



HOLLYWOOD



HOLLYWOOD STEALTH PITCH GUIDE

by

Kaia Alexander

Founder of the Entertainment Business School



Introduction



Hi, I'm Kaia Alexander, founder of the Entertainment Business School (EBS), and host of the Hollywood Wolfpack podcast.

I'm really excited to dive in and teach you my unique pitch technique. Let me tell you a bit more about who I am, and why my background has made me

the go-to business coach for creatives in Hollywood.

I was a development executive for Inferno Entertainment on many feature films including JUST FRIENDS (with Ryan Reynolds), PEACEFUL WARRIOR (with Nick Nolte), THE GOOD NIGHT (Gwyneth Paltrow & Penelope Cruz), and HACHI: A DOG'S TALE (with Richard Gere).

I also worked for and was mentored by comedian Garry Shandling. Garry was pivotal in my journey of learning how to navigate the ups and downs of showbusiness, and the strengths you need to cultivate to make it. I miss Garry, we all do. Carrying his legacy and teaching onward is one of the main reasons I founded the Entertainment Business School.



While I teach business, I'm also a fluent creative. As a lifelong history nerd, I'm an award-winning novelist for my book about the burning of the Great Library of Alexandria, *Written in the Ashes* (Harper Collins). That novel about Hypatia of Alexandria forged my brand as a writer/producer of badass, adventurous women.

I'm also a passionate advocate for New Hollywood diversity, parity and inclusion. Like most folks who get into this business, movies shaped my identity growing up, and I felt closer to certain characters than to members of my own family. From beautiful cinematic stories like *The Black Stallion*, to quality television shows like *Murder, She Wrote*, and *The Bionic Woman* I drew inspiration to become the writer, adventurer I am today. I recognize the power of cinema to change lives, and culture, and forge a path toward justice that has even influenced politics.

As a development exec I heard hundreds of pitches in my career, some of them so bad I would actually pause the pitch to coach the presenters on how to make it better. Some were so great we financed the movie on the spot.

From my experience in pitching, I created The Stealth Pitch formula.



Kaia's Stealth Pitch Technique

It's imperative that your pitch is *memorable*.

You need to be able to pitch anything –whatever project you're selling – effectively. Sometimes you'll be pitching in a meeting, and sometimes it's a chance meeting in a hallway of a film festival with your dream producer.

What I've seen is that you'll sink or swim in those first 60 seconds. Entire companies and movies get made because of how that minute goes by.

I can assure you that this technique works in every situation, if all you have is a short interaction, or a longer meeting. I know because I've been teaching it for several years now, and my students in the Entertainment Business School have used it to sell TV shows and get their movies financed.

I developed it from my time in the buyer chair, and that perspective is invaluable for creatives like you to comprehend, and embody.

Let's talk about my technique and why it works.



Whether you're in an elevator with Reese Witherspoon, or an Academy-award winning producer has blocked your car in a parking lot (which is how I pitched and got my first novel *Written in the Ashes* optioned by Academy-award winning producer Mark Harris), or you have a general meeting as a writer... you need to – in an instant and under great pressure – nail your pitch, and nail it fast. And nail it in such a way that you never feel like you're pitching, and the person you're talking to never feels pitched.

My students actually named this technique- *stealth*. They recognized that the value of stealth is that you forge a relationship wherein everyone wins.

Now, ordinarily I take 90min. to teach this technique, and that's during a full week of the Entertainment Business School where the students get a lot of practice. But this guide is a great primer for you to discover it, and start to explore working with it.

There's an acronym I teach that will help you remember what to do. To wit:

CAT + DOG + HORSE = ANIMAL



Cat/Dog/Horse/Animal. That's it! That's the acronym you'll need to remember.

An acronym is an instant way to remember the importance of a sequence. In this case, the first letter of each word helps you remember what to do next.

