

Key Points from the Open-Oxford-Cambridge AHRC DTP Engaged Communications Cohort Day with the BBC, 24 February 2020

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1) What is an Elevator pitch?

An **elevator pitch**, **elevator** speech, or **elevator** statement is a short description of an idea, product or company that explains the concept in a way such that any listener can understand it in a short period of time. This description typically explains who the thing is for, what it does, why it is needed, and how it will get done. An elevator pitch does not have to include all of these components, but it usually does at least explain what the idea, product, company, or person is and their value.

An elevator pitch can be used to entice an investor or executive in a company, or explain an idea to other potential clients. The goal is simply to convey the overall concept or topic in an exciting way. Unlike a sales pitch, there may not be a clear buyer–seller relationship.

The name—elevator pitch—reflects the idea that it should be possible to deliver the summary in the time span of an elevator ride, or approximately thirty seconds to two minutes.

- A pitch is a Story
- Stories have a structure
- Well told, strong stories are memorable and have impact.
- A strong story will have:
 - Structure
 - Subject
 - Characters
 - Setting
 - Tension
 - Emotion.

‘..Every great story has to either affect your mind, heart or wallet....no matter what apps or tools are developed.’ *Scott Rensberger* www.journalism.co.uk

Selling Your Story.

O = Opener: grabs attention and states clearly what the story is; what type etc.

A = Approach: who is it for? What angle are we taking?

B = Benefits: Why will it interest your audience? Why should they care to listen?

C = Conclusion: restates the heart of the idea.

Pitching language.

- Clear
- Everyday vocabulary
- Jargon free
- Short sentences
- Signpost words (now, so, next)

Pitching and social psychology

It seems that **confidence**, **comfort level** and **enthusiasm** may be important qualities of a successful pitch, according to social psychologist, Amy Cuddy. Cuddy is a Harvard Business school professor who studies how nonverbal behaviour and snap judgements influence people. In 2012 she delivered what became the second-most viewed talk in TED's history on 'power poses'. Cuddy's book, *Presence*, looks at how we can 'nudge' body language, behaviour and mind-set in day-to-day life. One of the areas she covers is speaking in public.

Cuddy quotes research by Lakshmi Balanchandra, who investigated the way entrepreneurs make pitches and how audiences respond. Lakshmi filmed 185 pitches and analysed verbal and non-verbal behaviour. She found that the strongest predictors of success were three traits:

- **Confidence**
- **Comfort level**
- **Passionate enthusiasm**

These traits, Cuddy believes, were 'signalling something more powerful than words'. They were displaying 'how much that person truly believed in the value and integrity of her idea and her ability to bring it to fruition which may in turn have signalled something about the quality of the proposition itself'. On the other hand, not showing confidence, comfort and enthusiasm could make speakers appear 'less believable, less effective communicators and, ultimately poorer performers'.

So does this just mean those who shout loudest get the prizes? Cuddy thinks not. She says we put faith in people who project passion, confidence and enthusiasm because these traits can't easily be faked. As a result, judgements based on them 'might be quite sound'. An artificial smile or forced enthusiasm can backfire because we sense it is not from the heart. 'When you are not present, people can tell. When you are, people respond'.

Filming on your smartphone

1. **Phone position.** For now - hold your phone horizontally with the home button to the right.
2. **Focus.** Tap on the screen to focus. A square box appears tracking what it thinks is the subject of your shot.
3. **Available light.** Remember: bum to the sun! (or at least to the side).

4. **Shot size.** You need three shot sizes to help with editing. Wide, mid and close up. (Make sure your close ups are *really* close). Move the phone and yourself – don't use zoom.

Different shot sizes



Wide



Midshot

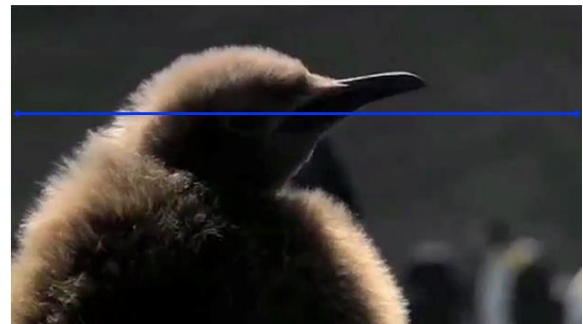


Close up

5. **Framing.** Imagine a grid on your pictures and film (the grid only appears on the iPhone on still images not on video). Positioning your subject on the left or the right and putting their eye line on the top line will produce a professional looking shot. Don't forget 'looking room'.



