



“Selling Yourself and Your Idea” The Business Pitch in 4-H Public Speaking

Introduction

Ever tried to convince a friend to play your favorite video game or watch your favorite movie? Have you helped with 4-H fundraisers, or gone door-to-door selling popcorn for a school club or sports team? Do you line up potential buyers for a 4-H livestock sale, or market items as a Show Me 4-H Wares exhibitor? If so, you already have experience with the “business pitch.” The popular TV show *Shark Tank*, TED Talks videos, sales presentations, and elevator speeches are all variations of this public speaking category.

What is a Business Pitch?

The goal of the business pitch is to inform, persuade, motivate, and even at times entertain an audience. At state 4-H public speaking contest, the business pitch combines parts of the traditional “prepared” speech with the “technology assisted” speech, and adds in a dose of persuasion.

The business pitch speaker’s aim is to quickly establish credibility with the audience; identify a common problem or opportunity; introduce an idea, product or cause that offers a solution; talk up its attributes; and conclude with an appeal to the audience to decide or act on what the speaker has presented.

Examples of 4-H Business Pitches

A business pitch can take many forms on a wide variety of 4-H topics, such as:

- A sales pitch to customers to buy 4-H-made products or services
- An appeal to buyers to purchase animals at a 4-H livestock sale
- A pitch to a sponsor to provide financial support for a 4-H trip, project, or community service
- A marketing presentation promoting a 4-H member’s family-owned business or community
- A briefing by a 4-H member to city, county, or state leaders to address an issue or adopt a policy

How to Prepare a Business Pitch

The first step in preparing a business pitch is to select your topic, something you may already be doing in 4-H, are knowledgeable about, or want to learn more. Next, start thinking through how you can pitch that topic to your listeners. The business P.I.T.C.H. should...

P – Persuade your audience

I – Imagine and inspire possibilities

T – Teach about your idea, product, or cause

C – Communicate your credentials and progress

H – End with how they can help

The next step is to consider how you will use visual aids to support your pitch. A slideshow can be used to display photos or diagrams, accent your main points, and add visual appeal. See the guidelines for “tech assisted” speeches for more info. You may also bring and use a sample item or model for

illustration, but not for demonstration. Your goal is to persuade people rather than show them how an item works or is made. Visual aids can help make your pitch more effective, but they are not required.

Here are a few tips to consider as you build out and refine your business pitch:

- 1) **Sell Yourself – who are you, and what do you do?**
Share key info about yourself, your unique skills and experience to build trust and credibility with your audience.
- 2) **Sell Your Idea – what does “it” do, and who should care?**
Focus on how the idea, product, or cause you are involved in, or are knowledgeable about, solves a problem or accomplishes something the audience values.
- 3) **Make the “Ask” – what do you want, and what do you want them to do?**
Build your pitch around a specific goal identified, and finish with a question or a call to action that is specific to your audience, whether it be a customer, investor, business partner, or governing official.

Things to Include in Your Pitch...	Things to Avoid in Your Pitch...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enthusiasm• Evidence• Trustworthiness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exaggeration• Falsehood or dishonesty• Too much persuasion 

As the table summarizes above, people will only grow as excited about your idea, product, or cause as you are! If you offer something that meets a need, adds convenience or solves a problem, and deliver it with enthusiasm, their ears will be open!

Use reliable, unbiased sources to back up your points. Avoid “fake news.” If you do your homework and talk up your topic using accurate supporting evidence, you will build credibility with your audience.

In keeping with good character, business pitches are also truthful and honest about strengths and limitations (what a product can and cannot do). If your pitch promises something more than it delivers, or seems too good to be true, you will lose credibility with your audience.

Likewise, if your pitch pressures the listener too much or comes across as pushy, that can be a turn off. The art of pitching is in knowing your audience, generating their interest, providing accurate information, and using gentle persuasion to make a compelling ask or offer.

4-H members can strengthen their business pitch by including personal traits or characteristics, identifying what sets them apart from others, a specific goal/interest they are working on, their current activities and progress, the challenges and roadblocks they have encountered, and the determination they have to succeed!

What is it you are trying to accomplish? Raise money for an exchange trip, grow and expand your herd, build your business, save for college? The business pitch speech is an opportunity to step up and claim your goals in 4-H, and to do so with confidence and conviction!

The Business Pitch in 4-H and Beyond...

On that note, the skills and experience you gain from preparing and delivering a business pitch will be relevant later on in your 4-H career, and in life. You may apply these further in applying for a 4-H scholarship, running for a regional or state leadership position, interviewing for state-level 4-H recognition, inquiring about employment, or seeking admission to your top choice of college.

Many young professionals can tell you how regularly their careers involve selling who they are and selling their ideas to others. By practicing and refining your persuasive communication skills, you are becoming more prepared for the college and career path you are on in 4-H!

Sources:

Kent State University. Your One-Minute Elevator Pitch. Career Exploration and Development. Retrieved online from <https://www.kent.edu/career/your-one-minute-elevator-pitch>

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