

Growing your market:

Making your sales pitch

What is a sales pitch?

The sales pitch is a tool used to grab the attention of buyers and initiate action to begin the sales process. In the context of agriculture and food products, it is the sales presentation made to the buyer or buying team to gain access to their market channel.

A supplier company uses a sales pitch to demonstrate how their product adds value and explains why the customer would want to list the product. Through the sales pitch, you demonstrate your capability, passion, knowledge and strategy for being a valued supplier with the goal to be invited to a second meeting with the buyer.

Remember, whether you are making the pitch in-person or virtually, there are key factors to consider, as well as some differences important to success.

Four parts of a pitch

1. Research and preparation

Understand how your product fits into the market you are seeking entry.

Identify your product's sales performance. This includes current units or volumes sold and the historical sales figures. Assess the uniqueness of the product; how you position the product to address current retail trends (health and wellness, convenience, meal kits or other); the category placement (fresh, frozen, grocery or other); and the target customer groupings.

Examine how your product fits within the specific retail or other customers' business; including their

corporate mission. Look for any opportunity your product presents to this customer. Prepare your retail and wholesale price points. Research how the retailer merchandises similar products and assigns products to the shelf. Review how the retailer is performing (e.g. the type and number of new stores) and what is happening in your category.

Identify the players who make the purchasing decisions, their contacts, and their profiles. You need to know who to connect with first: the store manager, the regional buyer or the head office.

Prepare information on your plan for distribution and on any service representatives who may be involved in distribution. As well, know how you will answer questions on your business plan, food safety program, minimum order requirements, marketing plan and marketing budget.

Research before the pitch

- The retailer is your customer and the one purchasing the product. Plan for how you will serve them as a customer.
- Each retailer is different. Tour the stores (in person or virtually), learn what makes them different, and observe the types of consumers that shop in their stores.
- Identify where you see your products being merchandized in each store.
- Consider what competition exists in this space and how you are different or unique.
- Find alignment between your product, the store and its customers.

Prepare a professional looking presentation, samples, packaging and point of sale (POS) materials.

Winning the sales pitch!

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2. Getting the appointment

Prior to getting an appointment, prepare the following:

- Introduction of yourself and the name of your company.
- Be able to tell why you are calling.
- The 'elevator pitch' of key product highlights – the brief, persuasive speech that will spark interest in your product.
- Be prepared with ideas for sales growth.
- Know your costs and sales expectations.
- Bring solutions to win in sales for both the buyer and yourself. For example, introduce a new product or launch a new line of products.
- Ask for an appointment.
- Be sure to confirm the date, time, and location for the meeting.
- Ask who will attend the meeting from the retailer, e.g., the Vice-President, the category manager, and/or the buyer.

3. The meeting

Be conversational and engage the buyer. Remain positive and practice your meeting ahead of time to ensure you know your key points.

For this meeting bring the following items:

- Business cards.
- Executive summary of your business story.
- Sell sheets and promotional or point of sale materials.
- Your presentation on a memory stick and a hard copy in case of any technical difficulties.
- A laptop and an extension cord.
- Your own copy of the presentation with your notes and timing. For example, as a guide for a 60-minute meeting, prepare twelve slides and allow five minutes per slide maximum.
- Product samples.
- Sales and costing history.

4. The agenda

Plan the agenda for the meeting with this general outline: [1] the introduction, [2] the product story, [3] the sales expectations, [4] the costing information, [5] your credibility, and [6] the conclusion.

Virtual meeting preparation

If you are doing a virtual meeting with the retail team, ensure you have good audio and visual connections from your end.

A headset will eliminate the background noise and provide a better microphone for your voice. Sufficient lighting is important; position the light above and behind the camera.

Newer laptops usually have a good camera. If you have an older model laptop, you may need an external camera attachment. Check the camera angle and position the camera angle at eye level. You do not want to look up or down when making a pitch. Raise the camera up if required to prevent an awkward angle.

Make sure you do not have any distractions in the background; a calm background without people or clutter is essential. Some virtual platforms enable you to choose a background automatically from the audio and video buttons.

Finally, use a 'hard wire' connection for the best outcome for internet connections.

What should I present?

You and your product story

This is where you tell your company and product story. Share your passion!

- Why you started and why you are doing what you are doing.
- The quality, the ingredients and the production methods.
- Describe the features and benefits that are critical to the store and selling points for the

shoppers. Highlight what is unique about the product or your point of differentiation.

The sales expectations

The sales expectations focus on not only the product's current sales performance, but also its demand and how you plan to drive sales to move the product into the shopping cart or basket.

- Identify your best sellers, the new products, and seasonal offerings.
- Describe how your product solves a problem for the retailers or fills a need with their target customers.
- Share how you adjust to changing consumer interests and the demands for your products.
- Share any industry insights and trends that demonstrates how the product will sell.
- Recommend the store locations that you see as a good fit for your product and why.
- Describe how you will help them or what you will do to drive traffic and sales to the store and to your product.

Costing

Costing involves not only the price, but also the information on any minimum order requirements and the lead times involved with ordering. Be sure to include the costs associated with the format and unit sizes.

Credibility

Credibility is about your food safety requirements, the distribution plan and fulfillment capability. Share your food safety protocols. Explain how you mitigate risks in processing and how your food safety protocols meet the retailer's needs. Include information on current sales channels and your capacity for growth.

Supporting the brand and sales

It is your job to ensure that your products get into the customers' carts and to demonstrate how you will support the retailer in sales.

What sells the product best? Is it demonstrations, events, social media, placement in store, or cross merchandising?

What is your plan for timing of these activities? Will you include promotional or discount offers and samples?

Will you support the activities with on-line promotion and direct customers to store locations to purchase your products?

Closing and plan for follow-up

The conclusion is your opportunity to highlight your key messages and request a follow-up date to the meeting.

Tips

- Confirm the meeting two days in advance.
- Practice your pitch ahead of time.
- Ensure your technology is working in advance.
- Arrive on time.
- Take notes.
- Allow for questions.
- Demonstrate your passion, integrity, authenticity, as well as your market and product knowledge.

Resources

[Promoting your food product: social media for food entrepreneurs](#)

Labelling, Pricing and Selling infographics and related resources for agriculture and food businesses at <https://www.alberta.ca/agri-processing-business-resources.aspx>

Prepared by
Alberta Agriculture and Forestry

More information, contact:
Alberta Ag-Info Centre
Call toll free: 310-FARM (3276)
Website: alberta.ca/agriculture-and-forestry