Elevator pitching

Information Science project | INFOB1PROJ

Created by: J. van den Heuvel B.Sc.
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I. INTRODUCTION

During the first year of Information Science, many different topics in ICT have been discussed in various courses. In this course, it is priority to synthesize the knowledge you have until now and apply it in one project. The first moment where you will be showing synthesis, will be in the form of a pitch. A pitch is not just a shorter type of presentation, but way to persuade someone that your idea is a good idea in a real short amount of time. As time is money, investors do not want to spend much time on bad ideas and lengthy presentations. A quick persuasive act is needed to have a go or a no go for your project.

Capturing a main essence while keeping a clear balance, and reporting this in a small amount of time is what the challenge of pitching will be. Creating a good pitch is quite a task as there are no general guidelines how these should be made. At least, on the positive side, there are some helpful tricks to improve your pitch. This documents gives an introduction to simple rhetorical mechanisms that not make your pitch good, but enhances it to perfection. Also, some examples will be provided and organizational issues will be discussed in this document.
II. RHETORIC 101

When speaking about rhetoric many people will probably think of untrue and altisonant stories, while this is not what the focus of rhetoric is. The focus of rhetoric is to use specific mechanisms to persuade the audience in order to have them be in your favour. Creating a generic story and telling this to each different kind of audience is what certainly will not work. Image that you use slang words when holding a speech for the elderly while talking about a change in Algemene Ouderdomswet (AOW). You will probably end up with elderly being in shock or losing interest more and more.

In the classical antiquity, Aristotle created some basic principles how people should speak to a broad audience. Until now, these principles have not challenged, but are still maintained and can still be used for your to be made pitch. Rhetoric was considered as a very important instrument within society back then and was used for plebiscites. One specific application could have been the murder trial of some person. For these plebiscites, thousands of people were listening to the speech and had the power to vote afterwards. Voting back then happened by screaming as loud as possible and the loudest scream would then be considered the winner. Naturally, this will not be appropriate when done at the pitching event :-).

But how do you convince the others? What should you (or not do) when creating a pitch? Aristotle defined three ways of addressing people which will be shortly elaborated. First is ethos: ethos is the appeal to being a suitable authority, qualify for this position, and convincing others of having that position. As discussed before in using slang when pitching for a change of AOW, nobody will assign the right authority to the one who is talking. What do people expect from you when you talk about this subject? How should you dress up? What terminology should you use? All questions that should keep in your mind when creating a pitch. Know the audience before the audience gets to know you. One way people could easily fail, is the way how they communicate through body language (as body language is the primary way of conveying information to others). Amy Cuddy has an interesting Ted-Talk on this subject: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ks-_Mh1QhMc

Second is pathos, which is how you affect the emotions of your audience. One simple way to do this is, is making your story personal. Let’s say you want to convince the elderly to lower AOW money (which is in general a drawback for the elderly). A personal story from you as student who needs to work even harder, who is having a burnout, while drowning in the amount of work you need to do, could strike some attention. In order to make the audience emotional, use superlatives (or emotional adjectives), make your story personal, and show you are fully passionate about your idea. A picture might say more than a thousand words.

Last is logos, which is about how you present the facts and the logical reasoning of what you are saying. When holding a speech, an audience is mainly convinced through ethos and pathos, but not logos! Logos just has a seven percentage convincing power to the persuasive process, which could be regarded as quite low. Many people are not able to deduce logic in a good way (i.e. modus tollens: if \( p \to q \), then \( q \to p \)). This gives a degree of freedom in how logic is used, but be cautious not to make big logical errors which can be spotted too easily by the audience. Know what your audiences knows before they figure out what was wrong.
III. THE PITCH

Create a pitch of maximum 180 seconds (yes, this will be timed and you will be stopped when too long). In this pitch you should address at least the following:

- The idea of your project
- A preliminary solution to this idea

This list is not complete and the minimum requirement of the pitch. Add relevant parts to these requirements and try to make your pitch a good pitch. If you need more tricks, watch this video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oGdO_3j1Vas](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oGdO_3j1Vas).

IV. PROCEDURE

Before the pitching event, send your presentation to the student assistant before the deadline. If you have no digital presentation, mail this as well. Afterwards, please adhere to the following steps during the pitch event:

1. Please be on time. The pitching event starts 15.15 sharp.
2. Collect four grading papers each in front of the class.
3. The four groups which pitch before you, are the ones you need to grade (see schedule).
4. When you need to pitch, please come forward quickly. If you have graded the groups, submit the papers to the student assistant.
5. Each pitch has a duration of 180 seconds.
6. Afterwards one question can be asked. Who may ask the question is chosen by the student assistant.
7. Clapping and switching to the next group (see schedule).
8. At the end of the pitch event, retrieve your feedback from the student assistant.