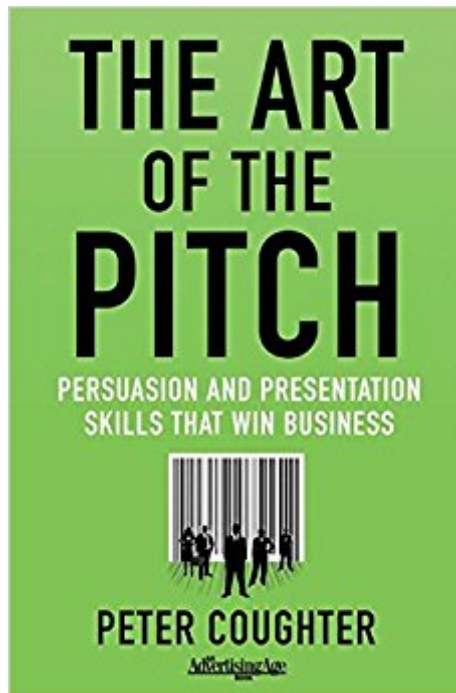




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The Art Of The Pitch: Persuasion And Presentation Skills That Win Business



Synopsis

Through an engaging and humorous narrative, Peter Coughter presents the tools he designed to help advertising and marketing professionals develop persuasive presentations that deliver business. Readers will learn how to develop skills to create the perfect presentation.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Praise for Peter's Seminar Presentation Skills Workshops: 'Peter has been a tremendous asset in coaching our guys on every aspect of Presentation. He's helped build up their experience, and most importantly, their confidence.' - Tony Granger, Global Chief Creative Officer, Y&R 'We have had over 100 of our senior and mid-level people go through Coughter's workshops. The results have been impressive. Rarely do we now prepare for a presentation without someone saying, 'Have we Coughter'd it?' That is the best endorsement of all in terms of the impact he has had with our company.' - Peter G. Krivkovich, President & CEO, Cramer-Krasselt 'Peter is a teacher, leader and a Zen master.' -John Adams, Chairman The Martin Agency

Peter Coughter is a professor at VCU Brandcenter at Virginia Commonwealth University and president of Coughter & Company, which consults with leading advertising agencies around the world. His clients include: Crispin Porter + Bogusky, DDB, Cramer-Krasselt, Dentsu, GSD&M, Goodby Silverstein, JWT, Leo Burnett, Publicist, Y&R, McKinney and many others. He lives in Richmond, Virginia.

Great presenters realize that people make decisions emotionally; they will rationalize decisions based on all the facts and figures, using the objective to help them justify the decisions they made subjectively, according to Peter Coughter in this book. It is critical to make the audience feel that what you are suggesting is the best thing for them. According to the author, the elements of an effective presentation include:

- * It's a conversation, only you're doing most of the talking.
- * Be yourself: what audiences want is authenticity.
- * Tell stories: we all love stories that grab our attention and hold it all the way to the end.
- * Know your stuff: don't memorize the presentation, but know the underlying ideas thoroughly.
- * Relax and be personable: it's the audience that really counts, so don't worry about yourself.
- * Teamwork counts: in great presentations, teams present as if they really like one another.
- * Make it personal: a level of intimacy builds credibility and makes a connection.

The book is written from the perspective of an advertising agency executive, but the principles described are applicable to the marketing of any professional services, or more broadly to any form of public speaking or private presentation. In accordance with his own advice, the author provides numerous engaging stories of business won through persuasive presentations, and the book includes brief insights from a number of experienced presenters. Many of the key points are reinforced by being repeated several times in the book. There is detailed advice on how to organize a presentation, how to use PowerPoint-type slides if they are suitable for your type of presentation, the importance of extensive rehearsal, and the effective use of silence, volume, pitch, tone of voice, facial expressions and other forms of "punctuation". Anyone who wants to become a better presenter is likely to find some useful tips in this book.

