

The Impact of Pitching the Same

Why agency pitches are becoming harder to remember

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1. The point in brief

Strong agencies are not struggling to stand apart because they lack capability. They are struggling because many pitches make capability look and sound alike.^[3]

Most competitive pitches include the same necessary ingredients: credentials, case studies, team, process, project management, sector experience, culture, delivery confidence, commercials and a final argument for why the agency should be chosen.

Those sections are not wrong. In many formal processes they are expected. The problem is that expected material struggles to create strong memory when shortlisted agencies present it in a similar way.

This paper draws on public pitch deck research, agency adviser commentary, buyer behaviour studies, trust research, and AAAnow review activity across website and CMS pitch materials. The evidence points to a clear external conclusion: agencies need to move beyond agency-centred credentials and bring more buyer-specific evidence into the conversation.

2. A familiar pitch can still be a weak pitch

A familiar pitch is not necessarily a bad pitch. It may be polished, professional, well designed and competently delivered. It may show good work and a capable team. The weakness appears when the buyer cannot clearly remember why one agency was materially more relevant than another.

This matters because the buyer is not only selecting a supplier. The buyer is carrying personal risk, internal stakeholder pressure, budget scrutiny and the need to justify a decision that may be visible for years after launch.

In a website, CMS or digital transformation pitch, the buyer is usually asking several questions at once: who can deliver, who understands the organisation, who will reduce risk, who is safe to defend internally, and who will still be useful after the site or platform is live.

When agencies answer mainly with credentials, awards, case studies and process, the buyer has to work harder to find the difference. That is where familiarity becomes commercially expensive.



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3. The common agency pitch architecture

Most agency pitch decks share a recognisable architecture.

The sections below are legitimate and useful, but they become weak when they are not connected to something specific about the buyer.

Common pitch section	What it is meant to prove	Why it needs sharper evidence
Agency introduction	Identity, scale and positioning.	It starts with the agency before the buyer recognises their own issue.
Credentials and awards	Experience, validation and market credibility.	Many shortlisted agencies can show credible past work and external recognition.
Team and culture	Relationship quality and confidence in people.	Buyers expect good people from any serious shortlisted agency.
Process and project management	Control, method, governance and delivery confidence.	Process diagrams frequently look similar unless linked to the buyer's actual risk.
Case studies	Proof that similar work has been delivered.	Past work is stronger when connected to the prospect's current position.
Sector experience	Familiarity with the buyer's market or constraints.	Sector claims are weaker than current evidence about the buyer's own estate.
Support and partnership	Reassurance that the agency will remain involved.	Partnership language needs a defined evidence basis after launch.
Why us	A final reason to choose the agency.	It repeats capability claims rather than changing the buyer's decision.

The table shows the practical problem. Agency pitch ingredients are necessary, but they are not automatically distinctive. The buyer may believe three agencies are competent and still struggle to identify which one has understood the situation most clearly.

4. The repeated language problem

The same problem appears in agency language. Phrases such as strategic partner, award-winning, data-driven, integrated approach, client-first, extension of your team, proven process, deep expertise, collaborative and transparent all sound reasonable in isolation.

They become weaker when they appear across many decks, proposals and credentials meetings. The buyer does not reject them because they are false. The buyer struggles because they are familiar.

AAAnow review activity across 81 website and CMS-related agency pitch decks found recurring claims of strategic partnership, passion, integrated or data-driven process, award-winning work, client-first culture, relevant brand experience and extension-of-team language. That internal review does not claim agency pitches are identical. It shows why buyers can hear several credible agencies making very similar promises.

The commercial consequence is straightforward. When the language is familiar, the buyer looks elsewhere for difference. They may fall back on prior relationship, perceived safety, incumbent comfort, procurement scoring, personal chemistry, internal politics or price.

5. What pitch deck research actually shows

The strongest public research anchor is not agency-specific, but it is highly useful. Paula Cabezas and John Bateman analysed 96 pitch decks from the Start-Up Chile accelerator programme, covering 1,513 slides. Their study found that 7 topics appeared in more than half of the decks: company, team, product, problem, achievements, business model and market.^[1]

The same research found recurring topic sequences, including common openings that moved from company to problem and then to product or solution. The important point is not that the decks looked the same. The important point is that pitch decks can converge on shared story structures and recurring topic order.^[1]

A companion visual composition study, using the same 96 decks and 1,513 slides, provides useful balance. It found that the visual composition of the pitch decks was diverse, with visual elements varying by slide topic.^[2]

That distinction matters for agency pitching. Decks can share structure without being visually identical. Two agency decks may look different, use different colours, and show different work, but still move through the same buyer story: who we are, what we have done, how we work, who will do it, why we are safe, and what it will cost.

