

Case Study | The Pitch

Evie Johnson

Student, 21

Winner of The Pitch 2017

Marketing was never part of my game plan. But during my placement year of my degree in business management and economics at Nottingham Trent University, I built up a massive interest in it. And if there's one thing that The Pitch did for me in my final year, it was cementing everything I learned and loved about it. Plus, it helped me climb the career ladder.

During my placement – which I did at BMW – I was lucky enough to be thrown into the dynamic and proactive marketing team for MINI and best of all, I was given responsibility for managing the UK social media page. So when, back at university in my final year, the guy I'd been on placement with got in touch to tell me about The Pitch, I didn't have to think twice about applying for it with him. I felt confident that Tom Brown – who was at Leeds Beckett University – and I could take both a professional and realistic approach, using everything we'd learned on placement.

The business we were asked to pitch to was StudentUniverse, a travel company for 18-25 year-olds – mostly students – whose marketing objective was to replicate the success that they had in America here in the UK. Although this was a tough brief, we relish a challenge and got stuck into researching and brainstorming straight away, ready for our 2,500 word proposal.

We started by reviewing and analysing the wider market – especially the competition – and exploring political, legal, economic and technological influences. Internally, we looked at where the business was currently at – especially around social media and their website – and where they wanted to be. Next, we worked out exactly who was our target market and how we could ensure we were appealing to them and then we got down to the nitty-gritty of tactics. First, we proposed a website review to ensure the look and feel as well as the functionality of the website were

well suited to the target audience, who are always online; second, we suggested things like flash sales to really encourage people to click the button and buy; and thirdly, we proposed a loyalty scheme to hang onto customers. Other tactics included a social media campaign, a CRM partnership with the NUS, and a blogger activation. And finally, our action and implementation plans focused on timings and budgets, while the control and measurement aspect involved setting, monitoring and measuring targets.

We were more than ready for our 10-minute pitch to the panel of judges when we got through to the second round – and because we were used to presenting to 300+ people at BMW, we weren't all that nervous.

Why do I think we won? Because we didn't just focus on the creative side, but how we were going to get there – the strategic bit. We were chuffed to bits and it was very well received at BMW too, where we've both since been given permanent jobs in strategic areas of the company.



Graduates can't afford to take a back seat in marketing and as placements become more and more common, they need to find other ways to have an edge. I think The Pitch is a great start and it's good fun. The money has come in really handy for my relocation too.

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Simon Heptonstall

Student, 22

Winner of The Pitch 2016

My friend Rhys Plater and I ended up doing courses without exams in the January of our final year. So when I came across an advert for The Pitch in the university library one day, I said we might as well give it a go. I didn't think for a moment we'd win, but it was a constructive way to fill our time and surely the very act of doing it would look good on our CVs. The money was a big incentive too – we were students, after all.

Our Pitch challenge was to increase brand awareness and positivity for Rustlers, who make hot snacks, and after some preparation and research, we pulled it off within a couple of weeks. We enjoyed bouncing ideas around but we eventually decided on our simple but workable idea of going to festivals and giving people a free Rustler burger if they posted it on Instagram. There was a lot of detail in our plan when it came to branding – everything from branded ponchos to a branded tent with games in. And we nailed down costings of everything from the merchandise to moving up a size in festival.

Handily, our lecturers invited us to present our pitch to them and gave us detailed feedback, which was invaluable. By this time, we could easily have written three or four times as much as we did, but somehow we whittled it down to 2,500 words and were over the moon when we got invited back to pitch to the panel of judges. That was when we got going on the visual side of things, which was a biggie for us, right down to using Photoshop to show what a branded Rustler's tent would actually look like. We even had branded cue cards.

It was nerve racking doing the pitch as neither of us had ever done anything like it before. But we knew our idea inside and out and had gone through the presentation so many times that we knew it word-for-word. Even the night before, we went through

it about seven times. We felt it went perfectly and when the judges said they had no questions, it made us hopeful. After being confirmed as being in the top three, we waited a few weeks until the Marketing Excellence Awards where we found out we'd won, and it was the perfect opportunity to celebrate our achievement.



The whole experience boosted my confidence and it helped me in my final year exams too because of what I'd learned. It also contributed to me getting my current job in IT sales at Softcat, not least because it gave me something to talk about in the interview.



So I'd have no hesitation in recommending The Pitch to others. Yes, it's a lot of work – and hard work – and it's easy to be put off by the sheer number of people who apply. But if you team up with someone you know you work well with and you're prepared to run your ideas past family, friends and lecturers – anyone who'll listen and give feedback, really – it's a fantastic experience.