Here's what it means:



CAT: Connect

Cat stands for: *Connect*. You need to make a *connection* with the human being in front of you. Do it quickly, ideally in one short sentence.

Here's an example of how I connected with producer Judd Apatow when we'd never met before. We were at a Netflix FYC event with a thousand people and the press, and Judd was walking past me when I said: "Hi, I'm Kaia, and I worked for Garry Shandling in 2006 and 2007." I was a stranger, but he immediately gave me his full attention and we had a wonderful connection talking about our mentor, and I thanked him for the wonderful docu-series he made about Garry called *The Zen Diaries of Garry Shandling* on HBO.

That's an example of a *mutual friend connection*. We do it all the time. We share how we have a friend in common. Mention that immediately to the person you're pitching, especially if you know that the friend is beloved.



You can also *give a genuine compliment*. If you've just met Mindy Kaling and she's the reason you became a writer, tell her so. It's always meaningful – even at the highest levels of fame – to hear how your impact has shaped or inspired another person.

Do you have *something unusual in common*? Perhaps you're both queer, or you attended the same high school, or you share a love of scuba diving with sharks. Lead with it.

When I met comedian Kevin Nealon the second time, we quickly *discovered that he now lives on the tiny street I grew up on*. Talk about a cool and memorable connection!

Do your research.

What could you share in one sentence that genuinely *connects* you to the human being in front of you?



Dog: Doorway

Dog stands for: *Doorway*. I call this the *doorway*, meaning, it's *the doorway to your passion*. To gushing about your passion. It's usually a quick sentence that you have memorized.

The mistake I see writers make a lot when they're pitching a script is that they try to fit the entire plot into a pitch. No one cares. And it's even worse if the writer is nervous and can't find how to convey their passion about this script. It's boring.

You know what's never boring? *Passion*. Passionate people pull you in. They make you curious. They're alive. You want to feel alive. You'll lean forward. We all do.

A doorway is the one word or phrase you can summon that brings your passion to the fore.

I wrote a comedy feature called THE ENCHANTMENT OF CARY GRANT. "Cary Grant" is my *doorway*. I'm crazy about Cary Grant! As soon as I say his name I'm through the doorway and into the zone of my passion. It's a joy to share about it. It gets even more fun if the person I'm talking to also loves Cary Grant.



So it could be a character, or a world, or a significant event or personal connection from your own life that connects you to this particular story.

So, what's that doorway for you? – And you may have more than one and that's okay.

When I teach the Stealth Pitch workshop in EBS I've discovered that creatives have natural passion for what they care about. And often it's so close to them that they forget to mention it altogether! They might care deeply about their cultural origins, or their home town, or motorcycles, or the ocean, or children. In one instance, a writer had written a movie about civil war re-enactment, and she was Vietnamese and her parents were Civil War re-enactors. She forgot to mention that last part, which she overlooked because it was so deeply woven into her life and identity, but it was the very thing that was the most fascinating about why she wrote the film.

Whatever has you so excited, you just need a doorway that's a word or phrase that opens a door to your excitement and passion.

Your doorway is the *reason* you love what you're talking about. Then talk about it!

You can even say, "Let me tell you about ____." Then away you go! Keep it succinct, tight, and leaving the person you're talking to wanting more.



Horse: Hook

Horse stands for: *Hook*. Passion isn't enough to land a pitch, but it's the first imperative. Next, you need to *hook* your listener. Tell them why they should care.

This might be why your project is relevant, or why the timing is so perfect.

The hook might be why you're the writer for the job: you worked for the CIA for 20 years, so you're the one they should staff for that TV writer's room for the new espionage show.

It might be that tons of people care about this topic right now and you have the perfect angle for the audience. It could be ripped from today's headlines.

The hook is the reason the buyer or investor should care *right now*.

It's also okay to say something like, "I get that this may not be for you, but here's why I'm hoping it is____." You give them a little permission to wiggle off the hook, and then you hook them.



