

[This is an excerpt from a longer handout developed for pitching training sessions,
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“it’s all about communication” – how to make your pitching a success

the teaser

Usually, your teaser will be part of your presentation on stage.

It provides some basic information (e.g. it may answer the classic questions: what, who, where, when, why, how), introduces the (most important) protagonists, the central conflict or themes and ideally gives an impression of the visual composition and narrative style.

teaser and explanations will go hand in hand

The teaser is an important part but certainly not decisive for reaching your audience’s interest and sympathy. It will work together with the explanations you will give before and after its screening.

Because you know so much about your project, you should put yourself in the position of an uninformed spectator. The audience is sympathetic, engaged and interested but has no idea what your project is about.

You must give them this.

This is why the teaser is very clearly structured. And it needs to be exciting and impressive – with the aim of awakening interest in your project.

Try it out in advance: the teaser is a success when you yourself are persuaded by it.

Before and after the teaser there is the opportunity for you to talk about your project.

This is when you can expand upon the basic information from your teaser. Important aspects can be reiterated. They make a better impression on the audience this way.

Don’t waste your precious time. It goes without saying that you know more and that your protagonist has more to say. You can speak about the unknowns that you will naturally encounter when filming, later in the discussions.

Finally you should briefly describe the current status of the project (research, in production, in post-production...). Say who is already involved, how much money you have already received, how much you still need and who you are looking to find during the pitching (Co-producer, World sales, Distributors, Commissioning Editors ...)

Everything further will arise in the debates and, hopefully, in the personal discussions afterwards.

using text within the teaser

Think about your audience! For your viewers, everything is new.

Too much text is overwhelming! And, for a start, the English subtitles must be read and understood by all those who do not speak your language.

This is why it is smart to include only a few, easily comprehensible key ideas in your trailer. You can take a few liberties with the English subtitles. A word-for-word translation is often overwhelming. It is better to use sentences that are easy to read and simply constructed – it is about understanding.

Explanatory texts in English off screen are difficult because those who are not native speakers will need to listen in order to understand – this is no easy task when images are flowing and the speaker is not to be seen.

Important information can also be conveyed with a few text inserts or a protagonist can be introduced with a visually well-structured caption.

classic structures

A teaser can consist of three acts: beginning - middle - end.

As in drama, the 1st act = introduction, the 2nd = consideration and 3rd = climax/ turning point and conclusion.

Good old rhetoric is also useful with its three components: thesis – antithesis - synthesis

Specifically: the introduction and outlining the purpose of the argument (1st act); establishing the evidence and counter evidence (2nd act); and “quod erat demonstrandum” (3rd act).

In practice the components are, for the most part: introduction of the place, time and characters then a clear identification of the conflict (1st act); closer presentation of those involved, the protagonist and antagonist... (2nd act); the peak of the crisis and a possible solution (3rd act).

Variety is a good strategy: for example, a short interview extract that ideally ends with a punchline, a summary, or an affect, should be followed by a “pause” or a “transition” (for example a “beautiful” image, a long shot that shows a new setting) so that your viewers have one or two seconds to take in what they have just heard or read (!).

about the discussions

Study the catalogue in advance. You will then know who you would like to talk to.

Usually the first few minutes will mostly be about simple questions of understanding. They should be answered factually.

Anyone who is interested in you and your project and who can imagine working together with you will want to get to know you properly and continue your discussion after the round tables.

So you can explain your project calmly. There will also be criticisms, questions of content, about contact with the protagonists and the camerawork, suggestions about the dramaturgy, statements about market opportunities, ideas about possible collaborations etc.

It is not about defending your project as it is currently. All those taking part are professionals. They all know that it will still undergo many more transformations before its completion!

It is much more interesting for you if you take careful note of all of the suggestions, statements and criticisms. A few trends will become apparent to you. You will be given many helpful thoughts and a few crucial ideas that you should reflect on later.

You can increase your chances by being open to questions and suggestions. This is because some of those present, to whom your project appeals in principle but who cannot market it as it is, may be using their questions to sound out your flexibility.

Each of the attendees is an expert in their field. It is therefore worthwhile for you to ask questions in order to try to understand their aims and interests better.

Good luck!