Preparing a Pitch Presentation

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Agenda

- About me
- How to craft the perfect pitch presentation
- Pro tips
- Pitch exercise

About Me

Nikki Riojas

Industrial Liaison Officer–Strategic Partnerships and Innovation

Role within CASFER

- To foster relationships between university, governmental agencies, and industrial partners at the intersection of cutting-edge research and technology development within CASFER

Professional Experience

- Entrepreneur and Business Owner
- 20 years of marketing & communication leadership roles in for-profit & non-profit environments
- SBDC Marketing Consultant
- Founder, Women's Entrepreneur Society of Corpus Christi

Education

- MFA in Graphic Design
- BA in Graphic Design & Fine Art

When you **speak to everyone**,
you **speak to no one**.

MEREDITH HILL

Draw Them In

- Explain what the major question or problem you are studying is
- Share a story about why this topic is important to you
- Let the audience know why it matters and showcase the value of your work

Craft Your Approach

What is your unique approach to meeting this need?

What is your solution, broadly speaking?

- Do you have any technical issues to solve?
- What will it cost to produce?
- How will it reach customers or users?
- How can it be produced

Quantitative ex: We have created a one-step process that replaces the current two-step process with the same quality (Not – "we have a clever design")

Show the Benefits

What is the customer or user benefit?

- What problem are you solving?
- What is the financial advantage for the purchaser?
- How will the customer ultimately benefit from this?

Quantitative ex: Our one-step process reduces our cost by 50% and results in an expected ROI of 50% / yr with a profit of 3M in year 3. (Not – the ROI is excellent)

Importance of Simplicity

- Use clear, concise terminology *(your audience is there to learn, not to admire your vocabulary)*
- CLARITY over COMPLEXITY
- Apply the “billboard method” when building your slide deck

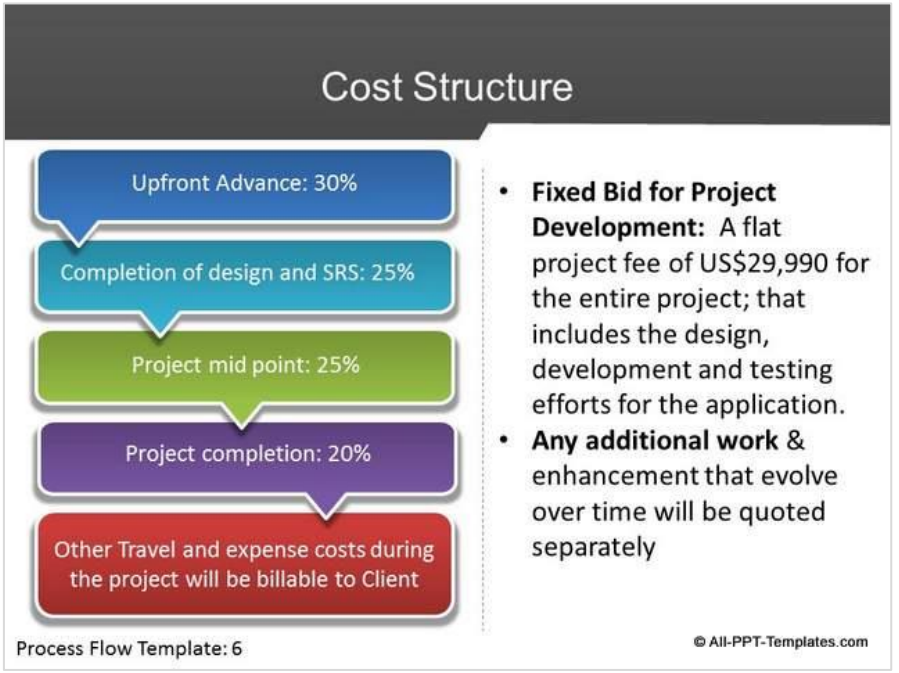
Engage with your Audience

- Try not to read directly off your slides (use them as prompts)
- Look at the audience and connect with them
- Ask leading questions and build off their answers

Visuals > Text

- Ensure your images are high resolution and impactful
- Listening vs reading

- Think about what you are saying and find images that represent the topic



Source: All PPT Templates

Adhere to Time Limits

- Make sure you stay on topic
- Create checkpoints to know when you should be at a certain point in your presentation
- Respect the schedule

Practice Makes Perfect

- Practice at home, then practice some more
- Time yourself to ensure you stay with your allotted presentation length
- Create mental notes to keep you focused

Presenting Your Poster

[Presentation Title]

[List of Authors]

Center for Advancing Sustainable and Distributed Fertilizer Production (CASFER), a National Science Foundation Engineering Research Center, [CASFER Partner University and address]

Corresponding Author: [Author Name and Email]

CASFER

An NSF Engineering Research Center

Introduction

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Methodology

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Fig. 1. [Figure Name]

Results

TEMPLATE INSTRUCTIONS

These are suggested heading titles and section spacings. Please rename and rearrange for what best suits your project. When changing headings, please be sure you follow the template provided, with a green box and white lettering.

