



THE PERFECT PITCH

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What is a film pitch?



What happens in a meeting to pitch a script?



How to write a pitch for a movie



How to sell a movie idea: prepare, prepare, prepare



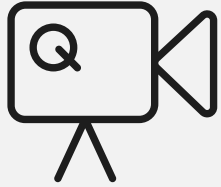
How to pitch a movie idea in a meeting



Following up on a film pitch

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A “film pitch” or “screenplay pitch”

Means verbally selling your script to studio executives, producers or someone in the industry who may be interested in it.



The Elevator Pitch

This is the most common form of a screenplay pitch – it should only take around sixty seconds to deliver. Ninety seconds is fine, but anything over and you’re probably going into too much detail.



The Twenty-minute Pitch

These happen more in general meetings.

You will have more time to describe characters, themes and specific scenes but the general idea remains the same. Stick to what the listener needs to know.

Your goal in this meeting is to deliver a sales pitch by telling your story in a short and exciting way.

It’s important to be passionate without sounding too aggressive. Overall, the goal of any perfect pitch is to get people excited about the concept, characters, story but most importantly, working with you.

GENERAL MEETING VS. SPECIFIC PROJECT MEETING

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General

This is an informal chat about you and your writing projects. This is so the exec or producer can get an idea of the writer you are, your writing voice and what you are working on.



Specific Project Meeting

These can get tricky because these days execs and producers will pull in a dozen writers and get a dozen takes. Then they pick the take they want and choose a writer, even if it wasn't their take.



One on One With Producer

If you snag a one-one with an exec or producer, it's helpful if you leave a one-pager behind. Leaving a look book or pitch deck is also encouraged these days because the more you can add to your pitch package, the more others can visualize and feel your film.

I will explain the look book and the pitch deck later on in the presentation.



Movie ideas with a high concept are easier to pitch than ones with a low concept.

For example, it's easier to pitch a film like *Apocalypse Now*, rather than a film like, *Roma*, in which the narrative relied more on the internal beats.

Here's the logline for *Apocalypse Now*:

During the Vietnam War a US captain is forced into one final mission; to locate and terminate the command of a rogue and delusional US colonel.

WHAT HAPPENS IN A MEETING TO PITCH A SCRIPT

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Here's a brief breakdown of what to expect if you are invited in for a general meeting to give a screenplay pitch.



Waiting to be seen/drinking water. This can be a very nerve wracking time for any writer. Try to stay calm, practice breathing routines.



Hello and small talk (1 to 5 minutes) **First impressions are incredibly important.** Be friendly and outgoing.



The screenplay pitch (15-20 Minutes).



Q & A's (5 to 10 min) They will ask a question or two. **Your chance to explain anything confusing.**



Wrap up (1 to 2 minutes) Time to end on a strong note. It's important to not ask questions about interest in your idea. Just leave on a positive note and either way you will be a writer they keep on the list for future projects.



If your screenplay or pitch starts to generate some serious "heat" you may be asked in for a series of pitch meetings for a variety of execs.

This is an exciting time and the moment where you realize writing an awesome screenplay or pitch was just the beginning of the journey.

Now you have to sell not only your work but also yourself

HOW TO WRITE THE PERFECT PITCH FOR A MOVIE OR SERIES

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The key to crafting a great pitch is to stick to the bones of the story. It's important to only use the most important beats that drive the story forward.



I always say, imagine you have 1 minute to get a friend excited about your fantastic movie idea.

Realize this is always the most nerve-wracking part for many writers. The skillset of being gregarious and charming doesn't always run alongside with being an introverted writer. But these skills can be learned.

Consider taking a public speaking or acting class to get out of your comfort zone.

So much rides on the pitch, it should be a 2-way conversation, not a speech.

All writers have faced rejection at some point in their career. Rather than get depressed, move forward and keep refining your writing and pitching skills.

Start the pitch by establishing the genre and giving a brief introduction on how you came up with the idea. This allows you to tap into your passion. What grabbed you about this story in the 1st place? A play, an event in your life—chances are what grabbed you about the story in the first place will stay get you excited

Once you tap into that energy, the nervousness will start to dissipate. Nothing about the moment will feel natural but if you can get into that headspace it will be easier.

