Pitching Online Preparation, Equipment and Tips

Preparing your Pitch - Do take the time to prepare your pitch. Winging it normally leads to losing your credibility as your audience has seen many pitches and will compare your message and performance with others. Preparation is key.

The following tips will help you to pitch online at the Meetup event and present online in general.

Equipment

Internet connection

If you don't have a stable internet connection, get one! Or go somewhere where there is one. Geneva's Largest Networking and Pitching Meetup is being held online, through an application called Zoom. A bad internet connection could result in your video flickering, sound breaks, or you are dropping off call altogether. A good stable internet connection means around 15-30mps. You can check the speed of your connection with your internet provider. Some phones allow good data usage that allow smooth connection so please check your service provider.

Camera

Most smartphones and computers have built-in cameras; however some are not great quality. If your built-in video camera is poor quality, you could borrow or buy a plug-in camera or borrow a laptop from someone else. We recommend using video because the visuals give us all a feeling of connecting with each other on a deeper level, hence our networking experience will be more enriching.

Microphone

Again, most smartphones and laptops have a built-in microphone, but some are not particularly good quality.

Unlike when pitching in person, you cannot project your voice further as you move away from the audience. To ensure your voice is heard, to minimise background noise and the effects of potential echoes or your voice bouncing around the room, you could use a plug-in microphone.

One option is to connect a separate wireless (bluetooth) microphone or a lapel (clipped to your collar) mic, with a cable of at least 2m length to allow freedom of movement.

Check the functionality and record yourself practising your speech *in situ* to ensure that every word is picked up by the microphone. Configure your microphone and check the quality by going into your audio/visual settings. When practising your pitch prior to our event, it is worth recording it so that after your own dry runs, you can watch how you performed: your voice, your flow, your clarity of speech, etc.

Lighting

Ensure you have adequate lighting so that you do not have shadows over your face and the focus is on you, not your wall. You may wish to add a couple of desk lights, but don't angle them to shine in your eyes as this will make your face appear harsh (and you'll be blinded!). Instead, angle the light to bounce off of a

wall or ceiling and back onto you. This creates a more natural, softened light. Check that parts of your face are not in shadow.

You may be tempted to use daylight, however, it is changeable and can be harsh. Do not position yourself with a natural light source (such as a window) behind you or you will create shadows across your face or be turned into a silhouette, which will mean the audience will not be able to see your eyes or facial expressions.

Setting the Stage

The positioning of the camera is very important and may require some trial and error. The camera should be at eye height and slightly angled down, rather than up (looking up your nostrils). If you want to pitch standing up (recommended to keep your energy up and your body free to move) this may mean that you need to find a chest of drawers or shelf where you could place your computer/phone. You can prop up your laptop or phone on a box or some books, to obtain the right height.

You should remain in the "frame" of the camera for the entire time length of your pitch. To do this you may need to modify your movements to ensure you remain in the frame but do not come across as rigid. Unlike in a conference call meeting, when you have a presentation to give, you may like to be further away from the camera, so the audience can see more of your body (at least from the waist up). How your position yourself will depend on your performance elements. If you need to use the "stage" more, you'll need to be further away from the camera. Use this unusual setup to your advantage – come closer to the camera (your audience) when you want to make a point or be more intimate.

Keep in mind that the audience want to see your facial expressions and hear you well.

Remember that your audience will not only see you, but what's in the background of the shot. Set yourself up in a space will a neutral background to limit the distractions. If you have something, for example a bookcase, behind you, then make sure it's tidy. You don't want your audience to be entranced by a pile of books and papers, instead of concentrated on you. This greatly influences the first impression you create and impressions matter a lot in networking.

Think carefully about what you will wear and what it looks like on camera and in contrast to your background. Plain block colours are best, whereas complicated patterns can be distracting and do not show up well on camera.

A dog barking next door or cars passing an open window can also distract the audience from your pitch. Make sure you are in a quiet place and inform those around you that you should not be disturbed and to not use the blender or vacuum cleaner while you are presenting. Close the doors and windows.

Performing on Camera

Performing your pitch on camera, is very different from pitching on a stage. Remember your audience are sitting in front of a small screen and don't have additional cues from you, which they would have if you were on the stage. Remember your audience is only an arm's length away from their own laptop/phone. This creates an intimacy and is very different compared to pitching to an in-person audience.

In addition, most people will be watching your pitch on their own. This means that your audience are not experiencing the usual buzz and feelings and most importantly reactions, of the other members of the audience.

Your audience only sees what you have framed in your camera shot. Everything seen within the frame takes on a greater significance. One advantage is that you now control your audience's gaze – you are telling them where to look, and what to pay attention to.

However, at the same time, big broad gestures, jerky body movements, and extreme facial expressions can come across as "artificial" or inauthentic on video, so you may need to modify your performance accordingly.

The audience will be confused if your hands are not in the frame and then suddenly appear, out of nowhere. If possible, keep your hands always visible. If your frame is only to waist-level, then your arms/hands "resting position" would be bent at about 90 degrees, at your waist.

No matter how you have set up your camera and the frame, you will not be able to move as much as you would on a live "stage". This will mean you may need to adjust your movements and the use of the space. Practice and record yourself. Get someone to review the video with you.

Like with movement, being closer to the audience will mean that you need to adjust your volume (no one wants to be shouted at or have to strain to hear what you are saying). Speak as if your audience is standing 1 metre feet away from you, and let the microphone do its job. You don't need to fill an auditorium with your voice, like you would on stage. This proximity also allows you to play with your vocal variety in a different way.

It can feel strange to "perform" in front of your computer and this may affect your energy. To keep your energy levels up imagine you are having a one-to-one conversation with an audience member. You can also put a photo of a person (or even a soft toy) near the camera lens and pitch to them. When you would normally make direct eye contact with someone in the audience, look directly into the camera. The audience will each feel like you are speaking directly to them. Again, this takes practice.

Be aware that the audience may be requested to turn their videos off during your pitch to minimise distractions to you.

Practice

Like with any pitch or presentation you need to practise. This may be the first time you have ever performed a pitch "on camera" and this requires additional practice and probably some trial and error, to get the stage, lighting, sound and movements just right.

Practise to check your camera angle, positioning on the stage, the lighting and the sound. Adjust as needed.

Practise bringing energy to your pitch and performing to the camera, instead of to a live audience.

Practise to check the timing of your pitch. You have 2 to 4 minutes only. The organisers can provide timing cues if you require them.

Share the video of your practice pitch with someone else – a friend, colleague, or speaking coach and get their feedback. A recording of the MeetUp event will not be provided due to the GDPR restrictions.