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NOW WITH
NEW CHAPTERS
ON THE TRUTH
BEHIND TRUMP
AND LIFE IN THE
DIGITAL AGE.

PITCH

**How to sell yourself
and your brilliant ideas**

*'This book isn't just about business. It's also
about life. That's why you should read it!'*

- Sir John Hegarty

About the Book

A televised presidential debate is a pitch. Lunch with your new boss is a pitch. The date which leads to a passionate affair is a pitch. Every meeting and every new opportunity involves pitching to someone, somewhere.

But a pitch is not about transferring information, it's about transferring power. It is business, but also theatre. Now, *Life's a Pitch* tells you how to do it better. How to get noticed and how to say the right thing. How to be cleverer, more charismatic, more charming.

Ground-breaking and genre-busting, *Life's a Pitch* is stuffed with unconventional wisdom which will change the way you pitch for ever.

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Life's a Pitch ...

**How to sell yourself
and your brilliant ideas**

**Stephen Bayley
& Roger Mavity**

This book is dedicated to
Niccolò Machiavelli, whose
ruthless understanding of
personal ambition has
inspired us both.

Pitch (pit-*sch*), v. [ME.
Piche(*n*; also later *pitched*).
Origin, history and sense-
development are obsc.].

1. To thrust in, fix in; make fast, settle, set, place. **2.** To plant, implant; to fix, stick, fasten. Later to make fast with stakes. **3.** To place or locate oneself; to take up position, settle or alight. **4.** To set in order, arrange; to fix the order, position, rate, price or value of. **5.** To pit (one person) *against* another. **6.** To fix, settle, or place in thought. **7.** To present, strut, flog, blag, persuade *in order* to win a deal.

How to use this book

Making a pitch is not just a matter of winning the pet-food account in an airless meeting room at one of those hotels where people conduct that sort of business. The whole of life is a pitch. Everything you do is a matter of presentation and persuasion. Getting dressed. Dating. Lunch. Sending an e-mail. As soon as you get the idea, it becomes infectious. But, until now, there has never been an inspirational book written on the subject of how to do it.

Stephen Bayley and Roger Mavity have similar philosophies, but from very different backgrounds. Unsurprisingly perhaps, they have chosen to write two different books on the same subject in the same cover. Roger wrote the first book and Stephen wrote the second, although they have been continuously interfering in each other's territory. The result is both a business manual and a philosophy for life.

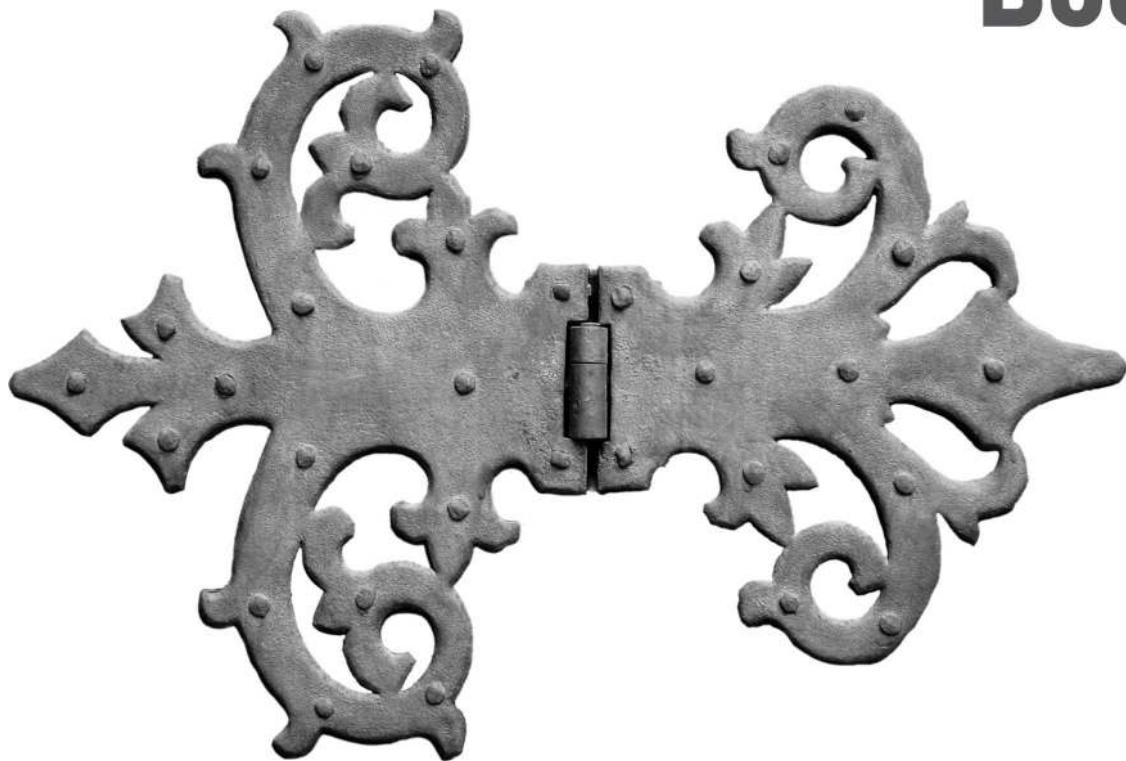
In the first book Roger looks at pitching in a highly pragmatic way: how do you design and deliver your pitch to get the result you want? He examines how you pitch in business and how you can do it far better. He goes on to look at the parallels between the way you pitch for business and the way you pitch yourself in life. You can use Roger's part of the book to understand the mechanics (as well as the psychology) of a brilliant pitch and to learn how to do it yourself.

