

Recording the pitch

SESSION 07

09.16.26

ART 418 · The Business of Design · How to present when nobody is in the room

Workhorse Collective

Name Abraham Garcia
Email abe@wrkhrs.co

ART 418 · Fall 2026

Meets Mon + Wed, 1:30 to 2:50
Today Session 07 · 09.16.2026

Recording is harder than presenting in person.

People leave early

In person they stay because you are standing in front of them. On video they decide in thirty seconds. Say what the product is and what problem it solves on slide one.

No one bails you out

In person, if you lose your place, someone asks a question. On video it just keeps going. Know the point of every slide.

Nerves show more

In person a pause is fine. On video it sounds unprepared. Practice fixes this. Editing does not.

The upside

Ten minutes instead of three. Enough time to show your evidence. Ten is the limit, not the goal. Seven is fine.

"Be a scientist when you work, and a snake charmer when you present."

MIKE MONTEIRO · 13 WAYS DESIGNERS SCREW UP CLIENT PRESENTATIONS

Presenting the work is part of the work. Monteiro wrote thirteen mistakes for a room with a client in it. Most of them still apply on a recording. Four get harder.

Monday's reading is his book, [Design Is a Job](#), chapters 1 and 2.

Thirteen ways designers screw up a presentation.

BEFORE YOU START

- 1

Trying to please the client

You were hired to reach their goal, not to make them happy.
- 3

Opening with an apology

They will remember the apology and forget the work.
- 4

Not setting the stage

Say why they are here, what they will see, what you need from them.

IN THE ROOM

- 2

Sitting down

"You'll seem more confident if you're standing up. Your voice will carry better."
- 7

Reading a script

"Be a scientist when you work, and a snake charmer when you present."
- 6

Taking notes

You are on stage. Someone else writes.

WHAT YOU SAY

- 5

The real estate tour

"You don't sell a house by talking about sheetrock."
- 9

Talking about typefaces

"Clients don't give a shit about typefaces. And if they do, they'll ask."
- 10

Saying how hard you worked

Sell the result, not the effort.

WHEN THEY TALK

- 8

Getting defensive

"You are not your work and your work is not you."
- 11

Treating questions as change requests

Answer the question that was asked.
- 12

Not steering the feedback

Know what you need from them before you walk in.
- 13

Asking "do you like it?"

They did not hire you to make something they liked.

Four of the thirteen get harder when nobody is in the room.

2 · Sitting down

Stand up anyway. A standing voice carries into a microphone the same way it carries into a room. Put the laptop on a stack of books and the camera comes up with you.

5 · The real estate tour

You cannot point at the screen, so you will want to describe it. Do not. They can see the slide. Tell them what it means and why you chose it.

7 · Reading a script

Worse on a recording, because nobody interrupts you. A read paragraph runs the whole ten minutes. Know the point of each slide and say it in a sentence.

13 · "Do you like it?"

You cannot ask, and that is a good thing. End on the ask: what you want them to agree to. Then stop talking.

Say it plainly

Say what it is before you say why.

Three things

KEVIN HALE, Y COMBINATOR

What you are making. What problem it solves. Who it is for. Get those three into the first thirty seconds and the rest of the deck can be argued with.

The mom test

HALE

"A great pitch is one where you can tell it to your mom and she gets it." Write two sentences before you record. Say them on slide one.

What kills it

HALE'S LIST

Vague words. Two ideas tangled together. Jargon. Marketing language that the ear skips over.

One idea a slide

NANCY DUARTE

A viewer should get the slide in three seconds. If they are reading, the slide is a teleprompter and you are competing with it.

How the good ones do it

Six rules from people who present for a living.

Kevin Hale

Y COMBINATOR

Two sentences a stranger could repeat. Big type, one point per slide, nothing to decode.

Nancy Duarte

SLIDE:OLOGY

One idea per slide. Three seconds to get it.

Airbnb, 2009

THE SEED DECK

Every statement fits on one line. The best slide is one sentence: "We take a 10% commission on each transaction."

Sandwich

LAUNCH FILMS FOR SLACK AND SQUARE

The founder on camera, the product in use, under two minutes. The person is why anyone believes the product.

