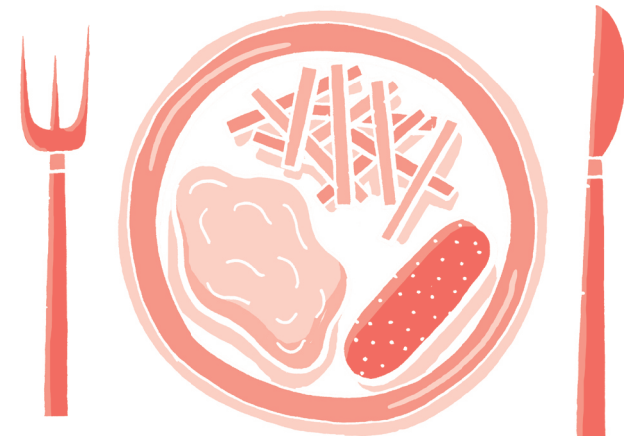


Chapter 1

WE PITCH ALL THE TIME

Remember when you were young and only ever wanted to eat your favourite dish – every single day? For me it was fries with apple compote and a croquette [yes, I am a proud Dutchman].



Work as a creative

As creatives, we think up ideas and use our skills to make them happen. But when it comes to pitching our ideas to others, we often fall short. I remember the start of my own career. Many of the ideas I had were never even considered. Not because they were (all) bad, but because I lacked the proper skills to pitch them. I knew this had to change and that began my journey into discovering the art of pitching ideas. ***cue epic intro song***

As creatives we often work collaboratively as one team towards a common goal – a finished project that fulfils our client’s expectations (as well as our own). And regardless of whether the client is internal or external, he or she is the person you have to convince that the idea is good: from initial concept to end result. Unless you’re a one-man band you’ll need the help of others to make your idea happen. And to do that you need to be able convince these others (and they also need to convince you).

As you no doubt realise by now, pitching is not always as easy as it looks. But the last time I checked there was no good course that teaches you how to do it.

But why should it be that way? You’re creative enough to come up with ideas. You know how to structure them and translate them into concepts. You understand creative processes and can apply them to your projects. You have the talent and skills to design and make things – be it a brand identity, a product, or service – and can present your final results.

The thing is, getting others to fully support your ideas requires a different set of skills. And that’s exactly why I’m writing this book; because it would have helped if someone had given me guidance like this when I was first starting out.

When do we pitch?

Creative work presents many different pitch scenarios.

- At the start of the project: when we pitch to get the project.
- After we win the business: the project starts and we pitch our concept ideas internally before going back to the client.
- During the process: when we want to add elements to the brand, product or experience – or want try a new approach – we need to convince our colleagues.
- When we get bigger ideas during the process: the kind that would change the project’s direction and improve it. We need to convince our team (internal), the project manager (internal), and of course our client.
- When the project is finished and we need to present it to the client’s CEO. No pressure...

However, only you can resolve this issue. Blaming others for your own failure will make the problem impossible to solve. (Thank you for this wisdom, Paul Arden, author of *Whatever You Think, Think the Opposite*).

90% people, 10% idea

When pitching ideas we mostly focus on the idea itself. While the quality of an idea is important, it only accounts for about 10% of the pitch's success. The other 90% comes down to how you work with people and manage relationships with them. Even if you have the best idea in the world, if people don't believe in you they will never support you. On the flip side, it's also possible that when you have an abstract idea, people will support it if they have full faith in you.

Next steps

You've made it this far, so I guess you're still interested in learning how to pitch! You can use this book in several ways. You can read it from start to finish and use it as a step-by-step guide to pitching. Or, if you've got a more specific skill you want to work on, just dive straight into the appropriate chapter. I've tried to make sure that each chapter works as a standalone piece of advice, and have included as many visuals and summaries as possible.

Here's what's in store for you...

Chapter 2 – What's the goal you want to reach?