Stephen's book is more discursive and anecdotal. Intended to be provocative, it looks at the differences between appearance and reality, between style and substance, between who you are and what you want to be and how bad

behaviour can sometimes get good results. Whether discussing business or life, this is in a way the ultimate design book because it is a book about how to design your personality.

Although **Life's a Pitch ...** is in two distinct parts, there's a single large idea behind the book. How you pitch your ideas and how you pitch yourself will determine the course of your life. Learning how to do it effectively (and understanding why you need to) can mean the difference between success and failure: because the truth is that **the whole of life's a pitch ...**

Book 1



1 Why it matters

Life is not a pattern of gradually evolving improvement. It's a series of long, fallow patches punctuated by moments of crucial change. How you handle the long fallow stretches doesn't matter much. How you handle the moments of change is vital.

THAT'S TRUE IN business: the moment of crucial change may be an interview for a new job; the board agreeing (or failing to agree) your plans for the coming year; a presentation to win a big new project. It's these moments when you're pitching for a step-change that things really matter.

The same is true in life as in business. It's the chance encounter which becomes a new friendship. It's persuading the bank to lend you the money to buy the house you've always dreamt of. It's the evening date which, handled right, becomes a passionate affair.

These big moments are not decided by chance - they're decided by how you handle them. How you pitch your case is what makes the difference.

The pitch is the hinge on which the door opens. Everything else in life is about process - the pitch is about decisions: the decision to give you the funds to start your own business; the decision to marry. If you get the pitch right, everything follows. And if you don't, nothing follows.

This book is not dedicated to the 98 per cent of our lives spent on the banal gaps between the big pitch moments. It's dedicated to that 2 per cent of pitch moments which really decide the success or failure of the whole 100 per cent.

2 It's theatre, not information

The pitch moments, those crucial moments which give the opportunity for big change, all have one thing in common. You are trying to get someone else to do what you want them to do - to hire you, to sleep with you, to lend you a million pounds to start your own business ...

PEOPLE ALWAYS ASSUME that the key to these moments of persuasion is to present the information which should make people change their minds (here's the logical reason why you should lend me a million pounds ...) but actually these encounters depend much less on logic and much more on emotion than people think.

Someone being asked to lend a million pounds is faced really with only one simple question to answer: will I get my money back? And of course that isn't a logical question, because it's asking to know the future. There is no logic which can describe what is going to happen a few years from now.

Yet while you can't know what's going to happen, you can think you know. Indeed a banker who spends his whole life lending money is endlessly 'deciding' what will happen in the future. But, of course, he is not deciding, he is just

guessing. He will never call it a guess – that’s too scarily truthful. He’ll call it an ‘informed estimate’, an ‘intelligent assumption’, a ‘considered opinion’. But believe me, it’s a guess. No one can foretell the future.

A banker doesn’t know whether he’ll get his money back; a date doesn’t know whether what lies ahead is three hours of tedium or thirty years of partnership.

So when you’re pitching to someone, you’re asking them to judge the future. Since knowing the future is beyond logic, their judgement won’t be based on logical factors but on emotional factors: trust, confidence, hope, ambition, desire.