6. What this means for agency leaders

The strongest conclusion is not that agencies should abandon credentials decks. They still need to show credibility, delivery confidence and cultural fit.

The stronger conclusion is that credentials are no longer enough on their own. Buyers hear too many similar claims from capable agencies, and many preferences are already partly formed before the formal presentation begins.

Agency leaders should therefore ask harder questions before the next credentials meeting or pitch:

- What will the buyer remember about us that is specific to their own position?
- What evidence are we bringing that the buyer did not already know?
- How does our pitch reduce the buyer's internal decision risk?
- Where are we proving relevance rather than describing capability?
- How will the buyer defend our selection after the meeting has finished?

Those questions move the pitch away from agency performance and toward buyer confidence. That is where the next stage of agency differentiation now sits.

7. Why the quantum matters

The useful evidence base is now broader than one article or one opinion. It includes public pitch deck studies, large slide datasets, agency practitioner evidence, buyer behaviour research and AAAnow review activity. Each source type does a different job.

- Start-Up Chile visual composition study: the same 96 decks and 1,513 slides, showing that structural similarity can exist alongside visual diversity.
- SlideVQA dataset: more than 2.6k slide decks, 52k slide images and 14.5k questions, showing that deck-level reasoning across multiple slides can be studied at scale.
- DOC2PPT research: about 6,000 paired scientific documents and slide decks, showing that document-to-slide structure and layout can be modelled.
- TrinityP3 credentials exposure: more than 1,000 agency credentials presentations over 20 years, giving practitioner evidence on agency presentation memorability.
- AAAnow pitch review activity: 81 website and CMS-related agency pitch decks, showing repeated agency claims in real pitch materials.
- Start-Up Chile pitch deck corpus: 96 pitch decks and 1,513 slides, supporting analysis of recurring pitch topics and topic sequences.
- 6sense buyer research: nearly 4,000 B2B buyers in the 2025 study, supporting the buyer behaviour evidence on shortlist and preference formation.

The large public slide datasets should not be treated as agency pitch deck proof. They show that deck structure, slide sequence and visual layout can be analysed at scale. The agency-specific evidence comes from practitioner exposure, benchmark data and direct review of agency pitch materials.

8. What agency advisers consistently observe

Agency adviser evidence is not the same as a public statistical deck corpus, but it carries practical weight because the advisers see many pitches and credentials presentations over time. TrinityP3's Darren Woolley writes that he has sat through more than 1,000 agency credentials presentations over 20 years, and that fewer than 10 initially stood out as memorable.^[3]

That observation fits the problem agencies recognise. A pitch can be professional and still fail to create recall. A credentials deck can be accurate and still leave the buyer unable to repeat what made the agency different the next morning.

BenchPress 2025 adds the commercial pressure. It reports that winning new business is the number one challenge for 46% of agency owners, the highest level since the benchmark began in 2012. It also reports that 24% of agencies described themselves as very different, and that those agencies continued to outperform others on growth and profitability.^[4]

The conclusion is not that agencies need to be louder. The conclusion is that agencies need to make their relevance easier to see, remember and defend.

9. Awards and credentials are not enough to build trust

Awards, case studies, logos and testimonials can help, but they are not the full trust story.

GYDA's summary of Marketreach's Trust Factor research lists

1. Reliability at 35%,
2. Reciprocity at 19%,
3. Aligned Interests at 14%,
4. Fame at 2% within its 8-pillar trust model.^[5]

This matters because many agency decks over-weight the visible proof of fame and under-weight the evidence of reliability, alignment and useful contribution before commitment.

The buyer does not need another agency saying it is award-winning. The buyer needs confidence that the agency understands the situation, will behave reliably, will make the decision easier to defend, and will remain commercially useful after the initial project or campaign has been approved.

10. The buyer is not a blank slate

The pitch room is not the start of the buying process. 6sense's 2025 B2B Buyer Experience Report says its global study gathered nearly 4,000 buyer responses and found that the winning vendor is already on the Day One shortlist in 95% of cases.^[6] Robert Craven, citing HBR data, reports that 90% of buyers choose from a shortlist created before any pitch begins.^[12]

The same report describes a two-stage buying model, where a selection phase precedes seller contact and the validation phase follows through live vendor engagement. This means a pitch is confirming, challenging or reshaping a preference that already exists.^[6]

Gartner also describes B2B buying as non-linear, with buyers looping across buying jobs such as problem identification, solution exploration, requirements building, supplier selection, validation and consensus creation.^[7]

For agencies, that creates a difficult reality. If the buyer already has a preference, a familiar credentials presentation may not be enough to move the decision. The agency needs to introduce evidence that changes how the buyer sees the problem, not just evidence that the agency has delivered similar work before.