Chapter 3 – What is the idea you have to reach the goal?

Chapter 4 – Who do you need to convince to reach your goal?

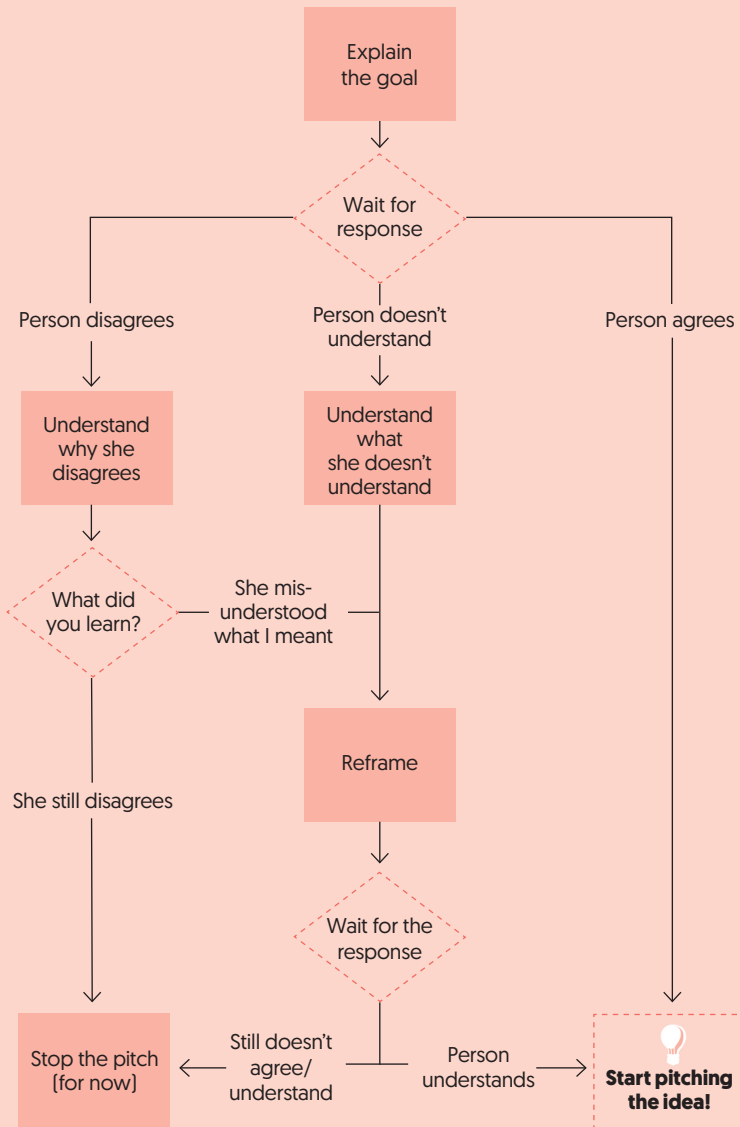
Chapter 5 – How do you prepare yourself for the pitch?

Chapter 6 – How do you deliver the pitch?

Chapter 1 - In short

- We pitch all the time! It doesn't matter whether we're convincing friends to go to Spain for a summer holiday, or telling kids how much fun it'll be to go and see grandma. (p. 11)
- The main problem in the convincing process is that we always want, and expect, our pitches to others to be received with overwhelming enthusiasm. (p. 13)
- The thing is, getting others to fully support your ideas requires a different set of skills than just coming up with good ideas. (p. 14)
- There are many reasons why things can go wrong during a pitch. Some examples:
 - **Overcompensation Mode** – you don't have a good understanding of the core idea and are scared others won't understand. (p. 16)
 - **Rambo Mode** – the other party doesn't directly buy into your idea. (p. 18)
 - **Best-Idea-Ever Mode** – You believe so much in your idea that you move forward without researching it. (p. 20)
 - **Wrong Style Mode** – Your pitch has the wrong focus because you assume everyone shares your perspective. (p. 22)
- It's too easy to assume that other people are the problem when you can't convince them. Pitching ideas the right way begins with a simple mind shift: you are the problem yourself.
- Convincing people is 10% about the quality of the idea and 90% about your relationship with other people.

