

Making up ideas as you address a group is often the hallmark of the amateur... And yet some people positively insist their creativity only 'flows' when the fear of a deadline becomes all consuming. We have a name for these people – but we're too polite to use such language here!

**Sounds harsh...** Well, yes, it does! We're of the view, though, that people who say they need a deadline are either being somewhat pretentious or genuinely don't understand how their minds work. It doesn't quite go without saying that studies show people do not, in fact, perform better under stress. Those that insist they do might never accept that they merely perceive it that way because, when time's running out, they have to – and usually do – deliver. But correlation does not imply causation even though, as some anonymous wag once put it, "Nothing is as productive as the last minute."

**But what if...** It's possible to utilise this flawed thinking so that the people who believe it, can feel the pressure... But the people that know better, can be spared the circus that it sometimes creates? Fortunately, there's a very simple way to do just that: use TWO deadlines!

**How does that help?** Well, let's first say that using a two-deadline system only really works in an environment with firm management and intelligent staff. That's because it's very easy to find the holes in the plan and undermine or sabotage it. In other words, this isn't a way to trick creative people – it's a way to manage them, providing they're mature enough to be managed, and it's much better to use the approach with complete transparency. Here's how to do it:

- Acknowledge the date that you're pitching ideas to your client.
- Set up an internal meeting a long time ahead of the client meeting.
- Ask your creative people to pitch at the internal meeting as if it's the real thing.
- Make it clear that the ideas generated at this meeting are the ideas you intend to pursue.
- Run the internal meeting in the way that you have found most productive!

**This creates the deadline** that some people feel they need, but also gives you an inbuilt safety margin. Also, if your actual client meeting is some time away from the dry run then you have a lot of wriggle room to work on or generate other thoughts. All this helps avoid what we think is one of the biggest and most common mistakes in pitching: allowing creative people to speak as if they've thought about everything when, in fact, they're bluffing through it for the very first time.

**Why does this work?** Simply put, it compels people to start thinking earlier in the process than perhaps they otherwise might. It asks the types of creative people that are surprised by the words that come out of their mouths to distance that moment from the one in which they speak to a client!



**BE  
CREATIVE -  
BEFORE THE  
DEADLINE!**

*"DMI are so helpful and organised - I can't really fault the service!" Laura Marshall, Seven Stones*



**Anything else?** Yes: keep in mind that some people may – legitimately, if wrongly – feel that this approach robs them of their muse or what have you. Be tactful, but don't accept that! Do everything you can to ensure the 'dry-run' pitch – for want of a better name – has the realism and urgency of the client meeting.

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