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Don't risk it. Rigorous Rehearse it.

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As many of us around the world head into uncertain macro-economic times, many of our clients ask us – what can they do from a business development point of view to best safeguard themselves for bumpy times ahead?

There are several initiatives we normally recommend but there's one strategy that comes out above all other. Do this one thing extremely well and you will increase your chances of winning a pitch by up to 50%.

What is this one thing? We call it Rigorous Rehearsal ©. Where rigour and repetition instil confidence, which in turn leads to compelling and convincing pitches. We're not talking the token and hurried stagger-through rehearsal typically done an hour or so before the pitch. Many believe rehearsal time simply eats into the available time for preparing, researching, and developing the pitch response, and its true those are necessary things to get to a great rational response.

Emotional Persuasion

But whilst rational reason leads to conclusions, it is emotional persuasion that leads to winning pitches.

How you make the audience feel, is rarely considered. Were you at ease? Likeable? Confident? Persuasive? Passionate? Did the team come across as liking each other? Was strong leadership evident?

Without rigorous rehearsal you won't be able to answer those questions, nor will you analyse the team's non-verbal communication.

Given that studies have shown that 65% of all communication is non-verbal, those agencies who take this into consideration find themselves winning a disproportionate number of pitches. It's our belief that rigorous rehearsal allows you to reap the reward of winning new business, which is why industry stalwart, Mike Parker wrote 'Don't Risk it, Rehearse It!' a booklet for The Great Pitch Company which contains practical advice to agencies.

***Parker** comments: "Rehearsal reluctance is common, and I have heard all the excuses there are including 'I ran out of time', 'my script needs revising', 'I like to reserve my energy' and the most common of all, 'Spontaneity will suffer.'" It is all rubbish. Make time. Make rehearsal a deadline, not an option. An okay script well-rehearsed will outperform the 'perfect' script unrehearsed and the more rehearsed, the more confident you'll be. This is what enables true spontaneity"*

Rehearsal Investment

We all know how resource-heavy pitching can be and Trinity P3, an independent global marketing management consultancy developed a sophisticated pitch cost calculator. <https://www.trinityp3.com/calculators/pitch-cost/>

*"An agency's staff costs for a simple pitch typically costs tens of thousands of dollars with more complicated and drawn-out pitches costing hundreds of thousands of dollars. That's without considering any external costs associated with pitching" said **Darren Woolley**, Founder and Global CEO of Trinity P3.*

Given that investment, surely agencies would do all they can to give them the best chance of winning. But time and time again, we see agencies taking short cuts on rehearsal. Few would argue against rehearsal, but few truly invest in it. Perhaps the dark financial clouds on the horizon will focus the minds of the forward thinking and determined agencies.

Ten Tips for more Rigorous Rehearsal:

1. The timings of rehearsals should be deadlines that are sacrosanct, working back from the day of the speech or presentation.
2. Start rehearsing early. The more you rehearse the better the performance.

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3. Rehearse in front of someone. Preferably a trained and experienced pitch doctor. They'll be able to significantly improve the value of rehearsal.
4. Look for edits that can help enhance performance. Shorter sentences, unnecessary vocabulary, memorable phrases and adjectives, opportunities for repetition perhaps. Concentrate on your storytelling, focus on the emotional highlight.
5. Think about rehearsal as much about 'play' as it is repetition. Use the time, to try out different deliveries and approaches.
6. The presenter is the hero not the charts. The presenter should speak from the heart not the chart!
7. Rehearse the Q&A as much as the presentation. Did you listen, really listen to the question as it was asked, not as anticipated? Listening makes for powerful communication.
8. Were you ready to answer the unexpected question?
Did you reply succinctly, resisting the urge to go on, and on?
Were you at ease and conversational, not talking at them?
Did you pause to reflect, rather than rush to reply?
9. Watch Amy Cuddy's TED TALK, 'Fake it to you make it'.
10. Remember, it's not what you say, it's the way you say it.

For more about Rigorous Rehearsal © or for your own copy of 'Don't risk. Rehearse It!', email Felix@thegreatpitchcompany.com

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