Informative. Descriptive. Relatable. These are all words that I would use to describe *The Art of the Pitch*, by Peter Coughter. From the first sentence in Chapter One to the final paragraph in Chapter Eleven, Coughter is able to capture the reader's attention and hold onto it, keeping him or her engaged and wanting to read more, until there is no more to read. By using simple sentence structures, telling stories from company executives to support his claims, and connecting to the reader by using his own personal experiences, Coughter has mastered the art of talking to people, which is clearly evident throughout this book. As I read *The Art of the Pitch*, I truly felt that Coughter could have been sitting there having a conversation with me, which is not a feat that just any author, or presenter for that matter, can do. He applies the skills for effective presentations to writing his book, and that makes it all the more evident that he is extremely credible when it comes to mastering the art of presentations. After

all, according to Coughter, "Everything is a presentation," so it only makes sense that he is able to take his own advice and apply it to the style of his book. Think about that.

"Everything is a presentation." I believe that is arguably the most important concept in this book. Coughter begins by dedicating the entire first chapter to this concept, but he is able to intertwine it into each proceeding chapter thereafter, and in the final chapter, once again states, "Everything is a presentation, remember?" And although this book was targeted towards those who would be giving business presentations, I was able to take many of the concepts and apply them to my life as a student. There is something that nearly anyone can take from this book, and that is yet another reason why Coughter, in my opinion, excels at relating to whomever he may be addressing. By having the mentality that everything is a presentation, you can more effortlessly take the rest of those concepts in the book and apply them to whatever it may be that you wish to accomplish. However, just the basic mentality that "everything is a presentation" is only going to get you about halfway to the finish line, so to speak. Throughout the book, Coughter also goes into details about every aspect of a presentation that one should look to perfect. From visuals to word choice to punctuation, he dissects every little piece that one should consider when preparing any kind of presentation for any kind of audience, whether it is a small meeting of two or three people or an entire lecture hall full of students. One of the most important points that stuck out to me was that you have to know the material you are presenting. This may seem trivial, but Coughter argues that one cannot simply memorize their presentation; they must know it. He argues that memorization hurts a presenter because, more often than not, that presenter is going to draw a blank at some point during the presentation. If and when this happens, he may skip over even more important parts, and this can affect not only the rest of the presentation, but also the authenticity of the work being presented. Audiences crave authenticity, and Coughter argues that memorization can put that in jeopardy. Coughter knows what his audiences want, and one of the ways to give that to them is by absolutely whole-heartedly knowing the material. I believe another one of the main reasons Coughter has mastered the art of relating to audiences is because he himself acknowledges that he is a human being. He knows he has experiences people can relate to. He knows he can tell stories to make an emotional connection with others. He knows that the only way to truly connect with his audience is if he is his true self: not Peter Coughter the Presenter, but Peter Coughter the Person. Throughout the book, he argues that many presenters, no matter what level of experience they have, forget this one common fact and do not apply it to their presentations. This is why they are not able to sell their product or idea: because no matter how great an idea is, if you cannot relate to your audience, you are not going to sell the

product. I would, however, like to point out one improvement that Coughter could have made to his book. As I was reading, I noticed that the entire book was very repetitive. Some of those repetitions were meant to emphasize his point or revisit an idea brought up in a previous chapter, such as the topic of not memorizing your entire presentation. I understand the point of those repetitions, and Coughter did a wonderful job by bring them back up at the right times to make one idea relate to another. However, when staying on one topic, he spent a lot of time repeating his main point, whether it was just stating it another way or telling multiple stories about it when they were not all necessary. One prime example of this was in Chapter Four, when Coughter was discussing the power of emotion. He continues to emphasize the point that the only way to truly convey emotion to an audience is by telling the truth, and the only way to tell the truth is by being our true selves. It is a simple idea, and it was fascinating to hear his supporting stories and arguments for it. However, one personal experience and one story, in my opinion, would have been enough to convey the idea and move on. Instead, Coughter proceeded to use one personal experience and three different stories to portray virtually the same concept. Of course, this is just one example of the unnecessary repetition I am talking about, but it is evident throughout the book and it is something that I would personally have liked to see less of. Nonetheless, Coughter still does a superb job at revolutionizing the way businessmen, or anyone for that matter, can give a presentation. I was not in the target audience for *The Art of the Pitch*, but I was still able to take lessons from this book and apply them to my life and studies. It is amazing that just by making simple changes when doing something as natural as talking people, such as changing your tone of voice or making eye contact, you can portray a level of confidence that you were not even aware you could reach in the first place. And so, I would recommend this book to virtually anyone who wants to work on not only their presentation skills, but their people skills as well. Because after all, *“Everything is a presentation.”*

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