



Presenting to Executives: 6 Strategies for Success

Senior executives have told us that 60% of the presentations made to them fail.

Imagine the cost of that.

Innovative ideas that go nowhere because they weren't presented persuasively. Projects that stall because a presenter didn't drive a much-needed decision from the executive team. Or how about the cost of wasting corporate leaders' time?

Why do so many people fail when pitching a new idea or asking for support for a new product, project, or resources?

Because most presenters, including people at the director level, don't understand that pitching to senior decision makers requires a completely different strategy and skill set.

The good news is, we've unlocked the secrets to making more effective presentations to executives that help move the business forward.

Read on for invaluable, expert insights and advice . . .

Learn the Executive Mindset

Executives are bottom-line-focused, strategic thinkers who want you to get to the point, step away from your slide deck, and be ready for a dynamic dialogue.

Listen to seasoned executive Brent Kedierski elaborate on the executive mindset in this clip from a PowerSpeaking Live! panel discussion with CEO Carrie Beckstrom:



Next time you present to decision makers, remember that they are:

- Always thinking in terms of the larger enterprise and business case
- Pressured by many other decisions to make and requests to consider
- Apt to become impatient if you aren't concise and crystal clear

We'd add that few senior leaders are going to sit still for a one-way presentation from you, especially if you're asking for their support or need a decision from them.

So, plan for lots of interaction.

Be Prepared for a Dialogue

When planning your presentation, use the "10/30 Rule." If you have 30 minutes on the executives' meeting agenda, plan to present 10 minutes of material. Devote the remainder of the time to discussion.



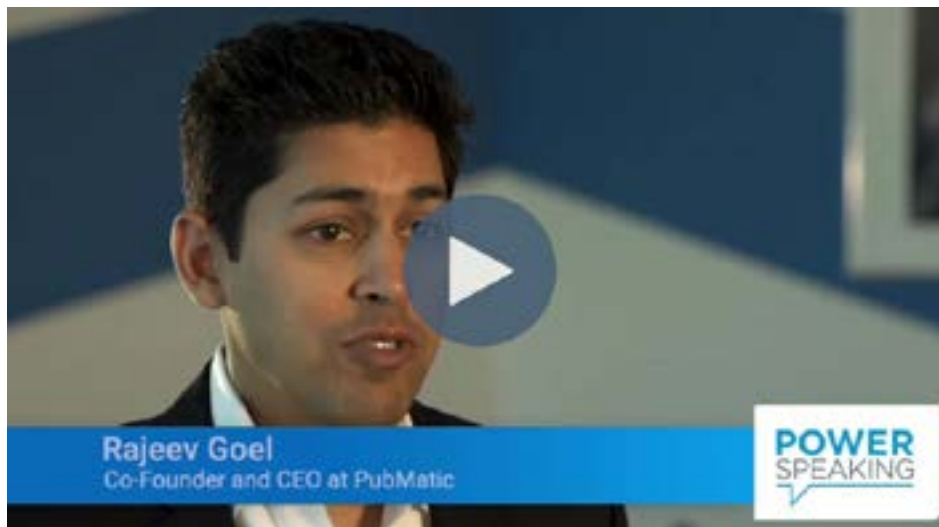
Remember that with decision makers, your role is to facilitate a conversation, not just deliver a presentation.

But speaking of your presentation, the first thing you should do is orient the leaders to the purpose of your time with them.

Set the Context and Deliver Your Bottom Line

It's important to remember that the executives will walk into that conference room with a million things on their minds. Your job is to first help them focus on why you're there and what you need from them. Briefly.

Several executives we interviewed give some great insights on why and how to set the context for executives in this clip:



Monica Poindexter makes a great point in how setting the context is an opportunity for you and the executives to frame how the conversation will move forward.

Once you've set the context, it's time to get to your main point—your bottom line—whether it's a project update or a proposal.

For example, what do you want the executives to say “yes” to?

Be specific. "I want your support" is vague. "I want you to approve a \$500,000 investment in new centrifuge equipment this quarter" is specific.

Here are more senior leaders we interviewed, explaining why it's so important to lead with your bottom line:



Antares Audio Technologies' Jeff Wright says it well: "An answer-first presentation is really what executives want." In other words, why are they there and what do you want from them?