Oh, one great hook is: *there's competition*. That someone else wants it, and this is their chance to get in first.

You must hook the person you're talking to, or they won't prioritize your project over others in their queue. A great hook gets you to the front of the priority line. That's where you want to be. Without a great hook, you can get swept along for months, waiting to hear back. Or worse, you're ghosted because they forget to get back to you, and didn't care enough about your project.

It happens all the time the more deal flow the person has. They're busy and in demand. That's why you need a hook.



Animal: Ask

Animal stands for: Ask. The second you hook someone you must immediately pivot to your ask.

What's an easy next step for them to say "Yes" to? Don't just assume they know what you want. If you don't ask, they can't read your mind.

My favorite phrase for the ask is "Would you be willing to____?"

...Read it by Thursday and get back to me then?

...Introduce me to your partner this week?

...Invest the first million?

...Take a longer meeting?

...Read the pilot?



* BONUS TIP! *

If the person you're pitching passes (meaning they say "no"), but they're complimentary of you or your project, ask them if they know anyone else you should talk to, and if they'd be willing to make that warm introduction for you. It's often easier on the person passing if they can do something for you since they like you, versus nothing at all.

People only do things for people they like. So if they don't like you yet, they'll think they like you because they helped you. We don't help people we don't like. That means your relationship will be considered higher value to them. I've met many wonderful partners because someone rejected one of my pitches and I used this question. It's very powerful.



Remember:

CAT + DOG + HORSE = ANIMAL



You might be at a party and realize you're seated next to someone that you want to pitch. All you need to do is remember is the acronym.

If you think to yourself "Cat+Dog+Horse=Animal" you'll remember this translates to "Connect - Doorway - Hook - Ask" you'll have your stealth pitch ready, and the person you're talking to might not even realize you're pitching because they enjoy it so much.



Practice

So, what should you do next after reading this guide?

Write bullets for your pitch, then practice it in front of the mirror. Then film yourself, and watch the replay so you can learn from how you did.

Once you have it shaved down to just a couple minutes, practice it on your friends and family.

Practice, practice, practice, and then know that if you nail my stealth pitch approach, the person will often give you more time to unpack it.

Use your intuition to feel if the person in front of you wants a follow up. Sometimes you can feel their disinterest or unavailability or they give you a shoulder: get good at reading the room.

In the Entertainment Business School during our week on pitching, I teach a segment on body language, so you know how to read the person you're pitching, whether they're sitting down or walking. You'll be able to see by their body language how open they are to continuing a conversation with you.

There you have it! The key to a successful pitch. Let me know how it goes!



Your Next Step

The Entertainment Business School is only offered twice a year: in winter and summer. You can always check our website to find out the dates of the session, and when we open for enrollment.

Be sure to star any email you get from us and save it to a special folder so that you never miss an opportunity or any of my communication.

In addition to EBS, we offer workshops, live training and events, retreats, and private coaching sessions. We have an active alums community for EBS that has exclusive events and trainings as well.



Entertainment Business School

9 Week Live Virtual Program

The entertainment business is opaque and difficult to navigate, whether you're trying to break in, or you're navigating the pressures of a public career. As a creative, you probably never thought of yourself as being in business, but you are. No university teaches the business side of Hollywood. This information is hard won. What you don't know can and does hurt your career. You need to understand negotiation, deals, community building, pitching, I.P., branding, if/when you need a company, and a whole lot more. You can see our complete syllabus, schedule, and the dates of the next session at:

 EntertainmentBusinessSchool.com/EBS

Private Executive, Creative, and Public Figure Career Coaching Sessions with Kaia Alexander

If a classroom is not for you, and you want private personalized instruction, we recommend 1-1 career coaching. Kaia offers 1-1 coaching packages for public figures, executives, creatives, producers, film productions, and company retreats. See more here on our website, or contact Kaia@KaiaAlexander.com



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Kaia@KaiaAlexander.com



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