

# 5 tips to pitch your small business

 By [Viresh Harduth](#)

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September is not only popular due to warmer weather in the Southern hemisphere, but it also means small businesses are stocking up on seasonal essentials. This month all South African consumers have been urged to support small businesses in their area.



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Every small business owner and entrepreneur needs support to ensure their survival every day of the week. Small businesses also need to master the art of pitching to persuade others to buy into their company's products or services.

As an entrepreneur, you'll want to convince key customers to make a bet on your company or encourage that high-powered salesperson to join your team – even if you don't plan to look for external investors. Crafting a pitch and the supporting document can be one of the most valuable exercises you can undertake for your business. Formalising your pitch will help refine your concepts, what you do, and help you break through the clutter.

Here's how to go about delivering a great pitch:

## 1. Answer the right questions

Your pitch needs to capture succinctly what your company does, why it does it, and what makes it different. Your pitch should answer the following questions about your business:

- Your target market.

- The problem or opportunity you've identified in this market.
- How your product or service addresses this problem for the customer.
- What you'd like the person listening to the pitch to do.
- How your product or service will benefit the listener with reference to rational and emotional benefits.

If you need some inspiration, take a look at PitchDeckCoach for a simple template to follow. Also, work on condensing your main messages into a 30-second elevator pitch that describes clearly what your business does and why it matters.

## **2. Keep it crisp**

We live in a world with endless distractions and plenty of competition, so when you get time with a potential investor or a key decision-maker, you must make the most of it. Get to the 'why' as quickly as you can. Keep your presentation short to ensure you'll finish delivering the key messages in the time allocated to you. Leave time for questions so the people you're pitching to can dive into the detail that matters to them.

## **3. Tailor the pitch to your audience**

Know your audience and focus on their needs and interests. If you want an angel investor to put money into your company, try to find out where their interests lie. If they have a strong interest in social entrepreneurship, talk to them about how you want to work with rural spazas to bring your product to market, for instance. When the audience is a venture capitalist, they might be more interested in your business or revenue model, the size of your market, and metrics illustrating your success.

## **4. Sell yourself and your team as much as you sell your idea**

Business-to-business customers, top talent and investors hear a lot of pitches from people who have great ideas. But what really matters to them is whether they believe you and your team can execute on the vision. For that reason, you should spend time polishing your credentials to showcase why your track record and expertise make you a solid bet. Be sure to show that aspects of your business, like sales, finance and technology, are in good hands.

## **5. Polish, polish and polish some more**

There are many founders going around the market with slick PowerPoint decks and polished presentations. For that reason, a well-honed pitch and a professional deck are just the ticket to play when trying to impress a decision-maker. An amateurish deck, with a dated look-and-feel or spelling mistakes, will not create the best first impression. Professional design and proofreading are a worthwhile investment.

It's also important to work on your verbal presentation as much as possible. Strip out the hype and the jargon. Learn the details inside and out. Ask friends and colleagues to critique your delivery. Get them to ask you difficult, uncomfortable

questions, and craft credible answers. The more polished and prepared you are, the better your pitch meetings will go.

## ABOUT VIRESH HARDUTH

Viresh Harduth is the vice president of small business for Africa and the Middle East at Sage.

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