



APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

B2 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 3 · B3B

Pitching with impact

Theme · Selling & Storytelling



Unit 3 · B3B

Pitching with impact

Theme: *Selling & Storytelling*



Learning objectives

- Deliver a punchy value proposition to a decision-maker in under 60 seconds.
- Use adverbs and adverbial phrases to sharpen impact without inflating claims.
- Support a pitch with metrics that are specific, comparable and credible.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Class Book

Warm-up · Ten-word pitch

Describe what you (or your team, or your last project) do in EXACTLY 10 words — no more, no fewer. Then rewrite it in exactly 6 words. Which version is stronger?

Start with WHO you help + WHAT changes for them.

Avoid the words 'solution', 'leverage', 'platform' and 'innovative'.

If a stranger heard your 6-word version, could they repeat it back?

If someone forwarded it in Slack, would it survive the copy-paste?

Lead-in: hit or miss?

Decide: HIT (specific, credible) or MISS (vague, forgettable).

1. 'We're an AI-powered next-gen platform empowering forward-thinking teams.'

2. 'We cut HR reference checks from three days to fifteen minutes.'

3. 'We help companies grow faster.'

followUp: Which HIT line is more re-tellable in a corridor?

Reading: What makes a pitch stick

Most pitches don't fail because the product is weak. They fail because the pitch itself is vague. 'We help companies grow faster' is technically true of every B2B company on earth, which means it tells the listener nothing. A sticky pitch does the opposite: it is uncomfortably specific.

There is a simple test. If the listener were asked to repeat your pitch back in the corridor thirty seconds later, would they get anything right? If your opening is 'AI-powered next-generation platform empowering forward-thinking teams', the honest answer is no — those are decoration words that carry no information. If your opening is 'We cut reference checks from three days to fifteen minutes', the answer is yes, because the listener now owns two comparable numbers and a specific job.

Adverbs matter here more than people think. 'Roughly', 'consistently', 'quietly', 'without exception' — these small words either sharpen a claim or inflate it. 'We consistently cut onboarding time by around 40%' is credible; 'We revolutionise onboarding across the industry' is not. Sharp adverbs signal a speaker who knows exactly how far their claim goes. Inflated ones signal a speaker who doesn't.

1. The most common reason pitches fail, according to the text, is...

- (A) The product is weak
- (B) The pitch itself is vague
- (C) The pricing is wrong

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. 'AI-powered next-generation platform empowering forward-thinking teams' is criticised because...
- (A) It's grammatically wrong
 - (B) The words are decoration and carry no information
 - (C) It's too short
3. The 'corridor test' asks whether...
- (A) The room clapped
 - (B) The listener can repeat your pitch back thirty seconds later
 - (C) The slides looked good
4. Adverbs like 'roughly' and 'consistently' are useful because they...
- (A) Sound British
 - (B) Sharpen a claim and show the speaker knows how far it goes
 - (C) Fill space

Vocabulary in context

Match the phrase to its meaning.

sticky (pitch) — memorable enough to be repeated

buzzword — an over-used word that no longer means anything specific

credible — believable given the evidence

inflated — made to sound bigger than it really is

hedge — soften a claim so it stays accurate

value proposition — the specific change you deliver for a specific buyer

Vocabulary: value props, metrics and adverbs

value proposition (VP) — a single, compelling statement of who benefits, what changes, and the evidence for it

positioning — the vantage point you occupy in the buyer's mental landscape relative to alternatives

differentiator — the singular attribute rivals cannot readily replicate

elevator pitch — 30–60 seconds; opening line + change + proof + ask

baseline — the benchmark figure against which subsequent improvement is measured

delta — the change from baseline to result

ROI — return on investment — $\text{value gained} \div \text{cost}$

conversion — % of prospects taking the next step

attribution — which action caused the result

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



roughly / approximately — signals honesty — you know the number isn't exact

consistently — not a one-off; it repeats

measurably — there is a number, not a feeling

quietly — understated confidence; often more credible

without exception — strong claim — only use if literally true

practice

Complete each pitch line with ONE word / phrase.

