

Seven Ps to Perfection

BY MURRAY STRACHAN,
STRACHAN & PARTNERS LTD

The perfect pitch, like anything in business or life, involves having or developing the necessary knowledge, skills, ability and attitude: combined with the ability to deliver with energy, sincerity and passion!

Before you contemplate making a pitch, know what you offer. That includes your company's profile; its products; the market it operates within; its existing and prospective customers; the competition; and what differentiates you.

Then first essential step in making a successful pitch is research: always. There is no substitute for and no shortcut to gaining the necessary background information on the target company: the key players (decision makers, shapers or blockers); what the target needs, wants and desires; and how you can exceed these, including how you can differentiate your offer from the rest.

And at the same time it is essential to have already made some form of connection with the target and to cultivate positive relations. This will also help with the research, and you may even be able to road-test your offer beforehand. Nice!

Then there's the pitch strategy. What's your game-plan and script? As the SAS would say, proper preparation and planning prevents piss-poor performance. Be concise, be to the point and ensure it is tailored to both the target and the key players.

If you are a team then be clear on roles, and how the interfaces will work. That means know what one another are doing: don't be a bunch of amateurs on the day. Then it comes down to practise, practise, practise! "The more I practise the luckier I get" said Gary Player, after holing a bunker shot.

When you arrive on the day remember that first impressions really do count! If you get off to a bad start it is very difficult to recover. Have a number of openings depending on the circumstances and, whilst always maintaining your professionalism, create a personable atmosphere that begins the connection process. A trick I use is to warmly shake everyone's hands and make eye contact on arrival. I would also urge you not to over-rely on technology... it often lets you down.

Finally, ensure that you clearly summarise the agreed actions and always, **always** deliver on them as agreed. There is nothing worse than being pitch perfect and being off-key when it comes to delivery!



*Murray Strachan is former
Chief of Staff, Petrofac Operations.*