospects. Ask for the running total periodically and announce the total raised at the end of the pitch.

16) Get Out before You Crash and Burn.

If it is just not flying, make sure that you close the pitch gracefully. You want to make a magical memory for your guests no matter what happens with the pitch. Try to give the room a parachute or something up beat or next steps for their involvement. 

This resource is provided to GLSEN chapters free of charge by the GLSEN Field Department



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