1. Our ____ isn't the AI; it's that we route by role, not by keyword.

2. Their established ____ was 6% monthly churn; our intervention brought it to 2.4% ____.

3. For every €1 they spent with us, they saved €7 in analyst time — a 7× ____.

4. We ____ cut onboarding by around 40% across the last six enterprise rollouts.

5. Trial-to-paid ____ went from 8% to 14% in the first quarter.

6. The founder didn't oversell — she said 'we ____ think it's worth a 30-day pilot'.

Practice 2 — collocations & rewrite

Rewrite each sentence replacing the underlined phrase with ONE word/phrase from this lesson's vocabulary. Keep the meaning identical.

1. Our <u>attribute rivals cannot replicate</u> isn't the AI; it's that we route by role.

2. Their established <u>benchmark figure</u> was 6% monthly churn.

3. For every €1 they spent with us, they saved €7 in analyst time — a 7× <u>return on investment</u>.

4. We <u>repeatedly</u> cut onboarding by around 40% across the last six enterprise rollouts.

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5. The founder didn't oversell — she said 'we <u>with understated confidence</u> think it's worth a pilot'.

Practice 3 — discursive writing (business memo)

prompt: Write a feedback memo to a founder whose pitch is currently 'buzzword salad' and lacks specific metrics.

Use at least FOUR of the target expressions from this unit.

Adopt a professional register: concise, structured, executive-friendly.

Include a clear recommendation or takeaway in the final sentence.

sample: Subject: Feedback — Q4 Investor Pitch Deck. Your current opening line is a bit of a 'buzzword salad'; phrases like 'next-gen platform' are inflated and don't help the pitch stay sticky in a corridor. To make the value proposition more credible, we need to lead with a specific baseline and delta. For example, instead of saying we 'significantly enhance efficiency', we should say we 'consistently cut reference checks from three days to fifteen minutes'. This provides a measurable ROI that an investor can actually model. We should also quietly hedge our claims where necessary—using 'roughly' or 'approximately' often lands better than absolute certainty. If we can show that our trial-to-paid conversion is up 40% without exception across the last six cohorts, the attribution to our new differentiator becomes unmistakable. That's the ask: less decoration, more data.



Grammar focus: Adverbs and adverbial phrases

1. Adverbs of degree — how far does the claim go? — Use these to signal you know your own limits:

- roughly / approximately (~) — you're honest about margin of error
- consistently — not a one-off, but not always either
- measurably — there is a number
- without exception — very strong; only if literally true
- across every X we tested — hedged but strong

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. Adverbs of manner — HOW you deliver the change — • quietly — understated, often more credible than 'loudly' • significantly — meaningful change, no specific number attached • immediately / eventually — puts the change in time • proactively / reactively — signals stance, not just outcome

3. Adverbial phrases — cheap way to sound specific — • within the first 30 days • in every rollout we've done • across the last six enterprise clients • with zero engineering effort • before Legal even had to get involved

4. Common trap — 'literally' means literally — 'Literally' is not for emphasis. 'We literally saved them a headcount' should only be used if you literally did. Otherwise use 'effectively' or 'in practical terms'.

Exercise A — Pick the sharper adverb

Choose the adverb / phrase that sharpens the claim without inflating it.

1. We cut onboarding by 40% (a) consistently (b) revolutionarily.

2. The tool paid for itself (a) within the first quarter (b) in the fullness of time.

3. We rolled it out (a) with zero engineering effort (b) seamlessly and holistically.

4. Churn dropped (a) significantly (b) totally to 2.4% across every cohort.

5. We (a) quietly (b) unashamedly outperform the incumbent on time-to-value.

Exercise B — Deflate the buzzword

Rewrite each inflated line using a sharper adverb or adverbial phrase.