These factors aren’t rational, they are instinctive. They are not of the head, they are of the heart.

Of course, logical arguments and rational thought have an important part to play in a successful pitch, because they can underpin emotional instinct with reassurance. But logic in a pitch is never an end in itself, it’s only a means to an end.

So to pitch successfully, you have to understand that it’s not about widening someone’s knowledge base, it’s about giving them a jolting power surge to their emotional electricity.

A pitch does not take place in the library of the mind, it takes place in the theatre of the heart.

3 Think ‘playwright’, not ‘actor’

It’s easy to be mesmerized by a presenter who’s good on his feet into thinking that good presentation is all about good delivery - if I put it across well, then it’s a good pitch.

NOTHING COULD BE further from the truth. If the content isn’t strong no amount of polished delivery will save it. If Kenneth Branagh plays a brilliant Hamlet, we can all admire Branagh’s acting skill - but we still know that it’s Shakespeare who wrote the play. And no actor was ever remembered for a great performance in a bad play. That’s why actors all yearn to play the great roles - they know that they can only do great work with great raw material.

So, when you set about a pitch, don’t think *actor* (how well can I deliver this?) but think *playwright* (how well can I write this?). A great performance starts with a great script.

Sir Gerry Robinson had a characteristically pithy insight into this issue. Gerry started life as the ninth of ten children born to a poor Donegal carpenter and went on to become the chairman of not one but two FTSE 100 companies, Chairman of the Arts Council and a multi-millionaire in his own right, so his views on the workplace are worth listening to. In a large meeting, one of his colleagues was described as a good presenter. Gerry looked witheringly and said, ‘There’s

no such thing as a good presenter.' Then he added, 'There's only a clear thinker.'

Gerry's point was simple but fundamental. A presenter, however good his delivery, is only as good as the presentation he is delivering. And if the train of thought in the presentation is clear, then the delivery will inevitably seem clear too.

Gerry is right. People do talk about good presenters in the same way they talk about good actors. But good plays don't start with a good actor, they start with a good playwright.

Delivering a presentation well (the acting bit) is a useful skill, and one that can be learnt surprisingly easily, but what really matters is the playwright's skill; the ability to write a great presentation in the first place.

There is a huge extra bonus in concentrating on getting the content right to start with. It isn't just a question of getting the foundation stones in place before you try to put up the building - important though that is. Your involvement in the shaping of the debate from the beginning will shine through at the end. When you make the pitch, the fact that it is your personal vision will radiate. As a consequence, your performance will have much greater confidence. The audience will sense your passion, and that's highly persuasive - if you show real commitment your audience will have trust in your ability to deliver.

Anyone who enjoys the music of the 60s knows that Bob Dylan has pulled off the curious trick of simultaneously having a near-to-dreadful voice yet being a great singer. Listen to any of the covers of his songs by other singers (there are plenty to choose from) and you will find few that match Dylan's emotional power. What makes him a great singer? Answer: the songs he writes are true to his own vision, and that shines through when he sings them.

Don't imagine that writing and owning your presentation means you cannot delegate any of the work to others. Of course you can - good pitches are well researched, well supported by the right data. You can, and should, involve others to share the hard work on this. What you must control is the high ground of the central theme. The great artists of the Renaissance had big studios with plenty of talented helpers who could tick in the details and the backgrounds - but they made sure they had control of the big theme. And they made sure they got the credit.

4 A good pitch starts in your diary

Question: What do business people put in their diaries?

Answer: Business meetings.

PEOPLE MIGHT ALSO put in the odd dentist appointment or a reminder to buy their partner a birthday card, but mostly what they put in is meetings.

And that, when you pause to think about it, is rather odd. Because what they don't put in their diaries is time to plan, time to think. So they are organizing all of their time around only one half of their job, and ignoring the other half.

If you want to succeed at pitching, don't echo that mistake. When you know you need to make a pitch, the first step to eventual success is to create a timetable for yourself. Then book that timetable firmly in your diary.

Make a list of the activities involved in preparing the pitch – there will be information-gathering, meetings with others to discuss ideas, time spent getting slides prepared, time spent on rehearsal. Above all, there needs to be time spent on *thinking*. Work out a timing plan which allows proper time for all these things. This may seem utterly obvious, but in practice it's often neglected. Giving a pitch a proper timetable is motivating to your team, because they quickly have a sense that this important project is being well managed. It will help you too, since pitches generate stress – and having a clear sense of what you have to do, and

when by, will take away that stress and replace it with a sense of direction and purpose.

