

## **Increase your Influence by being Pitch Perfect**

by Mari Pat Varga



If they'd *only* ask what you thought. You have twelve ideas percolating in your head about ways to improve the business processes but will anyone listen? You want to stand out and be heard but you can never seem to get a word in.

Making sure you are seen and heard in the crowded marketplace of ideas and personalities can be challenging. Distinguishing yourself, however, is essential to success in the world of work. Following are a few practical and concrete steps to help you perfect your "pitch" and advocate powerfully for your ideas.

### **Prepare your Pitch like a Pro Broadcaster**

Articulating your idea in a clear, concise and compelling way takes preparation – no shortcut here. For each idea you have create a pitch and rehearse it until it rolls off your tongue with ease. Utilize the formula most broadcast news stories are modeled around:

**Headline (what is the big picture attention-getter?):** *I have an idea that will broaden our consumer reach by 20%!*

**History (what's the background/context?):** *We've struggled in the past with reaching college students and so I've created a prototype for an app that will help us penetrate the college market.*

**Example (make it real by referencing an example):** *I tested it with a group of Georgetown Students this past week and the response was enthusiastic.*

**Action (identify the next steps):** *If this idea appeals to you I'd be happy to demo the app to you and the senior team whenever you are ready.*

## **Picture who'll you Pitch to**

Search the company website to find a photo of the individual you want to sell your idea to. Enlarge it on your computer screen and direct your pitch to the photo. Practice your pitch while looking into the eyes of your future audience. It'll go a long way in helping you feel comfortable in your communication.

## **Spot the Right Opportunity**

Rather than hoping for a random moment when you might attempt to squeeze your idea into the conversation, take a strategic approach to identifying the right time. Look at the agenda for upcoming staff meetings. Is there a spot for your idea? Are there key influencers who you can socialize the idea with in advance? They may advocate for you and ensure you are heard.

## **Ask for 5 minutes**

"Donna, I've got an idea that will save us money on our upcoming product launch. Can you let me know when you've got five minutes to share the idea?"

Busy people shy away from open-ended statements like, "Let me know when you have time to discuss an idea..." That kind of vague request is difficult to say "yes" to because the time commitment necessary is vague. Requesting five minutes only lets the listener know you are prepared and committed to being brief.

## **Pitch the Path**

After you've shared your great idea, follow it with recommended next steps:

- If you'd like to pursue this, I'd recommend drafting a press release..."
- If you are ready to proceed, I can draft an overview of the process for your review..."

A call to action is critical to galvanize your listener. Be confident and clearly outline the path ahead.