



Entrepreneurial Excellence in Presentations: Seven Steps To Success

By John Yates, Special To LTW

Editor's note: John C. Yates is the Partner-In-Charge of the Technology Group of the Atlanta law firm of Morris, Manning & Martin, LLP and is a regular contributor to Local Tech Wire.

ATLANTA - I recently attended an investor presentation by a Southeastern entrepreneur in the life science area. He made one of the most impressive presentations that I've seen in a long time. Since I've also attended some disastrous presentations, I would like to comment on the ABCs of an excellent entrepreneurial presentation – whether to investors, VCs or friends.

1. Present the Facts: The life science entrepreneur started out with the background facts on his company. He was clear about the past successes and failures of the business and didn't try to sugarcoat the past challenges. In two slides, he communicated a clear historical perspective as to past steps taken by the company to get to its current situation.

2. Avoid the Adverbs: The presentation had no adverbs. There was no embellishment of the company's current situation. The story was strengthened by the absence of self-serving superlatives regarding the team and its technology.

3. Always be Realistic: In the life science area, an investor must be patient. The entrepreneur's presentation stressed the fact that FDA approval would take time – or even longer. There was no attempt to set unrealistic expectations regarding the government approval process. Nor was there pessimism regarding the possibility of obtaining early approval.

4. Share the Credit: The excellent entrepreneurial presentation featured a heavy dose of credit sharing. The CEO recognized the accomplishments of the team and allowed each team member to discuss them. The great entrepreneurs have a unique talent of developing a loyal team through mutual respect and recognition.

5. Look to the Future: During the course of the presentation, the CEO called on team members to discuss the future steps to be taken in implementing the business plan. Each executive displayed a strong understanding of the subject matter and concisely reviewed the future timetable of events. The CEO noted the collegial decision-making process in the company and the constant communication among the executives.

6. The Silent "Ask": The presentation was highlighted by the absence of a request for more money (but my belief is that every person present at the meeting was prepared to write a check if requested – and, of course, assuming securities law compliance).

The Q&A session did include a discussion of future capital requirements. The CEO responded that the company was prepared to raise more capital, if needed. However, the current plan called for moving forward without additional capital.

7. The Use of Testimonials: This excellent presentation included a rare unrehearsed and unexpected testimonial. The presence of a satisfied customer making unsolicited and positive comments regarding the company was rare and effective.

If you're an entrepreneur, consider these best practices for your next presentation. If you're an investor in an entrepreneurial company, share these thoughts with the executive team of your portfolio company.

In summary, an entrepreneur's presentation can be excellent with the right focus on the executive team, and creation of the correct level of audience expectations based on the information provided. Follow these rules and you'll be amazed at the response.

John C. Yates Chairs the Technology Group of the law firm Morris, Manning & Martin, LLP, which has offices in Atlanta, Charlotte and Washington, D.C. He can be reached at jcy@mmmlaw.com and (404) 504-5444.

This column is presented for educational and information purposes and is not intended to constitute legal advice.