

PITCH IT FORWARD

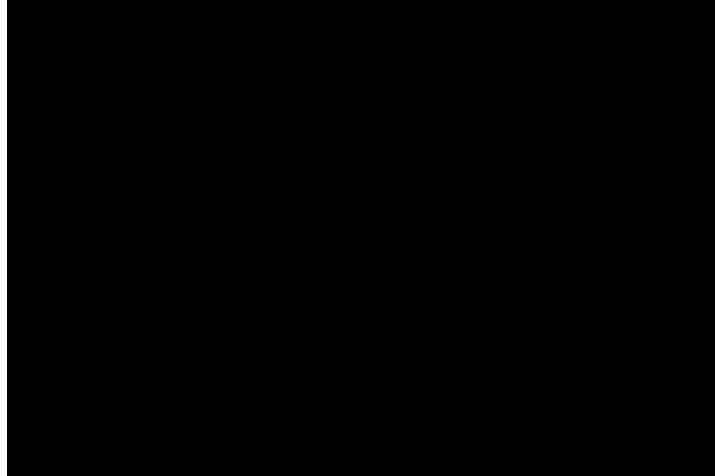


By Omar Douglass

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In my last blog, I identified 6 Tips for Attracting Startup Funding that I gleaned from a workshop on raising startup capital. As #4 on the list contends, an important piece of the startup puzzle quite frankly is for entrepreneurs to “nail the pitch” when presenting ideas to investors. Most times you really do only get one shot - and you shouldn't miss. This part of the process has always been a particular source of stress and anxiety for me, but I feel a little more confident after taking some secondhand advice I heard to heart.

On a recent broadcast of *This American Life* I heard the voice of a young girl teaching a younger girl, “how to become a entrepreneur, how to make their own money and buy the things that they would need in their life.” I was driving at the time and immediately had to pull over, park and listen to the whole thing. Episode 533: “It's Not the Product, It's the Person” featured 11-year old entrepreneur and all-star pitcher, Super Business Girl, also known as the very personable Miss Asia Newson of Detroit, Michigan. That's the wind up. Here's her pitch:



From salutation to sign off - and the all-important monetary transaction in between - Asia seems to understand that she's selling herself more than she is her candles. Using her cute little girl-powered charm to captivate unsuspecting adults, the youngster's enthusiasm is contagious. Informed, confident, and concise, Asia's veteran sounding pitch is perfect. It's the kind of live-action branding that captivates consumers by convincing them of the merits of their purchases. You can imagine if she stopped you on the street, you'd give her an \$8 "investment" and feel really good about it.

The story of Asia and her grade-school trainees also makes me feel good about the future of entrepreneurship. It's inspiring to know that young people are learning relevant skills for business and impressive to see them freely teaching their peers to do the same. It's a poignant lesson for every entrepreneur that reminded me of my own first pitches - which I didn't know were "pitches" at the time - to folks in and around my neighborhood to mow their lawns. The translation of performing a needed service into putting money in my pocket is a feeling that has stuck with me throughout my entrepreneurial journey.

In the feature on the radio, Asia also had some tangible advice for those of us with trouble closing pitches. If you listen to it, you'll hear her say a lot, but concerning the art of presentation, she says, "The number-one thing is give energy. Two, speak very loud, be articulate, use hand gestures, and make eye contact."

Right on. In the interview, Super Business Girl points to a few other things to keep in mind as well:

1. Recognize that **you** are your **product** and your **brand**.
 2. Don't be shy and **don't sell yourself short**.
 3. Have **confidence**.
 4. Exhibit **enthusiasm**.
 5. Know that you just might inspire someone else to do the same.
- & last, but not least...

Never fear! Super Business Girl is here!!!

Thank goodness.

What was your first entrepreneurial experience? Do you have any thoughts on the next generation of entrepreneurs? Are you currently doing anything to support them? Had you heard of Super Business Girl before? Please share your thoughts in the comment section below. We would love to hear about you.

Ed McLaughlin is currently co-writing the book "The Purpose Is Profit: Secrets of a Successful Entrepreneur from Startup to Exit" with Wyn Lydecker and Paul McLaughlin.

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