

## **What is a pitch? How do you do it? Are there specific “rules” in presenting a successful pitch?**

The answer is: yes and no. Every pitch session is different, but the most important thing to remember is that the point is not to sell your project. It is to build a relationship. A commitment to your project is secondary. Always.

First of all, remember that you are having a conversation, and it is your meeting. You are “hosting” the meeting, and it is up to you to direct the conversation and keep it on track. That doesn’t mean you can’t stray from it, but it is your job to keep the meeting focused and convey or find out the appropriate information.

What follows is an outline of the ten steps you should be familiar with when pitching.

### The Steps

1. Give them a business card
2. Tell them why you want to meet with them. What do you want? To coproduce it with them? For them to acquire your finished show? Development funds? Production commitment? Be specific.
3. Personalize it: tell them why the subject material is important to you. This is important because it connects you emotionally to the project.
4. Tell about characters, hosts, etc.
5. Tell about the overall concept of project; additional story ideas, etc.
6. Describe your background & key production team (if relevant)
7. Tell them current status of project: idea stage, bible & scripts developed, pilot shot, etc.
8. Repeat what you want from them. Be very clear.
9. Ask if you can send them a proposal or pitch them other ideas in future
10. Ask when you can followup, and do it

Each of these steps is about a paragraph in length, and you should be extremely familiar with your pitch. It is not inappropriate to go into your meeting with the information written out on cue cards or a piece of paper.

When you meet with a broadcaster or a producer, it is important to know that they are inundated with pitches – lots of excellent ideas and great projects, with experienced people attached. Your pitch needs to be as strong as possible to compete. It also needs to be passionate and enthusiastic. You’re not just selling your idea. You’re selling yourself.

Make sure you have a strong team. Make sure you know what you want – are you looking for a coproducer or a broadcaster? Without a strong and experienced production team, a broadcaster may not give it serious consideration, no matter how great the idea. Perhaps you should concentrate your efforts on finding a suitable coproducer first. Know what you need. And if you don’t know, find out before having a meeting you may not be ready for.

Is your concept original? If you are an emerging filmmaker, perhaps you want to consider bringing an experienced story editor or other creative individual to help hone your project. Asking for development funds could help you to bring this person aboard.

Do your research. Most broadcasters and decision makers have their own websites, which includes specific information for submitting pitches and proposals. Don't be afraid to ask questions, but only if you cannot find the answer on your own first, or if you need clarification. Find out everything you can about your broadcaster or producer before meeting with them. Watch their programming. Study their website. Know why your project would be a fit on their channel. This is important because nobody wants their time wasted, including you.

When you meet with a broadcaster or producer, particularly in an environment such as a pitchfest, it is appropriate to give out a one-sheet. This is a one page document, sometimes double-sided, usually glossy with color that gives a quick sell of the project. Generally, it is more focused on the concept and can be compared to a film poster. It is usually regular letter sized and can be helpful to a broadcaster as a reference.

What is not usually appropriate to give out is a complete proposal. Most broadcasters and producers get so much material at festivals that it becomes cumbersome to wade through it all, let alone pack it up and take back to their offices. Ask if you can send a proposal to them at a later date, and then make sure you do it.

Regardless of what happens during your meeting, be gracious. This is an individual giving you their time. Even if it is a project they are not interested in, accept that for the time being and move on. Perhaps you can pitch them another project, or rework it to make it more suitable. Most broadcasters and producers are very helpful and may suggest other broadcasters you may want to meet and discuss the project with. Even when they pass, it is an opportunity to find out more about their company and what they are looking for. From that meeting, you may be able to develop something that is more of an interest for them.

With every meeting, follow up. Thank them for meeting with you. Thank them for considering the project. Thank them for sharing information about their company and programming needs.

It's been said that "pitch" is the wrong word for such a meeting. It is almost as if the broadcaster or producer expects something to be thrown at them. But it is essential to learn how pitch well – it is the only way you can expect something to be thrown back to you.