Patrick Winston

MIT, HOW TO SPEAK

Open with a promise: what they will know at the end that they do not know now. Not a joke.

Mike Monteiro

THE THIRTEEN

Stand up. Do not describe what they can see. Explain every decision.

Sound

Bad sound is what makes people stop watching.

Distance

IZOTOPE, WISTIA

Four to six inches from the mic, a little off to the side so your breath does not hit it. For you: the earbud mic at your collar, or your phone on the desk in front of you.

Room

IZOTOPE

Soft room. Bedroom, couch, a closet with clothes in it. Not the kitchen or the bathroom. Fans, air conditioner and fridge off. Phone on silent.

Level

WISTIA

"Aim for 75% when setting the gain level." Test it by reading a sentence the way you will actually talk. Never let it clip.

Gear

WISTIA'S CHEAPEST TIER

Your phone's voice memo app, or the earbuds you already own. That is enough. A USB mic is nice, not required.

The test

BEFORE EVERY TAKE

Record ten seconds of silence. Play it back with headphones. That is what sits under your voice for ten minutes.

Picture

Camera at eye level, light in front, plain wall behind.

Height ELGATO	"Raise your laptop or webcam with a stand or a few books until the camera is roughly at eye level." A low camera films your chin and makes you look down at people.
Light ELGATO	A window in front of you is the easiest light there is. A window behind you makes you a silhouette. Indoors: one lamp at face height, overhead off.
Background ELGATO	"A plain wall, a tidy bookshelf, or a neat corner." Nothing at head height behind you; a lamp or a plant will look like it is growing out of your head.
Distance ARM'S LENGTH	Head and shoulders in shot, a little room above your head. Look at the lens when you make the claim.

The recorder

One app for everyone: Cap.

Why Cap CAP . SO	Free and open source. Mac and Windows. Records to your machine with no time limit. Puts you in the bubble. No other free app does all four.
Set up NINETY SECONDS	Studio Mode. Source: the slide window, not the whole screen. Camera on, floating, dragged to the bottom right, made small. Mic: the earbuds.
Record THEN EXPORT	Five seconds, stop, play it back. Check the sound, the bubble, the corner. Then the real take. Export MP4, 1080p. Trim only the start and the end.
If it will not run THE ONLY FALLBACK	Zoom, in a meeting by yourself: share the slide window, camera on, Record to this computer. Tell me today, not Sunday.
Other apps NOT FOR THIS	Tella (free six months with a school email, nice layouts) · Screen Studio (Mac, paid, polished) · Loom (free plan stops at five minutes) · PowerPoint, Keynote, Google Slides (voice only, no bubble) · OBS (does everything, takes an evening to learn)

Ninety seconds

Eight things, in the order you set them up.

1 · Screen	Slides full screen, you in a small bubble bottom right. Keep that corner clear on every slide.
2 · Camera	Eye level. Arm's length. Head and shoulders. Wipe the lens.
3 · Light	In front of you. A window or one lamp. Overhead off.
4 · Background	Plain, a metre back. Nothing that is someone else's brand.
5 · Sound	Earbuds, close, off to the side. Soft room. Play back ten seconds of silence.
6 · Delivery	Product and problem in the first thirty seconds. Say sentences, do not read paragraphs. Ten minutes is the limit.
7 · The take	Two run-throughs, then one take. Trim only the ends. Watch it back with headphones.
8 · The file	lastname-pitch.mp4 and lastname-pitch.pdf, both on Blackboard before 1:30.

One take

Record your first two minutes before you leave. It will be bad.

Two minutes

SLIDES 1 AND 2

Earbuds in, Cap on, camera on. The opening and the first setup slide. Better bad here, where someone can tell you why, than at midnight on Sunday.

Listen for

THE TWO FAILURES

An opening that takes ninety seconds to name the product. A voice reading a paragraph instead of saying a sentence.

Then

THIS WEEKEND

Two run-throughs before the real take. One take you are willing to keep.

Files in by 1:30.

Monday is the seminar: should designers design? Before it, read Monteiro, Design Is a Job, chapters 1 and 2, and Hall, Just Enough Research, chapter 5. Watch Soleio, Designers Who Ship, assigned Sep 2, and Wen, Design Process Is Dead. Bring your problem statement printed. Nobody presents.