

# Powerful Presentations Build Your Business

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Summary: Take the time to create presentations for your meetings, and sign up more business.

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You've set up a meeting with a potential client. You've dressed appropriately, your shoes are shined. You've got your portfolio and your business cards, and you have an idea of what you want out of the meeting. In a word: you want business.

This is the way 95 per cent of small business people approach meetings. However, if you spend a little more time preparing your presentation, you'll make a more powerful impact and will get more work.

The major rule is: when you've landed a meeting, always make a

proposal. Have a clear idea of exactly what you want. You present your proposal via a carefully scripted, and rehearsed, presentation. This is not the time to leave anything to chance, or to wing it.

Before you can create your presentation, you need to know what your proposal is. For example, let's say you're a freelance copywriter approaching a graphics design agency, with a view to being considered as a sub-contractor.

Remembering "WIIFM", (What's In It For Me), you realize that you will need to create your presentation's proposal from the view of the agency.

Before you do anything else, make a long list of What's In It For Them. Why does it make sense for them to sub-contract work out to you?

What's In It For Them is the heart of your proposal. On your notes, make sure you put WIIFT on each page, so that it stays at the front of your mind. It's easy to make the mistake of talking about what you want, but please don't. You can leave a CD copy of your presentation with the prospect, but again, it MUST focus on how you can help them.

== Preparing your presentation

The easiest way to prepare your presentation is to use presentation software. If you own Microsoft Office, then you also own Microsoft PowerPoint, it's part of Office. It's worth taking the time to learn to use PowerPoint. It makes creating an effective presentation easy.

What do you put into a presentation? Your proposal, and supporting material. Remember the agency wants to know what's in it for them --- how you can help them make money, save money, and make their lives easier and more pleasant. Everything you include in your presentation --- the kind of work you do, items from your portfolio, testimonials from satisfied clients --- must relate to \*them\*.

Think of the presentation as being a combination of a speech, an advertisement for your services, a showing of your portfolio, and a proposal, all rolled into one. Aim to make it around 10 to 15 minutes long. Have some fun with creating the presentation. Include plenty of slides with bullet points, and graphics.

You can get double-value out of your presentations. Just copy your basic all-purpose presentation onto a CD, and send it to prospective clients. You can also make your basic presentation a download on your Web site.

It's also a good idea to print out some of the slides from any presentation you give personally, so that you can leave the slide copies with the client after the meeting. (Note: don't hand out copies before the meeting. You need to make sure that everyone is paying attention to your presentation.)

== Control your nerves: rehearsal is everything

Many people hate public speaking. However, if you prepare yourself, you'll be just fine, and each presentation you give will enhance your confidence.

Write your speech out completely. Ask someone else to read it and help you brainstorm ideas. Then leave the speech for a week for a gestation period. You'll find that other ideas will come to you, and you can incorporate these.

As you prepare your speech, you can also prepare the slides in PowerPoint. Use photographs and other graphics, to bring your presentation to life.

When you're happy with the speech, learn it. Practise giving the speech in front of a mirror, then practise giving it as you click through the slides in PowerPoint.

If you don't have a notebook computer to take with you, take your PowerPoint file along on a disk or CD. You may be able to borrow a computer. If you can't, then give the presentation without the file, but leave the presentation CD and notes with the decision maker.

== Who will be at the meeting? Pitching to decision makers

Before you set a date and time for the meeting, ask who will be attending the meeting. You need to be sure that you'll be making your presentation to a decision-maker in the company. If you can't get an assurance that the decision maker will attend, postpone the meeting until she can attend.

== Get an agreement before you leave the meeting

You've given your presentation. You've made your proposal. Now what?

Now you get an agreement.

This is the "close" in sales-speak. It's the most important part of your presentation, aside from the WIIFM aspect. Many otherwise competent people skimp on the close, because it makes them nervous. However, no matter how nervous you are, you must ask for

the sale.

So, in our scenario, as you wind up your presentation, you would ask to become a sub-contractor for the agency. This will lead to discussion, but unless you get an immediate agreement to sign you up, make sure that you attempt to close at least three more times before you leave.

In the best of all possible outcomes, you won't leave the business before you have a check in your hand. This is your aim. So when the decision-maker says: "Yes, that sounds fine, we'd like to put you on our books as a sub-contractor", you say: "Great, can we make a deal now? I'd like a retainer, and \_\_\_\_\_ (mention the terms of your services agreement). A deposit of \$X would be fine."

Good luck with your presentations. They're a sure-fire way to build your business in a hurry.

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