To pitch or not to pitch



Four steps to make your goals clear, simple, and easy to understand

When writing down your goal you must be very clear in specifying what you want to achieve. In the next few paragraphs I'll outline four things to consider that will help you define a clear goal.

- Step 1** – Is it a problem or an opportunity?
- Step 2** – Is the aim short-term or long-term?
- Step 3** – Is the result already concrete or still abstract?
- Step 4** – Is the scope of the goal generic or specific?

Step 1. Problem or opportunity?

There are a lot of theories out there that outline how to define a good goal. But in the end the first step comes down to understanding a simple distinction: knowing whether you're trying to solve a problem or create an opportunity.

Every goal in life belongs in one of these two categories: a problem or an opportunity.

Problem

“any question or matter involving doubt, uncertainty, or difficulty”

– DICTIONARY.COM

Central question: What problem does the idea need to solve?

Several examples of problems:

- People aren't signing up for the newsletter on our website.
- Our support team is getting a lot of spam in their mailbox.
- Brand X is being perceived as too expensive.

Different types of pitches

There can be many different types of pitches. Depending on the type you can get a feeling of how you should define the goal around it.

I created an overview of the most common pitch types in projects.

Tweak or improvement

What is it?

When you need to make a small improvement on an existing product, service or identity: such as changing the colour of a button or the wording of a text.

How do we define the goal?

Short-term / specific / concrete

Feature

What is it?

If you have an existing product or service, but want to add something new to it, you're talking about a feature. For example, say you have a cycling app and want to add a commenting option to a website.

How do we define the goal?

Short- to medium-term / specific / concrete

Product

What is it?

If you already have an organisation with a clear goal, mission, and vision and want to launch something people can use as a standalone service (digital or physical) or part of a bigger service. For example: a mobile app for public transport, an e-bike, or a new website.

How do we define the goal?

Medium-term / specific / concrete

Service

What is it?

Services focus on helping people by providing support in one way or another. A service could focus on giving advice on public transport, delivering packages (postal service) on time, or bringing people from one location to another (e.g. a taxi service). One or more products can be used to make a service possible, such as the Uber app to call a driver over to pick you up.

How do we define the goal?

Medium-term / specific / concrete or abstract

Business

What is it?

A business is an entity that has a clear mission and vision to reach a certain goal. In a business there are different aspects, such as products and/or services, designed to make that mission and vision a reality.

How do we define the goal?

Long-term / general / abstract

Future

What is it?

Futures focus on dreams that can't be grasped yet, but could happen. They are disconnected from organisations, products, or services and stand by themselves. You might feel there's an opportunity to be a part of them if you're early enough (let's put a man on the moon) or that you have time to prevent them from happening (if we don't stop now we will kill the planet).

How do we define the goal?

Long-term / general / abstract

Abstract & general

What are you pitching?

There can be many different types of pitches. Depending on the type you can already get a feel for how you should define the goal around it.

Concrete & specific

tweak

feature

product

service

business

the future

Short-term

Long-term

Some examples of defining what's needed:

The Great Wall of China

What's needed?

About 3,873,000,000 bricks, millions of labourers and hundreds of years of patience

Spotify

What's needed?

For a basic prototype – A graphic designer, a strategist, and five days to create a prototype we can test.

For the entire 1.0 version – €2,000,000

Website problem

What's needed?

Two programmers, two pizzas, and one night.



Ultimately, you're aiming to create a single sheet of paper that describes the problem and context on one side, and the idea to make it happen on the other. By forcing yourself to stick to the core you'll see that through time and practice you'll get better and better at grabbing the essence of what's needed to create the impact.

