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## Making your first big client pitch? 15 important tips to keep in mind



L-R: Joy Frestedt, Samir Mokashi, Solomon Timothy, Priya Cloutier, Scott Baradell, Scott Scully, Merrill Stewart, Brent Foley, Keith Woods, Dustin Hopson, Jessica Hawthorne-Castro, Russell Harrell, Zee Ali, Kristen Briggs, Cody McLain



### **The Business Journals Leadership Trust** **By Business Journals Leadership Trust Expert Panel®**

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Pitching to a potential big client for the first time is an exciting milestone for any entrepreneur or business leader, but it can be intimidating. It's natural to be nervous –

there's probably a lot riding on the sale. Fortunately, there are many ways you can refine your pitch and cater it to the client to improve your chances of closing the deal.

We asked the experts of [Business Journals Leadership Trust](#) what entrepreneurs and sales reps should keep in mind when preparing their first pitch for a large prospective client. Follow their tips to better prepare for your meeting.

## **1. Understand what the client wants.**

Be sure you understand what the client wants and focus your effort on clearly stating how you will fill this need. Do not be afraid to ask clarifying questions. When preparing for the pitch, be sure to research your competition. How will they appear to this client, and how will you compare to them? Highlight your best competitive features and do not say negative things about your competition. - [Joy Frestedt, Frestedt Incorporated](#)

## **2. Know what you don't want to say.**

Prepare not only what you want to say, but also what you don't want to say. Anticipate difficult questions that might expose gaps in your abilities or experience. Big clients not only want to know if you can deliver everything but also whether you can recover well if something goes wrong. - [Samir Mokashi, Code Unlimited LLC](#)

## **3. Remember your value.**

When first presenting your pitch to a big client, just remember that you have value. It's not whether your product or service is good or bad – it's whether you're a good fit for this particular client. If they don't want you, good for you. Discover that as soon as possible and move on. Hearing “no” only means that you get more time to focus on the people who need you. - [Solomon Timothy, OneIMS](#)

## **4. Prepare for the client's unique issues.**

Put the potential client at ease by preparing for their unique issues. My potential clients want to know that I have the experience to understand their issues and to help. I prepare ahead of time by pulling together potential issues that they may run up

against and thoughts on how to handle those issues. - [Priya Cloutier, Cloutier Arnold Jacobowitz PLLC](#)

## **5. Prepare answers to anticipated questions.**

The best cure for nervousness is preparation. When you want to land that first big client, put plenty of time into rehearsing your presentation and preparing answers to anticipated questions – including “gotcha” questions that could catch you flat-footed. The best compliment a big client ever gave me was that I was “unstumpable” in the presentation process. Strive for that. - [Scott Baradell, Idea Grove](#)

## **6. Focus on building a relationship first.**

Do your research. Figure out who you are meeting with and what interests they have, and find something you have in common to make a connection. Always spend the first 10 minutes of every pitch building a relationship, not trying to close the deal. Instead of worrying about what you should say during the pitch, think about what you should learn about the prospect to make that crucial connection. - [Scott Scully, Abstrakt Marketing Group](#)

## **7. Have an outward mindset.**

Make sure you are prepping your pitch with an outward mindset. Many times we prep our pitches thinking about what we do, why we are unique, etc., but the client wants to know how you are going to apply your unique and expert capabilities to help them solve a problem. The pitch has to be more about the potential client and less about you. - [Merrill Stewart, Marketing & Business Solutions LLC](#)

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## **8. Be authentic.**

I became an entrepreneur during the 2008 economic downturn. In our eagerness to build our business, we often tried to sell ourselves as what our competition offered. The truth was that we would never outdo them – but nobody could outdo what we had to offer either. Once we corrected this approach, we started finding clients who actually wanted what we had to offer. - [Brent Foley, TRIAD Architects](#)

## **9. Don't forget about the emotional elements.**

People buy from people. Don't forget it. People get so caught up in PowerPoint and the script of the presentation that they fail to prepare for the emotional elements of the pitch. Take time to find out more about the big client's culture and the personalities of the leadership that you'll hopefully be representing. - [Keith Woods, KB Woods Public Relations](#)

## **10. Aim to alleviate the client's concerns.**

In engineering, the one thing I try to remember is that my job as a professional is to alleviate and remove any concerns about the project the client is soon to embark upon. Capital investment carries a certain amount of risk. My job is to alleviate that concern. - [Dustin Hopson, Synergeer Engineering](#)

## **11. Practice with your team.**

Practicing with your team before a big pitch is key to ensuring you are all aligned and have the opportunity to brainstorm any tough questions that might arise during the pitch. Practicing the pitch allows the team to identify potential areas of weakness to ensure they can appropriately tailor the messaging and ultimately secure new business. - [Jessica Hawthorne-Castro, Hawthorne Advertising](#)

## **12. Describe the client's problem as you understand it.**

Do everything possible to describe the problem as you understand it and in the way it exists in the client's environment. Then demonstrate quickly how your solution solves their problem better than anything under the sun. Make it about the client early and

often, and include the right amount of your features and benefits – but not too much. Lastly, be ready to ask for the business. - [Russell Harrell, SFB IDEAS - a Strategic Marketing firm](#)

### **13. Focus your message on the client.**

Make sure the message and the presentation are focused on the specific client. Alter your messaging to meet the client's problems and needs. Also, make the presentation all about the client. They don't care about your accomplishments; they care about what you can do for them. - [Zee Ali, Z-Swag](#)

### **14. Practice reading aloud before the meeting.**

Everyone gets nervous at these meetings. Make sure that you know what you are presenting inside and out. This will alleviate some of the stress and anxiety. Read some poetry beforehand to get a good cadence to your voice. Find out what works for you to put your game face on! - [Kristen Briggs, General Mailing & Shipping Systems, Inc.](#)

### **15. Make sure they're actually your ideal client.**

Business owners are often so eager to get a new client they can easily oversell their service in an attempt to get new business. Understand what an ideal customer and business fit looks like; otherwise, you can end up with a client who is a big headache in the long run. - [Cody McLain, SupportNinja](#)