CASFER prioritizes visual elements in all presentations. Please include graphs, photos, and other visual elements when appropriate. When at all possible please be sure that graphs are with the CASFER brand colors. CASFER brand colors are as follows:

- Hex #248351
- Hex #41929D
- Hex #436661
- Hex #9F6F47
- Hex #000000

In the upper left-hand corner, please circle the logo of the primary institution, and draw arrows to the collaborating institution(s), if any. An example is given above.

Font Guidelines:

- Use Arial for all CASFER fonts
- Font Sizes are as Follows:
  - Title – 108
  - Authors – 70
  - Centers – 50
  - Subheaders – 50
  - Body paragraphs – 36

This acknowledgement text must appear on your poster as regulated by the NSF. You may include other acknowledgements when necessary, but your poster must include "This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 2133576."

In the lower right-hand corner, please circle the primary thrust that this project falls within. And indicate with arrows the other thrusts that are incorporated into this project, if any. An example is given below.

Conclusion

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Acknowledgement

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References

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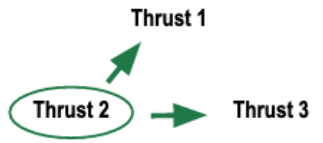
Thrust Interactions



Preparing to Present Your Poster

- How does the work fit into the testbeds?
- How is it interdisciplinary?
- How does it involve different thrusts?
- How are you collaborating with other institutions?

Pro Tips for Your Pitch

- Know your audience
- You need a Hook
  - Grabs your audience's attention
  - Tells a story
  - *Create a catchy start to your presentation to hook the audience's attention and prepare them for the important pitch they will soon see.*
- BE VISUAL – Use graphics and/or pictures
- YOU are the presentation! Be dynamic and sell the audience on why your idea/project is needed.

How to Give a 90-Second Scientific Pitch

1 HOOK

≈15 sec

Grab them with an analogy.

Something
every listener has felt.
Pick a thing a 12-year-old
would understand.

2 Problem

≈15 sec

Name what's the challenge.

The gap in your field
in ONE plain-language line.
Use a number if you can.
Skip the jargon.

3 SOLUTION

≈25 sec

Say what YOU do.

Your research, in words
a stranger can repeat.
Name your product,
not your protocol.

4 IMPACT

≈20 sec

Why it matters.

The outside-the-lab win.
Connect to something
the audience
already cares about.

5 CALL BACK

≈15 sec

Close the loop.

Return to the hook.
Same words. Same picture.
This is what people
will quote back.

1. **Pick an analogy your listener has already felt.**
2. **Say the science in ONE sentence.**
3. **Practice out loud. Twenty times. Minimum.**
4. **End with the same image you started with.**

The Recipe in Action

HOOK Quick question: when your phone hits twenty percent battery, do you throw it out? Of course not. You plug it in.

PROBLEM But every day, our wastewater plants do the opposite. Sludge goes through anaerobic digestion, and we throw the leftover 20% away.

SOLUTION I'm building the charger for that last 20%. My research turns digested sludge into methane to fuel the grid AND volatile fatty acids, the building blocks for bioplastics and green chemicals.

IMPACT But carbon is only one battery. There's nitrogen too, and that's where I plug into CASFER. My fatty acids feed the microbes that pull nitrogen out of the water and turn it into clean, distributed fertilizer.

CALLBACK So next time your phone hits 20% and you reach for the charger, remember: there's a sludge tank somewhere doing the same math. We just have to plug it in.

What each section is doing

HOOK
The phone at 20% is universal — everyone has lived that anxiety. → Analogy = borrowed emotion.

PROBLEM
One line. A concrete number (20%). No jargon like 'digestate' yet.

SOLUTION
'Charger' = plain-English stand-in for pretreatment. Products first, protocol later.

IMPACT
Second use of 'battery' bridges to CASFER without forcing it. Ties MY work to THEIR mission.

CALLBACK
Same words as the hook. This is the line the judges will quote back later.

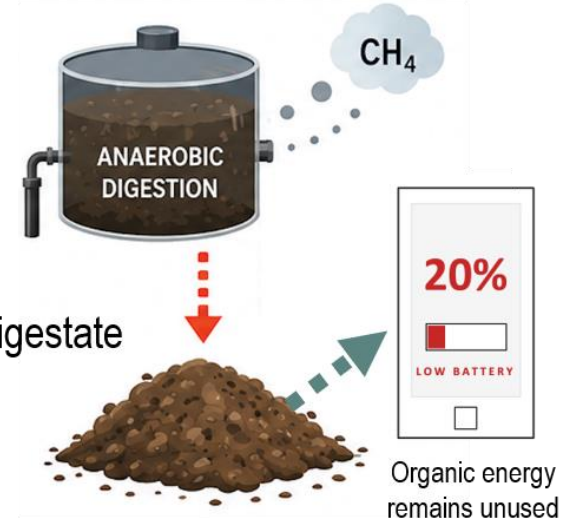
HOOK 15s	PROBLEM 15s	SOLUTION 25s	IMPACT 20s	CALLBACK 15s

