FROM RESEARCH TO RELEVANCE

How to structure and deliver a short research pitch

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UHASSELT
KNOWLEDGE IN ACTION



HI • EURECA • PRO
HERITAGE INNOVATION

Why am I talking about pitching?

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Communication & Outreach since 2012

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RESEARCH

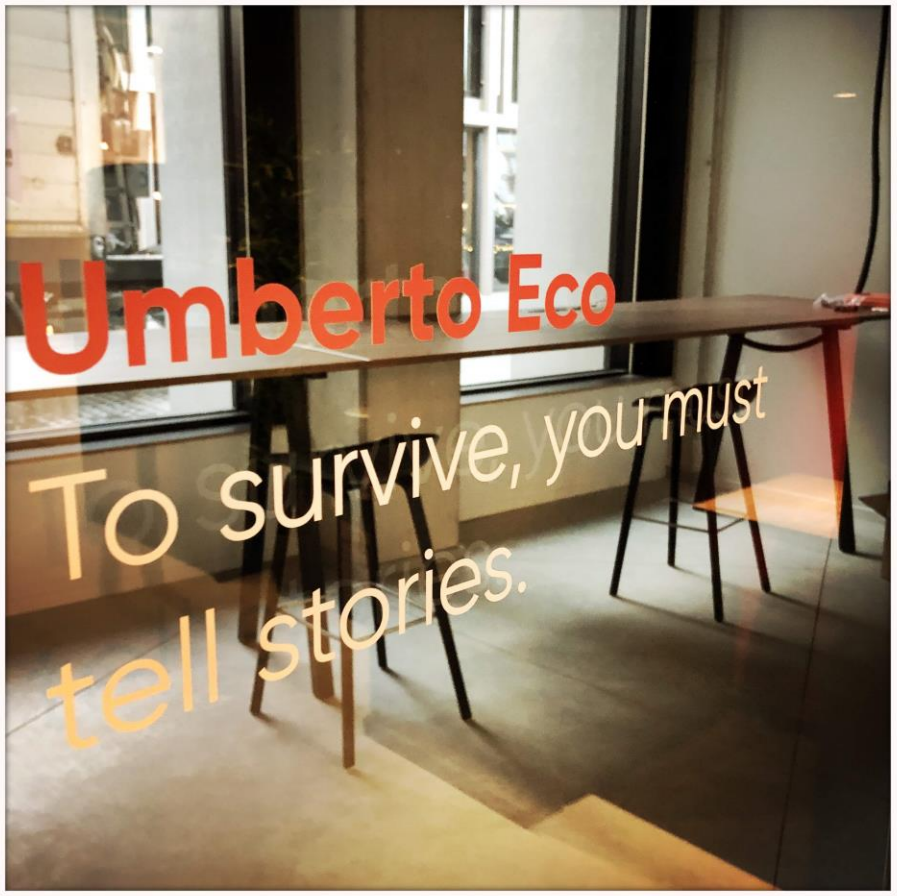
Understanding complex ideas and innovations

COMMUNICATION

Turning expertise into clear, engaging stories

IMPACT

Connecting research with industry, partners and society



Why strong research can still be difficult to pitch

1

The audience enters too late

The explanation starts with the research, rather than with what matters to the listener.

2

The story stays highly technical

Methods, models and terminology can hide the central idea.

3

Completeness takes over

Years of work create an urge to include every detail. In a short pitch, more can become too much.

4

One story is used for every audience

Researchers, companies, funders and policymakers listen for different things.

5

The message remains abstract

Without a concrete situation or example, relevance is harder to recognise.

6

Benefits remain implicit

The research is explained, but what actually improves, changes or becomes possible is not yet visible.

These are not shortcomings in the research. They are translation challenges.

The one-minute test

After one minute, could someone outside your discipline explain...

01 What problem are you addressing?

02 What are you doing about it?

03 Why does it matter?

04 What do you need next?

A pitch is not a mini research presentation

A research presentation follows the logic of the research.

A pitch follows the logic of the audience.

SELECTIVE | RELEVANT | MEMORABLE | ACTIONABLE

Three outcomes: believe, understand, remember

BELIEVE

Credibility
Evidence
Realistic claims
Confident, humble delivery

UNDERSTAND

One key message
Plain language
Short sentences
Concrete examples

REMEMBER

A strong hook
A clear contrast
A soundbite
A purposeful ending

Begin with one audience, not with one slide deck

The same research.
Different questions.

Adapting the pitch does not change the science.

RESEARCHER

Is it robust?

INDUSTRY

Does it solve a real problem?

FUNDER

Why invest now?

POLICY

What changes at scale?