However, creating that timetable is not quite as matter-of-fact and easy as it sounds. If you are going to give proper time to the challenge, you have to stop doing something else. There are still seven days in a week after you took on the pitch project, just like before. To give good time to something new, something old has got to go. It's simple: you have to be ruthless with yourself.

Go through your diary and cancel or postpone everything that isn't utterly crucial.

But you've got to be disciplined about this, or it just won't work. You do want to win this, don't you?

Whatever else goes into your timetable, you must be sure to allocate generous time for *thinking*. Much of the pitch process - collecting data, making slides, rehearsal - is mechanical. You can guess reasonably well how long those tasks will take. But the actual writing of the pitch is not the slightest bit mechanical; it's an imaginative and creative process. That makes it painfully hard to judge how long you need. With creative thinking, it's smart to budget a very generous chunk of time.

There are good reasons for this. First, if you do not allow enough time there is a real risk of an 'Oh my God, I'm not going to get this done ...' panic setting in. That will be counter-productive, to say the least. Imaginative creative thinking needs to go down a few blind alleys before it finds the right route. That takes time. Lastly, creative ideas do not arrive when it suits you, creative ideas arrive when it suits

them. Like the proverbial London buses, several often arrive in a row - but only after a long wait. So, give time for that wait.

When you have set aside the time, then set aside the space
...

5 Get your mind and your body to the right space

If you start to write a pitch by sitting down at your usual desk and staring at your usual computer screen, frankly you're doomed.

Unusual thinking doesn't happen when you're in an utterly usual space. You must find a new space to think in

ONE OF THE most famous advertising campaigns of recent times, 'Heineken refreshes the parts other beers cannot reach', was written by the talented but eccentric Terry Lovelock, who took himself to the most glamorous hotel in Marrakesh for a fortnight in the hope the muse might visit him. That might seem self-indulgent, but the value to Heineken of an idea that gave personality for a generation to an essentially me-too product makes one hotel bill (albeit a large one, knowing Terry's taste) seem piffling.

In an earlier time, Evelyn Waugh, one of the great English novelists, used to stay in an isolated hotel in Wiltshire to write his works. Less of a hotel than an upmarket B & B, the place was run by a lady with a fondness for literature matched by a steely sense of discipline. She ensured Waugh was not only fed and watered, but also freed from

distraction. Thus were *Brideshead Revisited* and *A Handful of Dust* born.

You don't need to escape to Wiltshire, let alone Marrakesh, to find some isolation - but you do need to find it.

For me, simply booking a meeting room in my own offices for a day or two works fine. It's enough to remove me and my thoughts from my usual desk. If it's really important, checking into a hotel near the office and working there can give me a bit more focus.

Some people solve the problem by working on big projects at home. This is cheaper than a hotel and will leave fewer anxieties in your lover's mind, but I find home to be the only place with more distractions than my office desk.

You will find what works for you, but don't make the mistake of thinking this is not critically important to eventual success. It is. There is much at stake in a pitch, and you must have uninterrupted clarity of thought as the foundation stone to build on.

So you need to get yourself into the right space. But you also need to get your mind into the right space. You have to remove the distractions inside your head as well as the distractions around you. I find it impossible to give clear thought to one big challenge if there is an unpaid parking ticket or a trivial but unanswered e-mail adrift in my brain.

My technique to deal with this is simple. I make a list of all my outstanding tasks, be they work or personal. Anything

that can safely wait till after the pitch gets set aside, with a note to my secretary to bring it forward to a later date. Anything that can't wait, doesn't. I organize myself to deal with all the can't-wait stuff as ruthlessly as I can before I start thinking about the pitch. It may delay starting on the pitch by a few days, but you would be amazed how much easier and quicker the pitch is when you attack it with a clear mind.

Here's a good example of all this in practice. Early in my advertising career, our young and small agency got the chance to pitch for Volvo's advertising - then, as now, a mighty advertiser. We were given eight weeks to do the job and after six weeks had got precisely nowhere. I was asked to take over the task with just two weeks left.

I got the pitch team in a room and told them that during the first of our two precious weeks, they were forbidden from doing any work on Volvo. What they did have to do was to clear away every other commitment they had, work or social, that was coming over the next two weeks. I wanted to be sure that they could give Volvo attention night and day through the second week.