In the next clip, PowerSpeaking Master Facilitator and Coach David Binder tells a great story about a different executive presentation scenario, in which a group of would-be leaders failed to get to the main point with executives:



We love David's point that presenters shouldn't take a murder-mystery approach to their content!

And speaking of content, be sure to take a big-picture, business perspective when pitching an idea or request to decision makers.

Make the Business Case

If you're asking for support or a decision from executives, state what value or ROI your ask will bring in terms of revenue increase, cost reduction, protection from risk, competitive advantage, or other business drivers. It can't be just a "nice to have" proposal.

For example...

"We're seeking your approval for 5 new FTEs in account management roles for an investment of \$750,000. The reason is that we have a \$2M revenue opportunity with the launch of [XYZ project]. These account managers will focus on the top 20% of our customer base to ensure we maximize the sales opportunity."

Next, follow with the essential data—and do a deep dive only if asked.

Instead of drowning listeners in data, lead with the top two to three key points and evidence that best support your ask. The key points should be answers to the primary questions you think the executives will have about your proposal.

Keep Them Engaged (even virtually!)

It's important to "read the room" at all times to ensure the executives are engaged with your presentation or the dialogue associated with it.

Yet, reading the room can be especially challenging in virtual meetings.

Listen to CEO Carrie Beckstrom and PowerSpeaking Master Facilitator and Coach Payal

Gandhi Hoon talk about what to do if you've lost your virtual audience:



We love Payal's suggestion to re-engage an executive by making a comment or asking a question that keys off of something the executive said earlier. It's a more personal, constructive way to draw them back in.

Find and Leverage a Sponsor

Finally, if you want to take your executive-presentation skills to the next level, find and leverage a sponsor.

Find someone who knows the group you're presenting to, and who is willing to not only help you prepare as your guide, but also, advocate for you during the meeting.

Use your sponsor to:

- Check the validity of your logic ahead of time
- Rehearse with and get feedback
- Agree on when you should look to them for help during the executive meeting.
- Debrief with your sponsor after the meeting to gain insights and lessons you can use in the future.

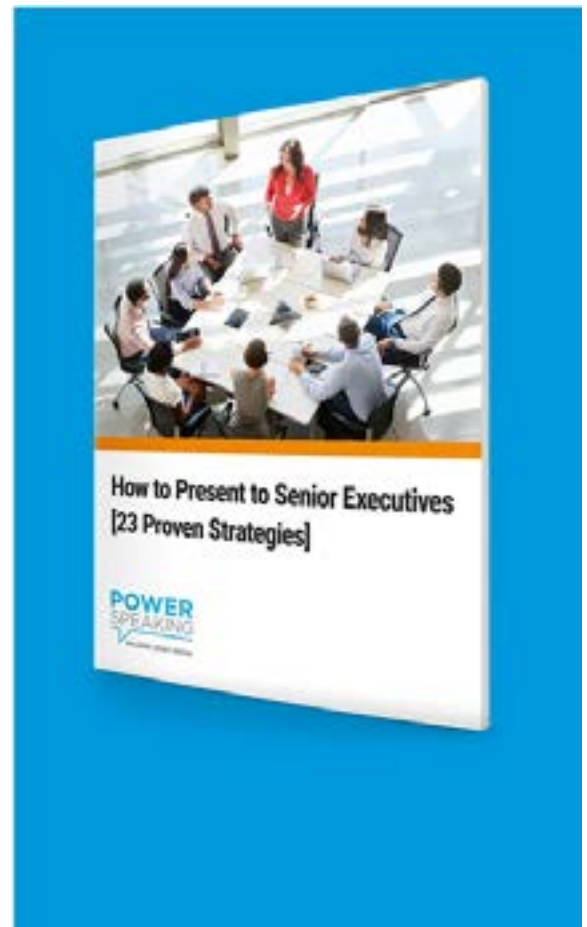
Want more expert guidance on successfully presenting to and winning over senior decision makers?

How to Present to Senior Executives (23 Proven Strategies)

Here's a sampling of the invaluable strategies you'll learn:

- Consider executives' personality styles
- Prepare for possible questions or objections
- Use the PREP model if your time gets cut
- Focus on analytical proof
- Be proactive and transparent when delivering unpleasant news
- Address feedback and challenging questions.

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