研究者のための＋αシリーズ Vol.8
How to Give an Impressive Pitch Presentation in Global Situations
―研究者の国際 R&D 戦略としてのセールストーク―
（2021 年 8 月 13 日（金）16:00〜18:00 開催）

Thank you for many insightful questions. The speaker's responses to them are listed as follows.

【Q1】I'm not good at showing myself confident during my presentation. Could you give me some easy tips to do so?

【A1】

➢ Well, there is probably no "easy" way to overcome a lack of confidence when presenting, but it's probably easier than you imagine it to be.

The most basic consideration is your physical/mental condition: You should be well rested and alert; you should not have eaten recently, if possible, or eaten too much; visit the restroom and brush your teeth (a clean mouth is better for speaking, and having fresh breath boosts everyone's confidence); within a few hours before the presentation/pitch, do an activity that makes you breathe—take a vigorous walk or a run, do exercises in your hotel room, etc.; as you take in the world around you before the presentation—by sight, sound, maybe even smell—accept that it's a world that supports you rather than one that will do you harm.

Beyond these basic conditions, make sure your mind is focused on your presentation job: speaking with a clear, strong, enthusiastic-sounding voice; keeping to your time marks (matching your speaking to your allowed time); smoothly coordinating what you say and what you show on the slides; looking at the audience to form a connection (online, at least mentally visualize the audience); expressing passion about your work. By devoting most of your thinking to your presentation, you won't have much mental capacity available for worrying about whether you can remain confident.

On the other hand, a small amount of nervousness can give you useful energy.

【Q2】 What is the most important thing to keep drawing attention from a busy person and to get more time to talk with him/her?

> **【A2】**
> ➢ Not really sure what the intention is here, but I'm guessing it relates to a general conversation rather than a pitch. I suppose it comes down to bringing up topics/questions that greatly interest the other person. Also providing your own information that is unique, thought-provoking, or politely challenging to that person's own ideas may stimulate further discussion.
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> On the other hand, it's important to avoid seeming too "needy" or overly anxious to hold the person's attention—most people feel uncomfortable around someone who shows too much desire to continue a conversation and thus they will try to escape such an individual.

【Q3】 What do you think is the biggest difference between scientific presentation and pitch?

> **【A3】**
> ➢ The biggest and most obvious difference is the "sales" aspect—whether you are trying to get funding from a venture capitalist, obtain a competitive grant, or form a partnership, you are selling the value of what you have achieved as well as the potential it offers the people being pitched. Therefore, brevity and persuasiveness are key factors to a successful pitch, rather than background and minute details of methods and results, which would normally be included in documents distributed either before or after your pitch (but not during— that's distracting), depending on your strategy.
>
> A conference presentation, on the other hand, is generally intended to inform your colleagues of the novel technical aspects of your work as well as how it fits into the general field of your research; this is a type of "sales," but much more indirect "selling of ideas." Accordingly, the presentation format roughly follows the traditional IMRAD (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion) pattern.
>
> Another key difference is the allotted time: A conference presentation is typically 15 minutes with 5 minutes Q/A, while a pitch tends to be 5 or 10 minutes with just a few minutes Q/A. This time difference will obviously affect

your preparation, included contents, and delivery style. In both cases, however, the organizers of conferences/pitch events tend to be very strict about time.

The "mood" of a pitch presentation tends to be livelier, more casual, and even a bit more dramatic. On the other hand, even a standard conference presentation should not be like a dull lecture—it's just more technically comprehensive and less business-oriented than a pitch.

【Q4】Can the conclusion slide be just an eye-catching figure? Or do you need words?

【A4】

➢ It can be a very dramatic effect to end the pitch with an "eye-catching" graphic (typically a photograph or drawing rather than a table or chart) while saying one (at most three) short sentence. However, even with this strategy I recommend that the penultimate (next-to-last) slide be a quick summary of two to four bullet points, each limited to a few words within one line, to reemphasize your most important ideas.

【Q5】Are there any tips when we are having pitch sessions online (because we cannot really see the audience reactions)?

【A5】

➢ This definitely involves different dynamics than a "live" pitch where you can see the pitch judges/decision-makers as well as, in the case of a pitch event, an audience. If possible, request that at least the "key people" turn on their camera and set your "view" options to include their video; try setting people up in "Gallery" mode on a second monitor.

If you only have "name squares" appearing on your screen, then visualize in your mind images of human audience members. And as long as it's imaginary, help yourself out by imagining that they're all smiling!

In any case, you need to set your mind to the reality that you are pitching/presenting to a real audience of real people, despite the fact they are all remotely located. Do not fall into the trap of feeling that you're alone in your room.

【Q6】What do you feel about exaggerating one's future plans in order to get a budget?

【A6】

➢ There's nothing wrong with being "optimistic" or "aspirational" in describing your future research goals or possible applications of your current work. However, if your plans seem obviously exaggerated or unrealistic, that can only hurt the impression you make.

Another risk is that, over the course of your research career, you may gain a bad reputation for empty boasts if people in your field recognize you as a person who habitually exaggerates future efforts but does not provide results.

On the other hand, there's nothing wrong with mentioning possible applications and extensions of your work by others, using words like "could" or "might." In many cases, new work provides opportunities that other researchers could develop beyond the capabilities of the original researcher (pitcher)—feel free to describe these opportunities.

【Q7】 In a very limited pitch session, should we show the first slide of "contents"?

【A7】

➢ In most pitch situations, the advantage of such a "preview" does not merit the time it takes. So instead, jump right into your problem-solution story without a "contents" or "overview" slide. Moreover, such an "overview" opening provides little dramatic effect.

In a standard conference session's presentation, however, a preview slide, kept short and quick, is very effective for setting the audience's mental road map.

【Q8】 I feel stress when I get questions after a presentation because I'm wondering if I cannot understand the question. Is there a good way to answer the question?

【A8】

➢ The Q/A session is the most stressful part of a presentation because there is a high likelihood of surprises, time is limited, and the pressure to please the questioner can be intense.

The most common bad tactic is to simply ask the person to repeat the question: "Pardon me?", "Could you please repeat that?", "One more time, please?". This usually creates a vicious cycle of the person saying the same thing, at the same

speed and clarity, with the presenter not getting much more information and thus still unable to answer. This can make the presenter's stress shoot up like a rocket, with the whole room (or remote group) feeling uncomfortable.

The "magic words" (as my company's founder, Frank Kurdyla, always said) are "Do you mean…?" finished by your best guess at what the questioner is asking (e.g., "Do you mean the difference in the polarizer plate's orientation?"). In this case, the questioner gets a better idea of your actual English level (compared to your "practiced speech" English) and, if he/she is even slightly sensitive and sophisticated, understands the need to slow down and use simpler terms (e.g., "Uh, no… I meant the difference in the beam's intensity.").

But finally, even if you don't get the question, don't panic. Just admit you don't understand the question exactly but would be happy to answer later, in a break session or by email.