How To Pitch For New Clients (And Actually Get Responses)

You've probably read a lot about pitching, right?

It has been covered by some of the **best** in the business. You have an almost *endless* supply of pitching articles.

Because on a regular basis I **still** receive pitches like this:

Message Body:
I know you probably receive a lot of emails talking about search engine optimization services but we are different from the rest and I am willing to prove it.

Here are a few reasons we are not your normal SEO agency.

1) Our Search Engine Optimization and Marketing services are designed for success. Our services generally start at $1500 a month in order to provide your campaign with the necessary resources to do the job right and confidently predict a successful campaign. If you've been burned by another company in the past, it was likely that they were just giving you the price you wanted rather than what was required to get results. We are focused on getting results!

2) We are in it for the long-term. We are an extremely low turn-over business and our costs go up significantly if we loose clients within the first year, so we have a large incentive to keep you happy and keep you on-board long-term.

3) We provide realistic expectations to our clients rather than telling them what they want to hear just to get them to sign up. The truth isn't as exciting as the fairy tales that other companies are willing to tell you, but it's the truth.

If you're interested in hearing what we can do for your site then I would love to set up a consultation call with you. Let me know what time/day works best (and the best number).

Thanks!

Which either leads me to believe that

a) you're *not* reading the information that's out there,

b) you're not applying the information that's out there or, and the worst,

c) the information out there is failing you.

And, for all three of those reasons to give you a new, different angle on pitching, and a **more practical** guide that you can implement now.

Because if you pitch like the above, your pitches *suck* and here's exactly why…

The Harsh Truth

If you're in SEO you're in sales.

I'm yet to meet a single SEO who is successful who couldn't sell his or her product or service to someone.

And, I know, it might not be what excites you about your business. Perhaps you're enthralled by the nitty, gritty, in-the-trenches technical stuff. Or, maybe you're in love with seeing the results happen right before your eyes. But sales is an **essential**part of your business. And, you might not always have the resources to hire someone to do it for you.

So it's time for you to get good at pitching to people. You need to know what it takes, until you *can* hire a salesperson, to get clients under your belt and write pitches that people want to read, and reply to.

The 7 Deadly Mistakes You Make In Your Pitches

01: Your Focus

Look, I don't want to lecture you. But the problem with almost *all* SEO pitches is that they're focused on **you**. What do I mean?

You tell potential clients about:

- How good your business is

- What your business does

- How much you can charge me for your services

- The features of your service

None of which is exciting, or interesting, to a potential buyer.

Especially not if you cold email, from a contact form, without any interaction beforehand (more on that later). I don't give a crap about your SEO service, or how good you think you are, or how different you think you are from the rest.

I care that you **prove to me** that you're different. I care about you showing me what **you can do for me** Not, as your pitch would suggest, I can do for you (or your bank account).

In short: you're not providing me with value.

02: You Make Stupid Claims

Okay, when you pitch you make some god awful, plain stupid, claims. Take a look at this line from the pitch I mentioned earlier:

"Here are a few reasons we are not your normal SEO agency.

Our Search Engine Optimization and Marketing services are designed for success"

The fact that you started an SEO service *implies* that you were built for success. You didn't start the service, and try selling it to people, to be a shitty SEO did you.

Also, are other SEO agencies not designed for success? I must have missed the meeting where everyone else agreed to engineer for failure.

These claims are a waste of time, and energy, for both your potential client and you.

03: You Go Straight For The Wallet

Asking for money, before you've sold to me, is a **sure fire** way to get me to close your email. Same goes for any client. For example, there are just 58 words in the example pitch before they try to charge me $1500 a month.

Which means that all I know by this point is that they are an SEO company, and they want to charge me a lot of money each month for something.

That's like sitting down in a restaurant and the waiter saying, *"Give me $70 and we'll bring you some food"* without ever showing you a menu, telling you what food you'll be getting, or if you even like that food.

You can't pitch me a price until I know what it is that I'm buying.

That's why sales pages never tell you what it'll cost until right at the end.

They make you an offer – based on the value (and desire) they've just created – and you're more inclined to purchase.

04: You're Ambiguous

SEO is a concept that people don't tend to understand. Or, at least, can't manage for them for a long period of time. But that doesn't mean you can't be specific in what you say.

05: You Focus On Features…

I touched on this earlier, but it's a point you *really* need to understand.

The features – the parts that sound sexy to you – of your business don't excite me.

As a potential client, who probably doesn't understand SEO that well, there's no room to tell me about what makes up your business.

Here's an example from a different pitch I was sent:

"I'm able to achieve results like this by using many white hat SEO methods including web 2.0 creation, article creation and submission, creating articles and backlinks on wiki pages, social bookmarks, forum profiles and blog commenting."

These are what an SEO should be doing, sure. But your potential client may have *no idea* what they are. In fact, I can almost guarantee they have no idea what they do, or why you would be doing them. So you can't sell them on these features because they mean nothing.

Instead – as we'll cover in the next section – you **have** to focus on **what these features can do for the other person.**

06: And Information I Don't Care About

I keep referring to this example pitch, but that's because it's rich with information on what you *shouldn't* do.

