

Study shows entrepreneurs should tweak their pitches based on how innovative their idea is

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In a study examining styles of pitching ideas to audiences, researchers found that pitches promoting radical ideas are better received when framed in concrete and explanatory "how" terms, while progressive ideas do better with abstract "why" style of pitches.

Previous research found that professional audiences, like investors, prefer concrete pitches with how-style explanations, while lay audiences such as students and crowdfunders respond better to "why" style pitches for [abstract ideas](#).

Professor Simone Ferriani, professor of entrepreneurship at Bayes Business School (formerly Cass), City, University of London, said, "We wanted to identify the best way for entrepreneurs to [pitch](#) their ideas to get audiences' attention and investment. Could the way they pitch affect their success? What if they had great ideas but were pitching them in the wrong way? We wanted to explore which styles of pitching work best with differing types of ideas."

To test this, academics conducted two experiments using an [online survey](#) with business students evaluating pitch decks, to see when [new ideas](#) were more likely to be viewed positively. The study used entrepreneurial pitches and varied the ideas' originality and the style of abstract "why" the idea works versus concrete "how" the idea works. They looked at how these factors influenced people's reception of the idea and their willingness to support it.

The results indicate that the pitching strategy should match the idea's novelty to make it more appealing and likely to attract investment. The paper, "Radically concrete or incrementally abstract? The contingent role of abstract and concrete framing in pitching novel ideas," is [published](#) in *Innovation: Organization & Management*.

Professor Ferriani added, "Imagine a tech startup introducing a groundbreaking new virtual reality (VR) gaming platform that revolutionizes the gaming experience. Our findings suggest that in their pitch to potential users, they should emphasize concrete usability details such as the advanced feedback technology, the immersive 360-degree visuals and the seamless integration with existing gaming consoles.

"When ideas have the potential to disrupt the status quo, this explanatory approach is key to offset the puzzlement that novel ideas can cause. Conversely, when ideas are less of a leap and more of a step forward, such as with incremental innovations, abstract language that paints the 'why' can be more effective."

Denise Falchetti, assistant professor of management at George Washington University School of Business (GWSB), added, "This strategy taps into the audience's existing knowledge and expectations, connecting the new idea to familiar concepts and emphasizing its place within a broader vision or goal."

Gino Cattani, Professor of Management and Organizations at New York University Stern School, concluded, "The research advises a tailored approach: for groundbreaking innovations, detail the practicalities; for incremental improvements, focus on the overarching vision. As the language of entrepreneurship continues to evolve, this study offers a compass for navigating the intricate dance of persuasion and influence, providing a linguistic toolkit for turning novel concepts into embraced innovations."

More information: Denise Falchetti et al, Radically concrete or incrementally abstract? The contingent role of abstract and concrete framing in pitching novel ideas, *Innovation* (2024). [DOI: 10.1080/14479338.2024.2363254](https://doi.org/10.1080/14479338.2024.2363254)

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