



HOW TO PITCH YOUR SHOW TO PRODUCERS

THE
THEATERMAKERS
STUDIO

THE EXECUTION PLAN SERIES

INTRODUCTION

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You have the script for the next *Hamilton*. Or you have an idea for the next long-running, Phantomsized blockbuster. Or maybe you've developed a product that could change show biz.

Well, guess what? While your script or idea may be the next Broadway phenomenon, no one's going to know unless you can pitch like a *Shark Tank* guru. Think about it. You may have the best show on Broadway THE PLANET, but if you can't market it...how will you get butts in seats?

The same goes when pitching to a producer. In many ways, you should think of a pitch as your first step to marketing your show or idea. Crafting the "pitch perfect" pitch can be daunting. I know. I've been there. You should have seen people's faces when I said I want to produce a musical about altar boys (insert shocked face here).

But you know what the result was? *Altar Boyz*—an award-winning, international hit that is STILL being performed around the world in amateur and professional productions. And you know how it got there? Having a pitch that convinced people to throw out their concerns and take out their checkbooks.

So if you're looking for the same results, let me help you get there. As you may have read in my course *Raise It!* or heard in my online workshop, *How to Get Producers to See Your Show*, getting your show off the ground is easier when broken down into key steps. And learning how to pitch your show is no different.

Read on for some tips on "selling" your show or idea to a producer.

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TIP 1: PRETEND YOU'RE IN AN ELEVATOR. AND ELEVATE YOUR PITCH

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You're heading to work and you notice you're in the elevator with a Tony Award-winning producer. You only have a moment of the producer's precious time. What do you say?

The most common mistake I see when people pitch their projects to me is oversharing. Not that details aren't important.... But in a pitch, less is more. The key to a successful pitch is distilling your project to a few sentences that are informative and even more importantly – PERSUASIVE.

As I've admitted, I struggled to find the perfect pitch for my Off Broadway hit *Altar Boyz*. So I gave myself this challenge:

"Imagine you get on an elevator with [insert name of very successful and equally busy investor] ... and they press floor TWO! How do you get them on board before they get off?"

What started as a clunky, detailed explanation of the show turned into a catchy hook (aka. Elevator Pitch!). And the \$\$\$ started flowing in.

Let me give you a better idea of how I got from "The Before" (a great show with an average pitch) to "The After" (a great show with a great pitch).

The Before:

The pitch had a lot of synopsis, a lot of explanation of where I thought I could go, a lot of ideas of who I wanted involved, a lot of ideas for marketing campaigns, etc. It may have been "a lot" but it yielded little results. Your brilliant game plan will come in handy later. Keep the pitch succinct and you'll get to...

The After:

Altar Boyz is a musical comedy about a catholic boy band whose names are Matthew, Mark, Luke and Juan.

(wait for laugh)

Oh, and the fifth member of the band is Abraham (beat). He's Jewish.

Of course, I had more prepared. But I found that one sentence to be the reason people started to lean in to the idea of *Altar Boyz*.



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TIP 2: THE WHY IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS THE WHAT

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You may have the greatest script in your hands or the most genius Broadway-ready idea. That's all fantastic. However, to paraphrase lyrics from *Once On This Island*, I need to know *why* you tell the story.

Believe it or not, a potential producer is arguably more interested in the *why* than the *what*. Sure, the script needs to stand its own. But producers are looking for a project that will get them fired up... AND get audiences fired up. A fired up audience means packed houses in a Broadway theater.

You need to have a compelling and convincing explanation as to why your project can do that. Consider the following questions:

• WHY did you start this project? _____

• WHY is the project worthy of a producer's AND an audience's attention? _____

• WHY does your project need to happen now? _____

• Why is your project "the next big thing"? _____

Answering the questions above will be crucial to a successful pitch. And once you have the answers....

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TIP 3: PASSION MAKES PERFECT

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Once you have your elevator hook and your why, you'll need to let your passion do the talking.

~~Producers~~ All people respond to passion. It's infectious. So while what you say is essential, it's also HOW you say it.

I need to see you're pumped up about your project. Otherwise, why should I get excited about it? Believe it or not, producers care about the person behind the project just as much as the idea or the script. The person behind the project and who will be involved is sometimes even more heavily considered than the project itself.

I've had several industry pros tell me that they've invested in shows solely because of a person's passion. In fact, an investor of a show opening on Broadway this season (not mine) told me they don't think the show is any good. But the person and the energy behind the show....

Well, that's what sold them.

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QUICK PITCH TIPS

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- Flattery leads to follow-through. People love compliments. Consider opening your pitch with some praise for the person you're pitching to. (If you're speaking to a producer who currently has a show running, you better have seen it. And whether you liked it or not, a kind remark can only help.)
- Photos and videos of past productions should be used sparingly. Yes, when used right, some past production shots or b-roll can make a positive impression. However, just like you should be cautious of an overly long explanation of your project, any visual assets should be kept to a minimum. It doesn't take long for me to gain an understanding of a project so please don't show me 15 minutes of footage. (And if you're going to show me anything, make sure it's professionally done! No shaky smartphone pics please.)
- Carry yourself with confidence. Sure, nerves are natural which is why you should practice your pitch as much as you can. I need to know you are comfortable and secure with your idea. If a producer senses a lack of trust in the project or questions your reliability, you can kiss that check goodbye.

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ONE LAST REMINDER

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Before you can pitch, make sure your project or idea is truly pitch-ready. Have you developed the work? Have you considered a preliminary budget? Have you made a list of the creatives you may want involved? Have you identified who your audience is and how to best reach them?

Preparation is key and having a plan is non-negotiable.

You should have a pretty clear set of answers to the questions above. If you need help determining if your project is ready for next steps, check out some tools that might assist you:

- Is your script in tip-top shape? Consider script coverage or a consultation at theproducersperspective.com/script-coverage
- Take my online workshop, *Urgent Care: How to Self Diagnose Your Script* (available on TheTheaterMakers Studio now!)

For more resources, check out The TheaterMakers Studio at
www.TheaterMakersStudio.com