

Pitch Coaching Case Study

Our Client

Aurora is an independent PR agency specialising in the healthcare sector. Established in late 2005 by two experienced PR consultants with a background in big brand, stock exchange-listed agencies, Aurora functions within a tightly regulated and highly competitive market. They provide

- Media relations for awareness-raising campaigns
- Programmes designed to communicate new information to healthcare professionals
- 'Issue Management' in broadcast, print and digital media

The company's success depends on maintaining links with their own client base while beating out other organisations for new contracts. The people their pitches must persuade are the marketing and communications departments within international pharmaceutical corporations, charities, and medical device companies.

The Problem

Aurora had been a fresh presence in the sector, but were now entering a phase when they were no longer the 'new kid on the block'. They found themselves losing contracts at the pitch stage to other younger specialist houses and the established sector leaders. The healthcare PR market is extremely **competitive**.

Nearly all PR outfits make similar service offerings to clients, and this means that Aurora needed to **differentiate** themselves clearly and tell the story of what makes this particular PR outfit better to work with than their competitors.

The Process

In discussions with the owners, the Spontaneity Shop went back to the drawing board. They looked at Aurora's primary credentials presentation, the opening bid of the pitch selection process that gives the company's background and distinctiveness. Behind the slide-show images and business language the Spontaneity Shop identified a compelling human story, in which two principled, ambitious collaborators started their own outfit on a living room sofa, with the desire to break away from being an anonymous corporate entity. The same content went from a **standard business-speak paragraph** (reassuring but unsurprising) to being a **PR version of 'Jerry Maguire'** (attractive, gripping, compelling).

Other story principles were then applied to the framing of the client's problem and solution. **Human, emotional and visual details** were drawn out and emphasised; every piece of evidence had a **context that raised the stakes** and the contract was re-framed as a **journey and a transformation**. At the end of the process - though the same discipline, energy and expertise were on offer - the Aurora team's pitch material was radically different.

The Spontaneity Shop then coached Aurora's pitch team in **happy high status**, a procedure for boosting their own **charisma** in an authentic and personal way. The pitch team were encouraged to adopt a **show, don't tell** approach when considering the emotional impact of the new pitch style. This makes a sale more human and credible, and can transform a formal speech to disengaged buyers into a conversation with excited and engaged clients, who have bought the idea before you leave the room.



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The Result

The effect of Aurora's commitment to these insights was **IMMEDIATE and DRAMATIC**. The team won both their next two pitches, with positive feedback in the room and talk of future collaboration while the presentations were still happening. Their third pitch (to a German company) was lost to a local competitor with an established relationship with the client. Pitches 4, 5 and 6 were back on track, with the Aurora team repeating the preparation process and being awarded the contract.

From an average win rate of 25%, Aurora have lifted their pitch successes to 83%. Working with the Spontaneity Shop on each pitch has **more than tripled their hit rate**. This has meant that instead of reducing their scale and ambitions as a team, and halting their traction, Aurora have not only built on their earlier success but accelerated it - and they have achieved this growth during a major economic downturn.

In the marketing communications sector, word-of-mouth is paramount. People are hearing that Aurora is hot: 'the agency to beat'. More importantly the team themselves believe it, and take this confidence into every new pitching situation.

Fig 1.

Date	Description	Outcome	Contract Size
May 2009	Awareness-raising campaign	WIN	£100K
June 2009	Launch of new cancer drug	WIN	£150K*
Sept 2009	Clinical nutrition conference protocols	LOSE	-
June 2009	Launch of new multiple sclerosis drug	WIN	£77.5K
Aug 2009	Prescription decision software	WIN	£100K
Oct 2009	Cancer therapy targeted campaign	WIN	£109K

* Drug failed to launch, so PR work was cancelled

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