This is what a filled-in *Core Idea Sheet* should look like:

Goal What is the goal of this project? <i>Make the country easy to defend and safe against all the invasions.</i>	Idea What is your idea in one sentence? <i>Build a wall around the empire.</i>
Context What are the constraints and enablers that influence the possible outcome? Target audience, budget, time to market, brand strategy etc. <i>Infinite money, 10,000 workers instantly available, first results must be visible within five years.</i>	USP's What are the three unique aspects that make the idea stand out? <i>1. keeps the enemy out 2. clearly shows our borders 3. illustrates our strength.</i>
	Requirements What's needed to make this idea happen? Budget, time, people, hardware, etc. <i>± 3,873,000,000 bricks, millions of labourers and hundreds of years of patience.</i>

You can use Jung’s functions to discover what primary functions the people around you fit into. By doing this you’ll be able to understand how they analyse the information they receive and how they will use this information when making a decision.

Also, be very aware of your own function. How do you perceive and process information? By understanding this and the position of the people in front of you, it will be easier to understand how you can adapt your style, and why past conversations went wrong.

Analyse the people you need to convince

With this theory in mind, consider the people you’re planning to pitch to. Do they have sensing or intuitive personalities? Are they thinkers or feelers? Do they appear extravert or introvert?

Organisational alignment

You’ve got a clear idea in your head and you’re keen to make it a reality. What do you do? You enthusiastically push forward, heading directly towards the goal. You even involve several important people along the way and manage to get them on board. With great energy, you’re soon building the idea and not long after are ready to kick off the project. But then, all of a sudden, news reaches you that your manager has killed the project. What the heck happened?!

Many people who are new in big organisations often aren’t aware that they’re not just pitching to one or two people, but to many different stakeholders. One way or another, these stakeholders will find out what is going on and influence the project. Without knowing, you walk into a minefield and step on toes, creating resistance. Unnecessary.


On the flip side, other new people try to avoid conflict. They try not

to step on toes and avoid pitching ideas that involve stakeholders from certain departments. The result is that only small steps are taken – the ones that are safe and don’t create real positive impact or change. This kills innovation. Unnecessary.

What do you do to overcome these situations?

Stakeholder Balance Map

Want to understand the position of all stakeholders involved in the project, in order to know who to focus on to get the idea done? Stakeholder mapping is a great way of doing this and it has been used by different organisations for many years (I honestly don’t know who invented it). Based on these principles, we’ve developed the Stakeholder Balance Map. Basically it illustrates the stakeholders involved and helps determine whether their influence will tip the balance towards a positive or negative outcome.

 **Tip!** You can download the Stakeholder Balance Map template on pitchingideas.com!

	1. Opposing	2. Neutral	3. Supporting
A. Decision makers	Understand needs. Meet needs.	Understand needs. Keep satisfied.	Embrace support. Keep enthusiastic.
B. Influencer (or decision makers)	Understand needs. Meet needs.	Understand needs. Keep satisfied.	Embrace support. Keep enthusiastic.
c. Interested people (no influence)	Minimal effort.	Ignore.	Use as supporter or reference.

succeed – even if it means giving others credit for your original idea.

Keep in mind that everyone has their own agenda. They all aim for the same goal: making the organisation a success, but they do it from their own position. As long as they see how an idea helps the overall goal and supports (or at least doesn't threaten) their ideas, they will jump on board.

Different types of roles

When you pitch your ideas to someone, you have to be conscious of their position and role. In this section we'll look at several positions, and consider what's important for them, how they think, feel, decide, and what words they want to hear.

The list of roles mentioned in this book is not exhaustive; I've just decided to focus on the most common ones in the creative sector.



The CEO

A CEO is one busy person. She has to keep twenty balls in the air and is always thinking ahead. Things never go fast enough.



