

Honing Your Pitch

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If you're getting ready to launch a new product or service, or even a new company, chances are you've spent a lot of time, effort, and probably money to prepare for the roll-out. But how much time have you spent developing and practicing what to say? If you're like most business people, probably not a lot, and that can come back to bite you.

I was recently at an entrepreneurial event where one lucky entrepreneur got the chance to stand up in front of a roomful of potential investors and deliver a one-minute pitch about his company. Unfortunately, this hapless individual did a poor job preparing for this golden opportunity and wasted his valuable sixty seconds warming up to his topic, talking about his competition and the marketplace. He never did get around to actually talking about his company and its product. The net result was an audience that was left remembering the names of all his competitors, but not his!

He could have turned this into a lucrative pitch if only he had taken a little more time to think through what is it that his company and product offer. This requires a certain amount of discipline, objectiveness, and practice. Think of this process in the same way you would an elevator pitch – those short but decisive opportunities to sell someone in the one-on-one environment of an elevator ride between several floors. It's also similar to a radio commercial or even a highway billboard – you have a very short period of time in which to clearly explain what it is you are offering.

This can be a daunting task for companies selling a complicated technical product. Nevertheless, it can be done. It means stepping back from the technical specifications and features of your product and clearly identifying the pain it addresses – the reason someone would need to buy it. It also requires

something we at the SCT Group call “communicating with clarity” – avoiding those grammatical and marketing crutches so often used by sales and marketing people. You know what I’m talking about: “next generation solution”, “leading edge technology”, “performance driven operatibility”. Purge this worst kind of fat from your sales pitch and you’ll begin to see the lights coming on a lot sooner for the people with whom you’re trying to communicate, whether it’s investors, potential customers, or even your own board of directors.

Once you think you have your message in understandable language, take a deep breath and pull out your editing knife. See if you can hone your pitch down to twenty-five words or less. Make it as simple and as compelling as possible. Once you do this, you can be confident that you will be communicating with clarity.