1. We revolutionise the way enterprises deploy AI.

2. We literally save companies millions.

3. Our platform is transformational, next-generation and holistic.

4. We significantly enhance operational efficiency across the board.

Exercise C — Adverb build

Take the neutral sentence. Add ONE adverb of degree AND ONE adverbial phrase to sharpen it. Do NOT change the number.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. We cut onboarding time by 40%.

2. Trial-to-paid conversion went up.

3. Their support team stopped drowning in tickets.

Listening: three founders, sixty seconds each

You're on a panel judging three back-to-back 60-second pitches. Each founder is selling the same category (a workflow tool for HR teams) to the same buyer persona (a Head of People at a 500-person company).

pre

Which pitch do you predict will win — and what will win it?

What is ONE word / phrase you're allergic to hearing in these pitches?

gist

1. Which founder wins the panel, and why?

2. Which founder is the buzzword offender?

3. Which founder is the closest to good but still hedges too weakly?

detail

1. What is Voice B's baseline → delta number?

2. What is Voice B's specific ask?

3. What does Voice B say to disarm the buyer's likely objection?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Third listen — pitch craft

Focus on *HOW* each founder pitches. Answer from what they *DO*, not just what they say.

1. Voice B uses the adverbial phrase 'within the first 30 days' twice. What work does it do?

2. Voice A's pitch has more sentences than Voice B's, but less information. Why?

3. Voice C is technically credible but forgettable. What ONE change would you push her to make?

Language from the audio — high-impact pitch moves

Match each phrase to what it *DOES* in the pitch.

"We cut it from three days to fifteen minutes." — baseline → delta in one sentence

"Consistently, across the last six rollouts..." — adverb + adverbial phrase — sharpens without inflating

"Not a slide — a real button." — disarms the 'is this vapourware?' objection

"One team, one hiring manager, thirty days." — makes the ask tiny and reversible

"That's the ask." — closes cleanly — signals 'now it's your move'

"Quietly, we outperform on time-to-value." — understated adverb — often lands harder than 'obviously'

Voice A (Ken): So we're an AI-powered, next-generation talent platform empowering forward-thinking people teams to scale impact across the enterprise. We're transformational, holistic, and honestly changing the way work happens. That's us in a sentence.

Voice B (Marta): Heads of People spend three days per hire on reference checks — most of it chasing people who ghost them. We cut it from three days to fifteen minutes. Consistently, across the last six rollouts, that has also freed up about twelve hours a week of recruiter time per hundred open roles. The ask is small: one 30-day pilot on one team, one hiring manager, no engineering effort. Decide at the end. And you can turn it off in one click — that's a real button, not a slide. That's the ask.

Voice C (Sanya): We work with People teams on hiring workflows. Our customers have seen meaningful improvements in time-to-hire, better candidate experience, and stronger collaboration between recruiters and hiring managers. We'd love to explore whether there's a fit.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Speaking: solo role-play — 60-second pitch

Solo task. Pick ONE scenario. Record yourself (voice note, exactly 60 seconds) delivering the pitch to a specific decision-maker. You MUST include: (1) opening line with the specific buyer, (2) baseline → delta number, (3) at least ONE sharp adverb + ONE adverbial phrase, (4) a small, reversible ask. Play back and self-score.

Scene: Your real product / service (recommended)

A: You pitch.

B: Imagined listener: the exact decision-maker you'd meet at a conference dinner.

Scene: A freelance / consulting pitch

A: You pitch yourself as an outside expert.

B: Imagined listener: a director who has already tried two consultants.

Scene: An internal pitch

A: You pitch a project idea to your own leadership.

B: Imagined listener: your CEO, who cares about revenue and risk only.

Extra speaking task — 15-second version

*Now compress the SAME pitch to **15 seconds** — the elevator-just-closing version. You must keep one number and the ask. Everything else has to go. Record and compare with your 60-second version. Which one would you actually use at a conference?*

Writing mini-task

Write your value proposition in EXACTLY 3 sentences (max 45 words). Sentence 1: who + what changes. Sentence 2: proof (a baseline → delta number). Sentence 3: the small, reversible ask.