I then booked a large hotel suite, near the office (but not too near). It was big enough for the team to live, work, sleep and eat in for a week. And that is just what we did.

You would be surprised how much work can be done in a week by a small, bright team giving *total* concentration to

one task - with every other distraction taken away.

We won the pitch. My good friend David Abbott was the boss of our small business, and he went on to do famous work for Volvo. He soon started his own company, Abbott Mead Vickers, took Volvo with him, and turned his new company into the largest advertising agency in the UK. So it was worth thinking how to give that pitch the distraction-free space it needed.

6 Shaping your pitch

Have you ever watched a house being built from scratch? For months and months nothing seems to happen - then suddenly the house is there in a matter of weeks. But those months and months of 'nothing' happening are when the site is cleared, the drains put in, the foundations laid. When the base is properly in place, the rest is easy.

IT'S WORTH THINKING about that when you draft a pitch. If you get the foundations solidly in place first, and you take a bit of time to do that well, the rest flows naturally. Fail with the foundations and you fail with everything. A good pitch needs a good foundation, a backbone, a central core. That must come first and it must be right.

People often agree with this idea in principle but find it hard to do in practice. They can't resist the temptation to start writing the final pitch before they've really thought through what they want to say.

You must begin at the beginning. A housebuilder starts with a blueprint, not a catalogue of roof-tile designs. You must do the same. I always start with a discussion about the problem and try to pin down what the big issues are - and if there are more than one or two, you haven't simplified enough.

I have this discussion with a small number of bright colleagues - typically, three or four of us. Beware the committee of six or seven or more: the larger the group the less productive the group dynamic.

I prefer to do this in a room with a whiteboard, so you can draw diagrams of the way the argument unfolds. This makes the debate more involving and helps give it a central focus. I don't know why senior businessmen never have a whiteboard in their offices - they are a huge help in strategic thinking, and if that isn't what senior business people do, what are they there for?

Sometimes you don't want to discuss it with others - either they aren't bright enough or the subject is just too confidential. In that event, I have the discussion with myself. I go on a long walk and talk through in my mind what really matters. Or sometimes I sit in the garden with a large Havana cigar (Hoyo de Monterrey, Epicure No. 1, if you're planning to send me a present) and have a quiet think. Lavish time on this process - the slower and more reflective you are at the start the quicker the process will be at the end. Only when the few big issues are becoming clear should you start to draft the backbone of your argument.

When it comes to drafting, you still need to stay with big issues, to map out the high ground, and to avoid getting sucked into detail. There's a technique which helps hugely in this. I use an artist's A2 layout pad, landscape not portrait, on my table, and I work with a very soft lead artist's pencil, at least 2B. That way you physically can't write in fine detail, so you don't.

You've equipped yourself to write in broad strokes, so you inevitably think

in broad strokes.

I then write the outline of the pitch like the storyboard for a film – in a series of frames across the page. In each frame I put only a few words – for example, ‘What is the biggest single problem we are trying to solve?’

I usually find, when I start drafting in storyboard form, that I’m clear about the problem and only half-clear about the solution. That doesn’t matter: working this way will help to stimulate and crystallize your own thought processes. By the time you get to the solution you’ll be clearer on what it is. You will also have spotted gaps in your argument where you need more evidence or more thought to complete your case.

Sketching out your argument in storyboard form seems a bit odd at first. We’ve been trained since schooldays that the proper form for a train of thought is an essay – or the adult equivalent, a ‘paper’ or ‘report’. But the magic of the storyboard technique is implicit in the name – you shape your argument not just as information but as a story.

Good storytelling is, of course, a visual as well as verbal experience. Because the storyboard was designed to express the storyline of a film, it helps you think visually as well as verbally. That’s crucial, especially if you are going to use a medium like PowerPoint. We’ll talk more about PowerPoint, the pain and the pleasure, later. The important issue now is that PowerPoint works best when you think of it as a series of pictures.

Each slide is an image which takes the story one thought onward. All too often people write individual slides as if they must exist as a complete message in their own right – they have lots of information but no sense of flow with the slides

around them. Think of the slides as stepping stones in an argument. They don't need meaning in themselves; they have meaning when they follow in a sequence. In fact they are often much more interesting when they don't have meaning on their own, because then you want to know what happens next. Which takes us back to where we began - great pitches are designed not as information but as storytelling.