11. Why similar pitches push buyers toward safer choices

When agency pitches sound similar, the buyer still has to choose. That choice then moves toward factors that feel easier to justify.

- Familiarity becomes more valuable because the known option feels easier to defend.
- Incumbency becomes more valuable because staying close to the current supplier reduces visible change risk.
- Procurement scoring becomes more prominent because comparable decks are easier to score than to judge.
- Price becomes more exposed because similar claims make cost differences more visible.
- Personal chemistry becomes more influential because the buyer needs confidence in the people involved.
- Internal politics becomes more powerful because stakeholders support the option they already trust.

None of these forces are irrational. They are normal responses to decision pressure. The agency's task is to give the buyer a more specific reason to care, remember and justify.

12. The shift from credentials-led to evidence-led pitching

A conventional agency pitch starts with the agency: who we are, what we have done, how we work, who is on the team, and why we should be selected.

An evidence-led pitch starts with the buyer: what we can see about your current position, why it matters, where the risk or opportunity sits, and how that changes the decision you are about to make.

This does not make credentials irrelevant. It gives credentials a sharper context. The agency still needs proof, capability, people and process, but those elements become more powerful when they are attached to something specific about the prospect.

Corporate Visions provides a useful supporting mechanism. In its work on unconsidered needs, it argues that messages based only on stated needs tend to become commodity messages because competitors are drawing on similar inputs. Its 400-person B2B simulation found that leading with an unconsidered need improved perceived presentation uniqueness by 41%, presentation quality by 11%, and attitude and choice measures by 10%.^[8]

The relevance to agency pitching is clear. If agencies respond to the same brief with the same expected claims, the buyer hears very similar answers. A current evidence point about the buyer's own digital position changes the frame because it gives the buyer something they did not already have.

13. The website and CMS pitch example

The pattern is easiest to see in a website or CMS pitch. Three agencies may all present strong creative work, a robust process, a capable delivery team, platform experience, relevant case studies and a commercial proposal that fits the brief.

The buyer may believe all three can deliver. The decision then becomes less about whether each agency is capable and more about which agency creates the greatest confidence in the decision.

The agency that brings current evidence about the prospect's own estate changes the conversation. It can show where content is weak, where pages or assets create unnecessary risk, where AI readiness may matter, where post-launch drift could appear, and where the organisation's current position is not being managed clearly enough.

That evidence does not replace strategy or discovery. It gives the pitch a more relevant starting point. It also helps the buyer explain internally why this agency has understood something important before the work has even started.

14. Where Agency Revenue Radar fits

Agency Revenue Radar belongs at this point in the argument, not at the beginning. The market problem comes first: credible agencies are hard to distinguish because the pitch architecture and language are familiar.

Agency Revenue Radar is a platform for agencies. It assesses and monitors client AI readiness, helping agencies create evidence for pitch, lapsed-client and account expansion conversations.

Its role is not to replace agency judgement, relationships or pitch quality. Its role is to give agencies current, outside-in evidence about the client or prospect, so the conversation can begin with what is happening in the buyer's world rather than another version of the agency's credentials.

That is the practical bridge from sameness to relevance. The agency can still show its work, people, process and capability, but it can anchor those claims in evidence the buyer can recognise, discuss and use internally.

15. Conclusion: agencies need a clearer reason to be remembered

Most strong agencies can show process, awards, case studies, people, culture and delivery confidence. The difficulty is that many other agencies can show the same things.

When the buyer hears familiar claims in a familiar order, difference becomes harder to see. The pitch may still be competent, but competence alone is not always memorable.

The evidence points to a better route. Agencies need to move from agency-centred credentials to buyer-specific evidence. They need to show what they can see, why it matters, and how that evidence helps the buyer make a more confident decision.

The next paper in this series will cover how agencies can make that shift in practice, before the pitch, during the pitch, and after the pitch has finished.

16. Sources and evidence base

The following sources support the public evidence base used in this paper. Internal AAAnow review material is listed separately where the analysis comes from AAAnow source material rather than a public third-party source.

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[12] Robert Craven, GYDA. The Day One List, citing HBR data.

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