Wrap-up

One buzzword you'll retire this month.

One adverb ('quietly', 'consistently', 'measurably') you'll use in your next pitch.

One baseline → delta number from your work you'll practise saying out loud.

Quiz

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. The 'corridor test' asks whether...
 - (A) The room clapped
 - (B) The listener can repeat your pitch 30 seconds later
 - (C) The slides looked good
2. Which line is SHARPER, not more inflated?
 - (A) 'We revolutionise onboarding.'
 - (B) 'We consistently cut onboarding by around 40%.'
 - (C) 'We literally change the game.'
3. A good value proposition has three parts...
 - (A) Slogan, logo, colour
 - (B) Who + what changes + how we know
 - (C) Product, price, place
4. 'Literally' is over-used because...
 - (A) It's slang
 - (B) It should only be used when you literally mean it
 - (C) It's American
5. The small, reversible ask matters because...
 - (A) It's polite
 - (B) It removes the buyer's risk and makes 'yes' cheap
 - (C) It fills time

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Workbook — home practice



Exercise 1 — Pitch vocabulary

Complete each sentence with **ONE** phrase from the box.

Word bank: differentiator · baseline · delta · ROI · conversion · quietly

1. Our ____ isn't the AI; it's that we route by role, not by keyword.

2. Their monthly churn ____ was 6%; we brought it to 2.4%.

3. That constitutes a ____ of 3.6 percentage points within a single quarter.

4. For every €1 invested with us, they recouped €7 — a 7× ____.

5. Trial-to-paid ____ went from 8% to 14% in the first quarter.

6. The founder didn't oversell — she ____ said it was worth a 30-day pilot.

1b. Vocabulary — discursive writing

Write a formal 150-word pitch to a potential investor or senior stakeholder. Focus on a specific product or service, emphasizing your unique 'differentiator' and providing clear 'baseline' and 'delta' metrics to prove impact.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



id: vocab-discursive

type: writing

Use all 6 target vocabulary items.

Maintain a sharp, data-driven register.

Avoid buzzword inflation; use specific numbers.

Include a clear, reversible 'ask'.

model: Investment Pitch: Vellum AI Talent Discovery Current recruitment processes are broken. Heads of People are spending weeks on manual screening. Our key differentiator is our role-based routing engine, which outperforms keyword filters by 40% in accuracy. For our pilot client, the baseline time-to-hire was 45 days. Within the first quarter, we brought this down to 18 days — a delta of 27 days that saved the company roughly €120k in recruiter fees. We have quietly built a portfolio of six enterprise clients who have seen trial-to-paid conversion rates increase by 15% since integrating our API. The ROI for our customers is typically realized within the first 90 days. We are now seeking a €500k seed investment to scale our sales team. My ask is simple: a 20-minute follow-up call to walk you through our product roadmap. We are confident that our data-first approach represents the future of talent acquisition, and we would love for you to be part of that journey.

Exercise 2 — Sharp adverb, not inflated one

Choose the sharper adverb / adverbial phrase.

1. We cut onboarding by 40% ____.

2. The tool paid for itself ____.

3. We rolled it out ____.

4. Churn dropped ____ to 2.4% across every cohort.

5. We ____ outperform the incumbent on time-to-value.

6. ____ 30 days, they removed one full FTE of manual reporting.

Exercise 3 — HIT or MISS?

Which pitch opener HITS (specific + credible + memorable) and which MISSES?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. 'We're an AI-powered next-gen platform empowering forward-thinking teams.'
(A) HIT
(B) MISS
2. 'We cut reference checks from three days to fifteen minutes.'
(A) HIT
(B) MISS
3. 'We help companies grow faster.'
(A) HIT
(B) MISS
4. 'Last quarter we saved one retailer a full analyst headcount without firing anyone.'
(A) HIT
(B) MISS
5. 'We deliver best-in-class, transformational solutions across the enterprise.'
(A) HIT
(B) MISS

Exercise 4 — Deflate the buzzword

Rewrite each inflated line using a specific number, sharp adverb or adverbial phrase.