Three decisions before you write

WHO? **Who am I speaking to?**

WHAT? **What matters to them?**

THEN? **What should happen afterwards?**

The five-part pitch

1

HOOK

Earn attention

2

CHALLENGE

Create need

3

RESPONSE

Explain your contribution

4

VALUE + EVIDENCE

Make it matter and credible

5

ASK

Make the next step explicit

1. Hook: earn the right to continue

WEAK OPENING

“Good morning. My name is… Today I will present my research on…”

Correct, but it gives no reason to listen.

STRONGER OPENING

“Every year, valuable research fails to reach practice, not because the science is weak, but because the route to implementation was never designed.”

Immediate relevance.

2. Challenge: make the need concrete

VAGUE

“Current diagnostic procedures present several important challenges.”

CONCRETE

“Clinicians inspect hundreds of images manually, consuming time and increasing the risk that subtle patterns are missed.”

Who experiences it? • What happens today? • Why is that insufficient?

3. Response: explain your contribution, not your whole method

What are we doing differently, and why might that work?

Keep methodology proportional to the decision your audience must make.

4. Value + evidence

CLAIM

“Our approach is faster and more accurate.”

A claim tells me what you believe.

EVIDENCE

“In our initial study, the approach reduced analysis time while maintaining diagnostic accuracy.”

Evidence gives me a reason to believe it.

5. Ask: do not end at “thank you”

What next step do you want?

- Funding
- Consortium partner
- Pilot environment
- Access to data
- Industrial expertise
- Feedback or adoption

“We are now looking for two clinical partners to validate the approach in different hospital settings.”

Translate research into value

Researchers naturally start here:

MODEL • SENSOR • METHOD • WORK PACKAGE • PLATFORM



The audience is asking:

WHAT CHANGES? • FOR WHOM? • WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Feature → benefit → value

FEATURE

What is it?

A wireless monitoring system for manual valves.

BENEFIT

What does it enable?

Continuous monitoring without manual inspection.

VALUE

Why does this stakeholder care?

Earlier error detection and lower operational safety risk.

Features describe your research. Value explains why somebody should care.

One innovation, four value propositions

RADIOLOGIST

Prioritise images that require attention

HOSPITAL

Improve diagnostic workflow

PATIENT

Support faster detection and follow-up

FUNDER

Generate evidence for responsible clinical use

What LinkedIn teaches us about pitching

3 seconds to earn attention

30 seconds to create interest

1 message that should remain

An example

INFORMS

“Researchers from our university participated in an innovation selection.”

Accurate, but flat.

CREATES CURIOSITY

“Jury duty! And what a jury. Limburg is bursting with talent.”

Voice, tension and a reason to continue.

Your first sentence does not need to contain everything. Less is more!

Make them believe you

- Be specific
- Use relevant evidence
- Make realistic claims
- Show confidence without overselling
- Acknowledge limits
- Let genuine commitment show

Make them understand you

SHORTER SENTENCES

The spoken word needs more breathing room than academic writing



ONE IDEA AT A TIME

Do not use three arguments inside one sentence.

EXPLAIN ACRONYMS

If it is necessary, translate it immediately.

PAUSE ON PURPOSE

Silence gives the audience processing time.

USE AN EXAMPLE

One concrete example can clarify a lot!

SLOW DOWN

Especially for the key message and call for action!

Make them remember you

People may remember:

- one problem
- one image
- one example
- one phrase
- one clear ask

If everything is important, nothing is memorable.

Repeat the key message naturally at the beginning, middle and end.

Online delivery: design for the small screen

CAMERA

Eye level. Look into it for the core message.

NOTES

Place them close to the camera, not at the bottom of the screen.

VOICE

Vary pace and emphasis. Pause a little longer online.

SLIDES

One idea per slide. Large type. No written script.

TIMING

Rehearse aloud with a timer.

TECH

Join early and test microphone, share screen and slide mode.

A 60-second research / proposal pitch template

HOOK	Right now, …
CHALLENGE	This matters because …
RESPONSE	We are developing / proposing …
VALUE + EVIDENCE	This could enable … and we have shown …
ASK	We are looking for …

Write it out. Say it aloud. Cut it. Time it. Repeat.

Final checklist

- ✓ AUDIENCE — One specific audience and decision
- ✓ MESSAGE — One sentence you want repeated afterwards
- ✓ STRUCTURE — Hook → challenge → response → value/evidence → ask
- ✓ PROOF — One or two credible proof points
- ✓ SLIDES — Visual support, not a written script
- ✓ DELIVERY — Clear pace, pauses, camera connection
- ✓ ENDING — A specific next step
- ✓ TIME — Practise!

A good pitch does not simplify your research.
It reveals the relevance.

Start with what matters to your audience.
Build one clear line of reasoning.
End by making the next step explicit.