Electrochemical Digestate Conversion for More Recovery, Less Disposal

Neidy Ocuane

Problem

Anaerobic digestion recovers ***most methane*** ~80%

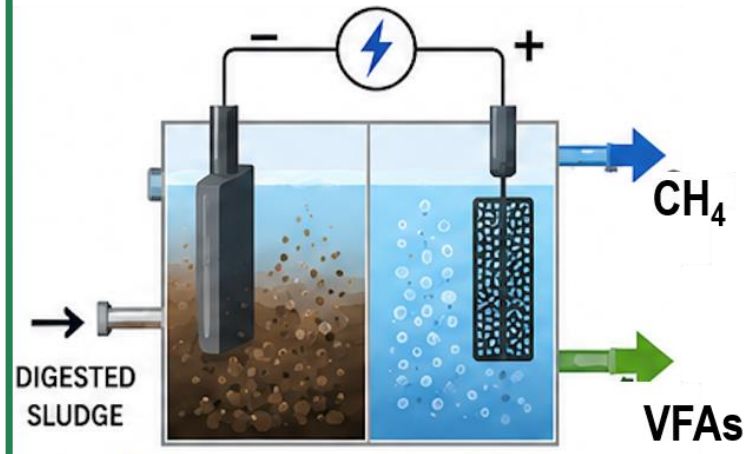


~20% of energy and nearly **all nutrients** remain locked in **digestate**

Untapped potential for resource recovery

Our Solution

Electrochemical Conversion of Digested Sludge



CH_4 Renewable energy + **VFAs** High-value chemicals

Integrates with nutrient recovery for circular wastewater treatment

IMPACT

Renewable Energy
More CH_4 → grid & heat

Bioplastics & Chemicals
VFAs → PHAs, biofuels

Fertilizer (CASFER)
VFAs power N recovery

Carbon Out

Nitrogen Out

Loop Closed

Building a circular, resilient water future

Pitch Exercise: Favorite Movie

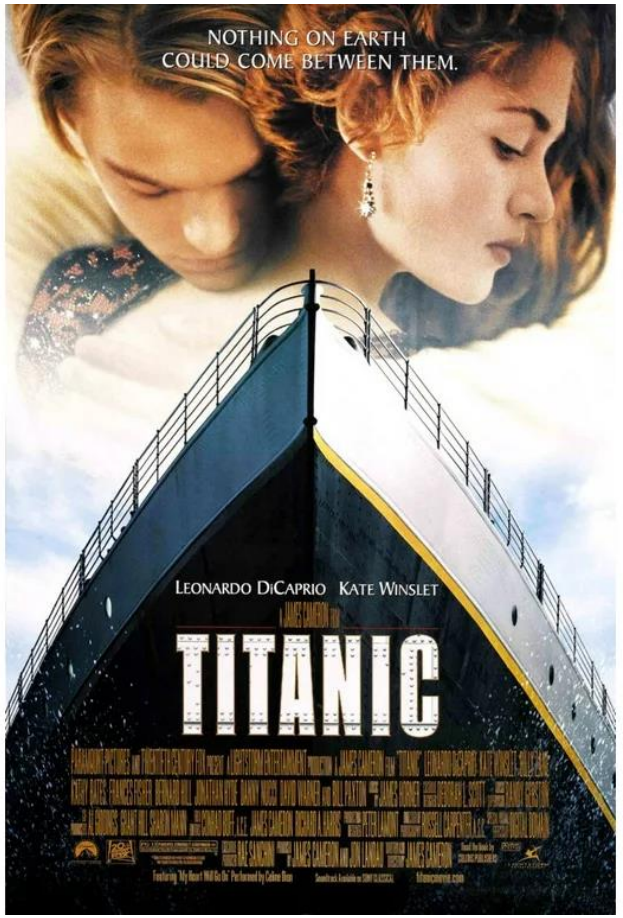
Objective
Select your favorite movie and in a 1-minute pitch, explain why it's your favorite.

1. Selection
Choose your favorite movie. This could be a blockbuster hit, an indie film, a documentary, etc.

2. Preparation
Take the next 5-7 minutes to prepare your thoughts. Focus on the key points you want to highlight in your pitch.

Think about the following:
Summary: A brief overview of the movie's plot or main idea.
Personal Connection: Why does this movie resonate with you personally?
Unique Features: What makes this movie stand out? (e.g., memorable characters, insightful themes, etc.)
Recommendation: Why should others watch this movie?

Pitch Exercise: Favorite Movie

3. Pitch Practice
Get into groups of 3-4. Each person will share their pitch. Remember the importance of staying within the 1-minute time limit

4. Presentation
Select 1 member from each group to share your 1-minute book pitch with the class