1. We revolutionise the way enterprises deploy AI.

2. We literally save companies millions.

3. Our platform is transformational, next-gen and holistic.

4. We significantly enhance operational efficiency across the board.

Exercise 5 — Three pitches on the panel

You'll hear three founders each give a 60-second pitch to the same investor panel. One offends with buzzwords, one is sharp, one is credible but forgettable.

1. Which pitch wins the panel — and why?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



2. Which pitch is the buzzword offender?

3. Which pitch is credible but forgettable, and what ONE change would fix it?

Voice A: Speaker 1 (Ken): We're an AI-powered, next-generation talent platform empowering forward-thinking people teams to scale impact across the enterprise. Transformational, holistic, changing the way work happens.

Voice B: Speaker 2 (Marta): Heads of People spend three days per hire on reference checks. We cut it from three days to fifteen minutes. Consistently, across the last six rollouts, that has freed up twelve hours a week of recruiter time per hundred open roles. Ask: one 30-day pilot, one team, one hiring manager, no engineering effort. You can turn it off in one click — that's a real button, not a slide. That's the ask.

Voice C: Speaker 3 (Sanya): We work with People teams on hiring workflows. Our customers have seen meaningful improvements in time-to-hire, better candidate experience, and stronger collaboration between recruiters and hiring managers. We'd love to explore whether there's a fit.

Exercise 6 — Your value proposition in 3 sentences

Write your OWN value proposition in exactly 3 sentences, max 45 words. Sentence 1: who + what changes. Sentence 2: proof (baseline → delta with a number). Sentence 3: small reversible ask.

Exercise 7 — Case study reflection: the 3-founder panel

Reflect on the Peregrine case.

1. Which founder gets the majority of your coaching hours — and why?

2. Write the ONE-sentence coaching rule you'd pin at the top of every founder's slides.

3. Redraft the FIRST 15 seconds of Ken's pitch, without triggering him.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Class Book

Lead-in: hit or miss?

1. MISS — buzzword salad
2. HIT — clear change, comparable numbers
3. MISS — could describe any B2B

Reading: What makes a pitch stick

1. (B) The pitch itself is vague
2. (B) The words are decoration and carry no information
3. (B) The listener can repeat your pitch back thirty seconds later
4. (B) Sharpen a claim and show the speaker knows how far it goes

Vocabulary: value props, metrics and adverbs

1. differentiator
 2. baseline; consistently
 3. ROI
 4. consistently / measurably
 5. conversion
 6. quietly
1. Our differentiator isn't the AI; it's that we route by role.
 2. Their established baseline was 6% monthly churn.
 3. For every €1 they spent with us, they saved €7 in analyst time — a 7× ROI.
 4. We consistently cut onboarding by around 40% across the last six enterprise rollouts.
 5. The founder didn't oversell — she said 'we quietly think it's worth a pilot'.

Grammar focus: Adverbs and adverbial phrases

1. (a) consistently
 2. (a) within the first quarter
 3. (a) with zero engineering effort
 4. (a) significantly — dropped significantly to 2.4% across every cohort
 5. (a) quietly — 'unashamedly' inflates
1. Model: 'Across the last six enterprise rollouts, we consistently cut deployment time by about 40%.'
 2. Model: 'For the three enterprise clients on our public case-study page, we saved between €800k and €2.1m in the first year.'
 3. Model: 'Our platform quietly does one thing well — it routes tickets by role, not by keyword. That alone cut engineer time by roughly 40% for Northlake.'
 4. Model: 'Within the first 30 days, we typically remove one full FTE of manual reporting per 100 stores.'
1. Model: 'We consistently cut onboarding time by around 40%, across every enterprise rollout we've done in the last 12 months.'
 2. Model: 'Trial-to-paid conversion measurably went up — from 8% to 14% within the first quarter of us joining the team.'
 3. Model: 'Within eight weeks, their support team quietly stopped drowning in tickets — the same three request types were auto-routed to the people who actually owned the answer.'

