

Practitioner information

Introduction

This resource helps learners understand how to plan and deliver compelling pitches that persuade investors or customers, creating emotional engagement backed up by facts and data. Learners explore how an engaging story brings the innovation and its benefits to life, and how an entrepreneur's personal presentation skills create a strong first impression and positive outcomes.

Topic links

- Presentations
- Enterprise
- Skills for employability, teamworking, and project management

Suggested learning outcomes

Learners will be able to:

- explain the purposes and audiences for pitches in engineering enterprise
- describe the features and content of a high-quality pitch
- list and model personal presentation skills and explain their importance.

Why this topic is relevant for engineers

An idea is only good if it is applied and is successful. This requires investment and eager customers, who are engaged and persuaded through pitches that create emotional engagement. This is a distinct skill from presenting facts and one that any entrepreneur needs to develop alongside their technical skills and understanding.

Delivering the theory: Pitches create emotional connections

- Link building emotional connections in a pitch with the simpler and more familiar example of persuading a friend to do something such as coming to a party. Learners will be familiar with the arguments they might put forward about enjoying themselves or meeting someone they like – creating an image of a better future. Effective pitches do the same.
- Link examples of stories in pitches to how new technologies are improving engineering outcomes. What stories do learners think are behind the wide adoption of internet-of-things devices, low-carbon and renewable energy sources, or robotics, for example?
- Learners can suggest other specific examples of what 'emotional connection' might mean for customers and potential employees.

Practitioner information

Delivering the theory: High-quality pitches tell a story

- To illustrate System 1 and System 2 thinking, learners can identify examples of instant decisions that appear to involve little active thought, such as choosing food, entertainment, etc (System 1), or more complex tasks like parking a car, comparing study options, etc (System 2).
- Highlight that 'arousal' in this context means a heightened interest in, and desire to participate in, the success of the enterprise.
- Ask learners to share examples of branding or advertising that rely on System 1 (emotional or intuitive) thinking.
- Learners can generate lists of persuasive words and phrases they think would be effective in engineering contexts.

Delivering the theory: Personal presentation skills

- Emphasise the importance of preparation – investors are risk takers who will ask tough questions to understand the opportunity. The best preparation for this is to present an idea and plan that have been thoroughly thought through and tested against assumptions and identifiable risks.

- Learners can describe or model how to make a positive first impression, and what things they think contribute to a negative impression. Remind learners to think as investors and not as peers.
- Model good body language for your learners.
- Highlight the adage, 'tell them what you are going to tell them, then tell them, then tell them what you told them'.
- Remind learners of the earlier example of inviting someone to a party – they will want the conversation to end with clarity about when it's taking place and where, as concrete next steps.

Delivering the case study: Pitching to win

- The exact nature of the innovation is not important in this case study – the exercise is for learners to identify an effective structure that could be used to sell any good innovation and opportunity.
- Remind learners that slides do not need to provide detail, just headline information. Details can be provided at the end in a handout document that can be reviewed in the meeting or at another time. The role of the pitch is to persuade the investor to dig deeper into the detail because they are excited by the opportunity.