Natural behaviour

- *Big picture* – She doesn't want to get involved in the details, but is always focused on the bigger picture. But when you do go into details, always relate them to the impact on a broader scale.
- *Guiding role* – CEOs like it when their organisation, and the people within it, strive. She loves to take the guiding role, and to give nudges and feedback to push people in the right direction. Acknowledging this guiding role builds rapport.
- *Clear communication* – There is no time for bullshit, so cut out all the sweet talk and get to the core of your message. CEOs like to keep things effective. And in a lot of cases they don't mind others taking the initiative to make this happen.
- *Respect* – Most CEOs love getting respect for what they've achieved. On the other hand, they also give respect to others who have a clear idea of what they want and why they want it.
- *Project confidence* – Even in the toughest situations a CEO will project confidence. Do not mistake this for arrogance. She also prefers people who themselves appear confident. At the same time she loves to challenge them to see if they hold their ground. If so, respect is born.
- *Know your history and context* – Never start a conversation without knowing the history and context of a situation. There is nothing worse for a CEO than to hear someone come up with a solution to a simplified version of the real problem.

Large crowd (20+ people)

You don't have a lot of choice on the set-up for a big crowd. The best thing to do here is to make sure that you and your presentation are visible to everyone. To do that most effectively, you can set up the room in several ways.

1 Auditorium set-up

The entire crowd sits in rows, facing you. The advantage of this set-up is that they're focused and are not naturally invited to interact with the people around them. Optimal focus is assured: so make sure you rock that pitch!

2 Cocktail style set-up

In the cocktail style set-up, the room is more casually arranged. The advantage of this is that people have more chance to interact with each other and your presentation can be given in an informal way. In this environment, it's possible to break down your presentation into several parts, giving people the opportunity to converse in between. At the same time, you have an opportunity to walk around and ask/answer questions. The risk of this set-up is that people are naturally more easily distracted.

Medium crowd (8 - 20 people)

This group size is small enough for you make contact with everybody, but too big to really make it intimate. Plus this audience size gives people the chance to have individual conversations, meaning you could lose control of the crowd's attention. A good way to overcome this is to stand in front of the crowd and present the material directly. Centralise every conversation going on in the room, so that you don't get multiple discussions and are able to maintain a clear agenda and focus. Make it clear if you want questions afterwards or if it's okay for people to ask them during the presentation.

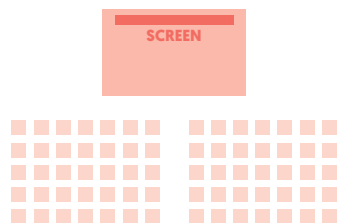
3 Boardroom set-up

One big table. Gives you a clear view of everyone and is handy for group conversations. It's also a good set-up for management-focused meetings, since many senior people don't really feel comfortable being placed in a workshop (U-shape) set-up.

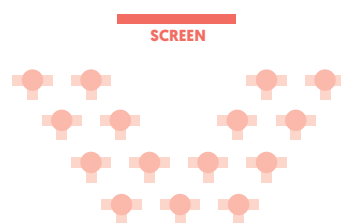
4 U-shape set-up

If you're looking for an environment where you have room to approach individuals, or where people can have smaller group discussions, the U-shape is the best option. It leaves an open space in the middle of the room making it easier to approach everybody, as a presenter.

