



10 Top Tips for Finalists

Collated by independent judge, Nic Hallett, Excel Communications (HRD) Ltd.

So it's judging day! Congratulations on reaching the Pf Awards Assessment Day. It's a great chance to show your peers just what you, your brands and your company are doing to help patients and the NHS. Here are the 10 top tips gathered from the judges over recent years to make sure you maximise this opportunity to shine. This is the recipe for winning.

TIP 1 - GET YOUR HEAD STRAIGHT

Firstly, know that every judge wants you to do well, they will enjoy your success and appreciate your skill. Your audience will do everything they can to put you at your ease.

TIP 2 - MAKE TIME TO PLAN & REHEARSE

Write an outcome that meets the brief in the time allowed. Then set down what the judges need to hear, so they can understand what is special, unique, different, or innovative about you. Choose relevant visuals to illustrate your messages. Home-made slides must look professional so consider your design, font, colours, grammar, and spellings.

TIP 3 - IMAGE

How do you want to be perceived by the judges? Probably as professional, knowledgeable, and engaging. So, align your image with this goal. Consider the clothes you'll wear, head and/or facial hair, jewellery and make-up. All this will tell your story before you've even said a word.

TIP 4 - BE PUNCTUAL

Which means be early, ready to start by your allotted time. Plan plenty of time to get ready... and relax.

TIP 5 - CONNECT

Judges are human too so take a few moments at the beginning to engage with them. Introduce your company, yourself and your relevant experience, explain your area of expertise and what you are selling or presenting. Rapport is fundamental to everything that follows.

TIP 6 - UNDERSTAND

Invite the judges to briefly introduce themselves and their relevant expertise; this highlights areas of common interest. It will also enable you to pitch your session at a suitable level, avoiding blinding them with science or patronising simplicity.

TIP 7 - ENGAGE

Judges want to be engaged so give them plenty of eye contact via the webcam, gestures and facial expressions. A smile is a winning trait. Use judges' names as they introduced themselves but "Dr John Smith" is usually "Dr Smith" rather than just "John".

TIP 8 - INTERACT

A level of interaction keeps judges engaged, checks their understanding and uncovers concerns. In a sales call, plan some good open questions. In a presentation, invite comments or use a closed question to check understanding.

TIP 9 - TIMING

Use all your available time to make your case - but don't run over, because the judges will stop you - ask them to give you a 5-minute warning before the end. If you're running right up to the wire then let them know, that you know, that your time is nearly up.

TIP 10 - QUESTIONS

Questions from the judges are to seek clarity and address areas of the brief not yet covered. They are also observing how you manage Q&A's. If you're unclear about what's being asked, seek clarity. If you don't know the answer, admit it. When you have an answer, keep it relevant and brief. Maintain your professional presenter style, address everyone and check that your answer has met their needs.

At the end, summarise your key messages and seek commitment to action if appropriate. These will be your last, and your lasting, impressions on the judges so finish with a positive, confident finale.