

You've Made the Shortlist...Now What? Presentation techniques that increase your win potential...

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Congratulations! Your firm has been short listed and your prospective client recognizes that your firm and your team are qualified to do the work. However, every firm on the short list is qualified, so what do you do now? Use your 30 minute interview to convince the panel that you know and understand their project more than any other team. Focus on the panel's three favorite topics: "me", "me" and "me." Change broad statements to project specific examples. Make it personal since every panel member has different needs and specific hot buttons. Here are our top 10 techniques to accomplish all of these goals.

1. **Demonstrate "added value"**. When you introduce a speaker or they introduce themselves, tell the panel what added value they bring to this project besides experience on similar projects. Show how each individual is more valuable than their counterparts on other teams. Do they know the local inspectors personally? Have they worked on this site before? Have they worked successfully with the community groups? Include this in the introductions right up front.
2. **Make it personal**. Look for opportunities to mention the panel by name. Include their name when you reference an issue that's important to them. Include their name when you state a benefit that will make them/ their division look good. Include their name if they're the key person you'll be working with on the project.
3. **Separate "me too" from "wow"**. As you listen to each speaker and review each slide, are you offering something that every team can deliver ("me too") or an approach that sets you apart ("wow")? For example, every firm delivers projects "on time and on budget". Instead, offer an example of how you worked around scope changes and permit delays and still finished on time.
4. **What's your point?** Every slide and every board should have one clear message that summarizes what you're discussing. Use it as the title of the slide and make that your first statement when you introduce that slide/board. Instead of using "Organization chart" start with "Proven team that knows your priorities".
5. **Energy and enthusiasm matter**. Every panel believes that their project is the most important. Every panel wants to know that you're excited to work with them and are personally invested in their messages. Project your voice across the room. Use gestures that match your words. Move often and always try to stand closer to the panel. Smile to appear confident and demonstrate that you're approachable. Enthusiasm

- becomes a more important factor when you're the next to last or the last team they're seeing.
6. **Barrage them with benefits.** When you mention benefits out loud and often, your team appears to have more "added value" and it's an easy way to build rapport with the panel. Include tangible benefits ("this reduces cost") and intangible benefits ("keeps the community groups happy"). Here's a quick quiz for you: state 10 benefits that you mentioned/should have mentioned in your last shortlist interview.
 7. **Show me.** Use a multimedia approach to get and keep their attention. Include Power Point, boards, props, maps of their site, photos of your site visit and sample documents that reinforce your "added value". Take visuals off the easel and bring them over to the table. Make boards smaller if the interview room is tight. Always provide a written agenda at the beginning of the interview.
 8. **Take out unnecessary phrases.** You can save time by eliminating phrases that add no value and might make the panel feel slighted. We refer to these as the "stupid hammer" and ask that you leave them out. Avoid saying: "as I mentioned before", "to tell you the truth", "again", "as you can see on this slide" and "that's an interesting question".
 9. **Practice, practice, practice.** Really. Here's a quick question for you: why does Tiger woods practice for hours everyday? Perhaps to stay at the top of his game and ensure his position as number one. Use practice for the same reasons. Practice on your own and with your team and you'll be more relaxed and confident. Practice the presentation and Q&A, so you can focus on the panel, watch their reactions and build a connection during your interview.
 10. **Prepare for emergencies.** What if the projector breaks? What if the interview starts late? What if a speaker gets stuck? What if the panel is different than what we expected? Each short list interview takes on a life of its own. How you react to presentation "emergencies" shows the panel how you'll react to project emergencies. Be prepared, have a back up plan and keep a cool head.

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