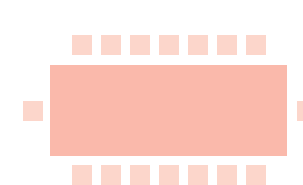
1. Auditorium



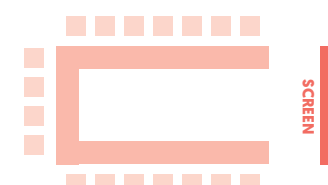
2. Cocktail



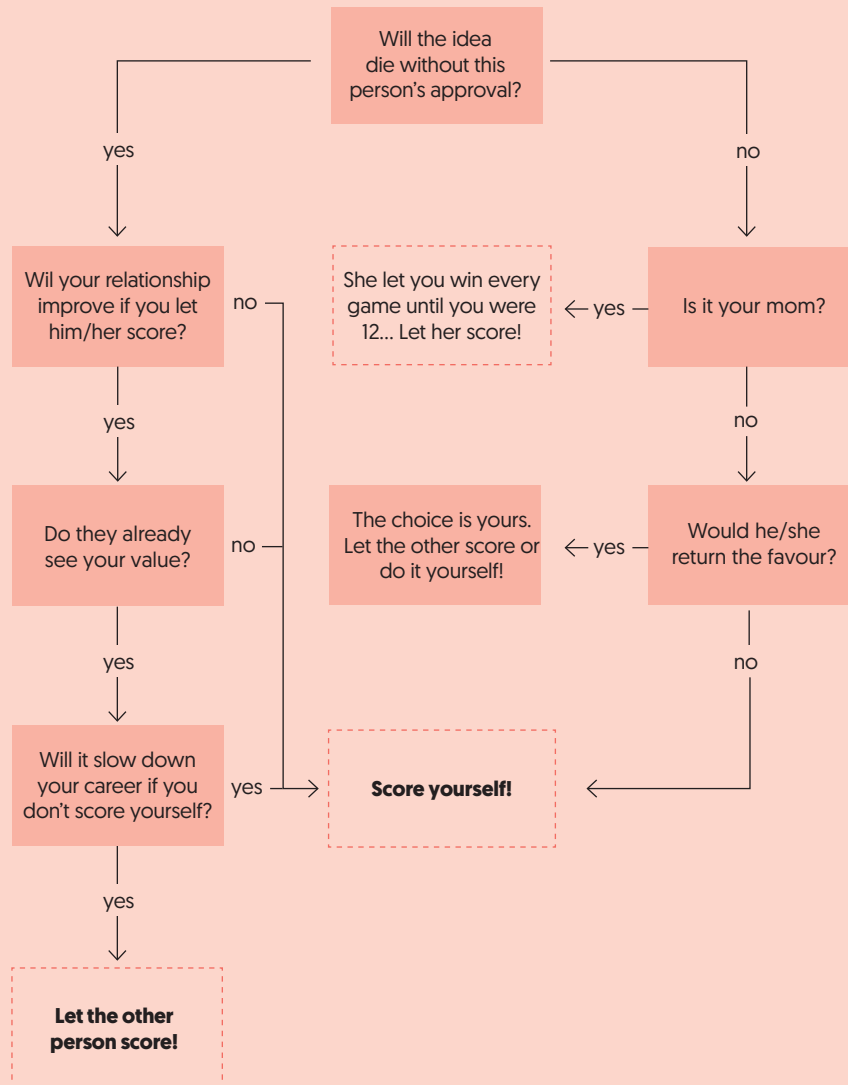
3. Boardroom



4. U-shape



When to let others score?



Your body language

People will create a first impression based on how you look and behave during your meeting. So you can imagine how important it is to radiate confidence and competence. You must own the moment. Always be aware of this during meetings and it will eventually become second nature.

Stand up straight when pitching the idea

Standing while delivering your pitch shows you're confident and in control. You are higher than everyone else and have a good overview of the room. Always a good option – unless you want to make it more intimate.

When seated, sit straight and lean forward

Sitting back sends a message that you are too relaxed and a bit disengaged. Leaning forward is all about focus, interest, and engagement – which is exactly what you want.

Keep your shoulders relaxed

If your shoulders are not relaxed you will appear tense.

Look people straight in the eye

Keeping good eye contact is a signal that you're interested in keeping attention and that you're paying attention yourself. But looking for too long will make people feel like you're staring, so remember to gaze away.

Use your hands when speaking

For me this is not even a thing to remember, since I do this automatically. It's an engaging way of speaking and emits energy – as long as you don't overdo it.

