

10 PRINCIPLES OF PITCHING

By Dan Cogan

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- 1) **ESSENCE.** Know the ESSENCE of your project, and speak directly to that. This is not about plot. The essence is about the basic drama, emotional power, and overarching themes. Make me feel that you understand the raw, primal power of the story and the characters.
- 2) **SEDUCTION.** Pitching is about creating a sense of excitement and desire in the buyer. You are seducing them with an idea. You need them to walk out of the meeting not wanting to let you or your film go.
- 3) **LISTEN & REACT.** Read your buyer carefully: as you talk to them, watch and listen for the way they are reacting to you. From this, you can figure out what they want to hear. Don't lie -- you have to deliver what you're pitching -- but speak to them in the way that will most appeal to them. No pitch should be exactly the same for two different buyers.
- 4) **CONFIDENCE.** Speak with self-assurance and confidence. Buyers want to feel like you are in control of your idea, and you can handle its execution.
- 5) **BREVITY.** If a pitch were a work of literature, it would be a short story, not a novel. Every single phrase, word, and image must contribute in a precise way to the whole. There should be no extraneous material, no tangents. Tight, tight, tight.
- 6) **STORY -- BEATS & STRUCTURE.** When you tell the story of the film, don't simply recount the plot. Tell me the broader narrative beats, and make clear the Act breaks. Make me believe, through your pitch, that you understand the craft of storytelling.
- 7) **BUSINESS.** Know who your market is -- both industry buyers and ultimate audiences. Think carefully about the relationship between your budget and your potential revenues -- and be ready to defend the budget as realistic *according to the realities of the marketplace.*
- 8) **YOU & ONLY YOU.** Any good buyer knows that at the end of the day, they are investing in YOU. However you feel you best sell yourself, **DO THAT**, especially if you're at or near the early stages of your career, you have to make me want to help make it happen for you. I have to want to help you achieve something *more than* I fear your lack of a track record. You also have to convince me that there is a huge synergy

between you and this film. I have to feel not only that your film is a great idea, but that you are the best and only person who can execute it.

- 9) **HAVE FUN.** No matter how nervous you may be, try to enjoy the pitch. Have fun with it. If you are relaxed and enjoying it, the buyer is more likely to enjoy it too.
- 10) **THROW OUT ANY OF THESE PRINCIPLES THAT DON'T WORK FOR YOU.** At the end of the day, pitching is about creating electricity in a room between you and the buyer. Whatever works for you and that buyer, do it. Whatever doesn't, drop it.