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Stick to what is important and lose everything else.

The main focus should be **the struggle between the protagonist and the antagonist** and the trauma you will put them through. Not scene breakdowns, not dialogue or minor characters and definitely not camera moves

1

Spell out the important beats the inciting incident, call to action, big event, turning points, etc. Whether or not you reveal the ending is up to you. I've had writers leave me hanging and others prefer to tell the whole story.

2

Know your genre! If you're struggling to make a comedy sound funny or a drama sound dramatic, there may be a problem with the tone or beats of your story rather than your pitch.

3

Do practice your pitch at home and make sure you don't overrun your allocated time. You run the risk of alienating the execs and losing the room.

4

Don't compare your series or screenplay to existing movies unless it helps to make your project sound fresh and insightful. Often it makes a story sound derivative, so this one is up to you to deliver it in a way that adds value.

5

Don't mention specific actors or directors but be prepared if they ask for your opinion. It's important to sound educated but easygoing and open-minded at the same time.

6

Register your 3 to 4 page pitch document, Series Pilot or screenplay with the WGA or copyright your work.

HOW TO SELL A SERIES – HOW TO PITCH AN IDEA IN A MEETING

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Research!

Make a list of producers/distributors/financiers you plan to solicit. Investigate what genres or films they have produced in the past. They are always looking for something that fits within their mandate. This is the **biggest mistake I have seen writers make**.

For example, if you are pitching at Focus Features, don't pitch a horror film. They make award-winning films. If a certain producer loves high adventure films, it's a waste to pitch them a romantic comedy.



If you are contacting producers via email include a short synopsis of your story and a bit about yourself. The note should be warm and friendly but also professional. Sign the letter and include your phone number and email address. Don't include your full script but mention you can send it if they are interested in reading.



If you are sending a hard copy letter, add a self-addressed stamped envelope so it's easy for them to respond to you whether they are interested or not.



If you have an agent, manager or lawyer you should talk to your reps. And if you don't, attend as many networking events as possible. Stage 32 has pitch events where you can be heard by the industry, IFP Week and Women In Film. There are lots of places to look into.

HOW TO SELL A SERIES – HOW TO PITCH AN IDEA IN A MEETING

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1

Tweak your presentation to fit who you are pitching.

2

Be Concise.

3

Establish Interest and Intrigue.

4

Talk about characters.

5

Speak from the heart.

6

Keep the energy flowing and connect with the listener.

7

Bring a copy of your IP content in case they want more.

8

Bios of any producers or other key crew.

9

Financing already in place.

HOW TO SELL A SERIES – HOW TO PITCH AN IDEA IN A MEETING

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Synopsis, Logline, Show Bible or Deck
(For TV, this includes character, episode and season breakdown.)



Budget



Cast, if any attached



Contact info



Lookbook

(Creates the tone and feel. If it's a drama for example, the lookbook can help explain if it's a gritty drama or an eerie drama. If you are including creative comps you can do it here.)



Bring your enthusiasm and passion for the project. **Life is short and you want people to want to work with you.**



Get to bed at a reasonable hour the night before. Research parking spots, subway times or cabs. Wait in a coffee shop if you are early. **Any snags can cause nerves so remove the stress!**

Follow up with producers that you solicited 4 weeks after your emails or mailing

Be kind and friendly. Don't give up. A bigger company may take up to six months. Regardless, be polite if you get a pass, this doesn't mean you won't get a greenlight on something else in the future.



Can you pitch a movie idea without a screenplay?



Despite what you may have heard, there isn't really a market for stand-alone movie ideas. You can't sell an idea or copyright a movie idea.



They are essentially worthless. At the end of the day, **it's the execution of an idea that matters.**

Q & A

Resources

The Hollywood Creative Directory

List of producers

The Writers Market

Helps to identify producers looking for new material

The Hollywood Pitching Bible

Ken Aguado and Douglas Eboch

Selling your story in 60 Seconds

Michael Hague