Heads or Eyes



6. **Settings.** Turn to airplane mode to avoid phone calls during filming.
7. **Sound quality.** There's no point in having great shots if you can't hear anything. Use the mic in the headphones if you have it. Otherwise use a clip mic or any mic you have.

2. Social Media

Blend In: To leave a good impression, you need to make sure your tone matches with how other people in the space are behaving.

Content: Users want to see a content that is compatible with their lives, interests and needs. In social media, consumers can be very critical and can feel that their personal spaces are violated as your posts will interweave with those from family and friends etc.

Respond: Direct and personalised communication is vital in social media. If someone sends a message it is essential to respond as quickly as possible.

Find a balance: Although it is important to remain relevant and current, you also need to find a balance between relevance and how often you post. Don't over-post and swamp your audience.

Dealing with Negative Feedback.

- **Straight Problems** - Someone has an issue with your post and has laid out exactly what they feel about it. This type of feedback is negative in the sense that it can paint your post in a poor light, but it can be helpful in exposing real problems that need to be dealt with.
- **Constructive Criticism** - More helpful is when the comment comes with a suggestion attached. While this type of feedback may point out your flaws and can be seen as negative, it can be very helpful.
- **Trolling/Spammers** - Trolls have no valid reason for being negative at you. Also in this category are spammers, who will use a negative comment about your post (whether true or not) to promote a competing point of view.

How to Respond.

The number one rule when responding to all criticism, even the negative type, is to stay positive. Adding more negativity to the conversation by letting yourself be drawn into a fight with someone will only reflect poorly on you.

When dealing with Straight Problems, a response is almost certainly necessary. There will be times when such criticism is the result of a perceived problem rather than an actual problem (e.g., someone who just doesn't like the method by which you do something). Even this type of complaint should be given a response, if only to say, "Thanks for bringing it to my attention, but here's why we do it that way."

Similarly, Constructive Criticism also requires a response. It is well worth the effort to thank those people who took the time to provide you with a suggestion or point out a problem.

The final category is the only category of negative feedback that does not require a response. In fact, it is almost always best not to respond to Trolling or Spam. This type of feedback isn't really feedback at all. It is designed either to bait you into an unnecessary and image-damaging fight. You should always ignore this variety of feedback, and when appropriate, remove it as soon as you spot it.

3) Media Interviews – Down the Line/Skype/FaceTime Etc.

Tips for 2-ways

1. Know your subject matter / prepare

Arrange your key facts – what is the key message you want to leave in the minds of the audience? Keep it simple, don't be tempted to pack too much in. Ask for information about the interview, such as, when is it? Where is it for? Is it Live or recorded? Who will be interviewing me? Will I be appearing with anyone else? Agree the main points to be covered.

Practice – read your answers out loud, test them with someone you trust! Do this until you are confident of the main points and you can deliver them fluently, without hesitation.

2. TV - always look into the lens

It's important you always look into the lens of the camera when speaking to a studio-based presenter. Try to relax, be composed, but be focused. Never let your eyes stray up, down, left or right – it makes the audience wonder what's happening behind the camera and you lose their attention.

3. Don't 'crowd' your brain

Think of the 2 or 3 key points that you want to make. You don't want to crowd your brain with endless facts and figures because you won't remember them and it will cause panic. Use a bullet point list of it will help you remember – but don't write a script!

4. What if the presenter asks me a question I don't know the answer to?

Advice from Norman Smith – deputy Political Editor BBC:

“Turn the question around...so if the presenter says something like ‘But doesn't the majority of the country want this reform’, you say “Well, some people may think that but the real issue here I think is X Y Z etc. Don't slap down the presenter, don't bash him or her. Just move the question into an answer you're more comfortable at giving. Move it along gently”.

If a presenter asks a daft question, say something like *“It's difficult to tell at this stage...or we won't know that for some time”.*

5. Be yourself

Never try to be someone different on TV. Don't fake an accent or try to imitate anybody. If you do, you'll stumble and your performance will suffer, because you'll be concentrating more on that, than the content.

6. Keep calm and carry on...!

Perhaps the most important rule of all...**don't stop!** Even if you stumble or say something factually incorrect, just apologise, correct yourself and move on.

7. Skyping or FaceTiming?

Consider where to be when doing this – particularly if you are somewhere where things or people could distract you! Frame your camera so it's directly on you, not upwards towards the ceiling!

8. Review your Interview

Although not always possible, you should go back watch/listen to your 2-way again. This is to spot things you could have done better. Also, don't be afraid to ask for some constructive criticism from the programme you did the interview for.