Listening: three founders, sixty seconds each

1. Voice B (Marta). She opens with a specific pain-number, gives one metric with a baseline, and closes with an ask ('one 30-day pilot').
 2. Voice A (Ken) — 'AI-powered next-gen empowering forward-thinking teams' with no customer and no number.
 3. Voice C (Sanya) — good customer example, but she buries the number ('meaningful improvements') where 'from 3 days to 15 minutes' would have landed harder.
1. Reference checks: from 3 days to 15 minutes; and 12 hours/week of recruiter time freed up per 100 open roles.
 2. 'A 30-day pilot on one team, one hiring manager, no engineering effort — decide at the end.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



3. 'You can turn it off in one click. That's a real button, not a slide.'

1. It puts the change in time and makes the pilot feel low-risk and reversible — reduces the buyer's 'when will I know?' anxiety without inflating the claim.

2. Because most of Voice A's words are decoration ('empowering', 'next-gen', 'transformational') — they carry no specific claim, so density of information collapses.

3. Replace 'meaningful improvements in time-to-hire' with the actual number ('from 3 days to 15 minutes'). That single change would move her from testimonial to case-study level.

Quiz

1. (B) The listener can repeat your pitch 30 seconds later
2. (B) 'We consistently cut onboarding by around 40%.'
3. (B) Who + what changes + how we know
4. (B) It should only be used when you literally mean it
5. (B) It removes the buyer's risk and makes 'yes' cheap

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Workbook

Exercise 1 — Pitch vocabulary

1. differentiator
2. baseline
3. delta
4. ROI
5. conversion
6. quietly

Exercise 2 — Sharp adverb, not inflated one

1. consistently (not 'revolutionarily')
2. within the first quarter (not 'in the fullness of time')
3. with zero engineering effort (not 'seamlessly and holistically')
4. significantly (not 'totally')
5. quietly (not 'unashamedly')
6. Within the first

Exercise 3 — HIT or MISS?

1. (B) MISS
2. (A) HIT
3. (B) MISS
4. (A) HIT
5. (B) MISS

Exercise 4 — Deflate the buzzword

1. Model: 'Across the last six enterprise rollouts, we consistently cut deployment time by about 40%.'
2. Model: 'For the three enterprise clients on our case-study page, we saved between €800k and €2.1m in the first year.'
3. Model: 'Our platform quietly does one thing well — it routes tickets by role, not by keyword. That alone cut engineer time by roughly 40% for Northlake.'
4. Model: 'Within the first 30 days, we typically remove one full FTE of manual reporting per 100 stores.'

Exercise 5 — Three pitches on the panel

1. Speaker 2 (Marta). Specific baseline → delta ('3 days to 15 minutes'), sharp adverbial phrase ('within the first 30 days'), and a small reversible ask ('one team, one hiring manager, 30 days').
2. Speaker 1 (Ken) — 'AI-powered next-gen empowering forward-thinking teams' with no customer and no number.
3. Speaker 3 (Sanya). She hedges the metric. Replace 'meaningful improvements in time-to-hire' with the actual number ('from 3 days to 15 minutes').

Exercise 7 — Case study reflection: the 3-founder panel

1. Model: Sanya. Marta is already on target; Ken is defensive and low ROI on time. Sanya has the biggest gap between product strength and pitch strength — the highest-leverage founder to move.
2. Model: 'If an investor writes down anything from your first 15 seconds, it must be a number and a name — not an adjective.'
3. Model: 'Last quarter, we saved a 40-store retailer 12 hours a week per store manager — without them touching engineering. That's the promise. Here's how we did it.' — keep his energy, replace his opener.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class