Here's, by far, the most pointless line I've read in a pitch for a long time:

"We are an extremely low turn-over business and our costs go up significantly if we loose clients within the first year so we have a large incentive to keep you happy and keep you on-board long-term"

So what?

I don't care about your business's turnover, gross profit or anything else. You should have a desire to keep me on board because you love what you do, and you want to provide me with results. Not because I'm going to make it easier for you to go on vacation next summer.

07: Typo's

Finally, and let's make this abundantly clear in a sexy little sound bite:

Typo's cost clients.

If you don't take the time to proofread, or spell-check, your emails, you're not going to get any attention. If you can't do it in your sales email, what leads me to believe you're going to take care in the work you do with me?

Okay, That's The Hard Bit Over…

So, let's look at what it takes to create a real, impactful pitch that people want to listen to.

Don't Go In Cold…

My biggest tip – and one I learned the hard way, trust me – is to not go in cold when you're trying to pitch. You live in a world where you're only a tweet away from the people you want to connect with.

If you find a site, or person, that you want to pitch to, go the **extra mile** by connecting with them first. Try to build a relationship so that they at least know your name when it pops up in their inbox.

This is particularly effective if you know *who* you're trying to pitch to (not go for a beer know them, but know their name – more on that in the next point) and can get their personal feed.

A simple way to do this is to check their feed and look at the last 10-15 tweets they posted. Then, start a conversation. It's really that simple.
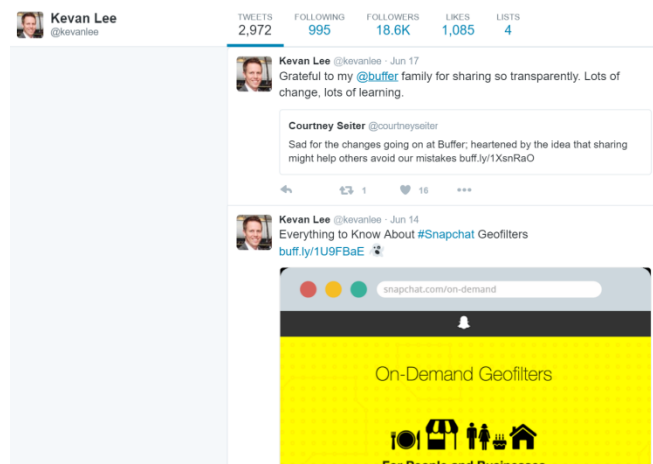
Now, be clear, I don't want you to start a conversation about SEO. Start an actual conversation like you want to become friends with them. Have a bit of banter, chat and get into their heads as a name they'll remember.
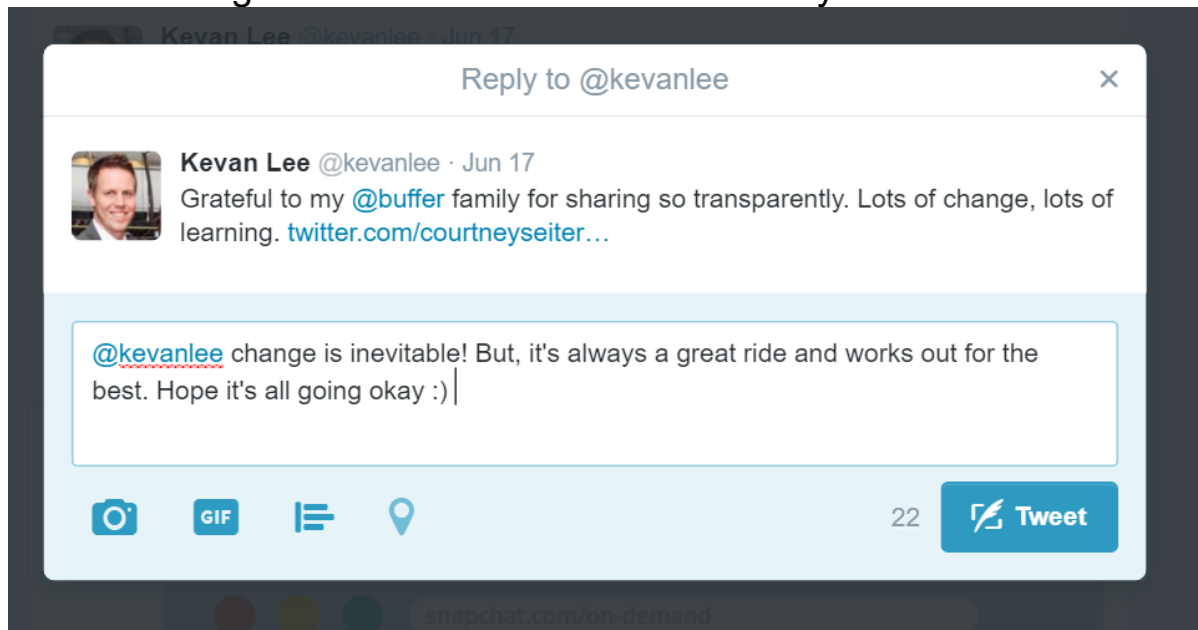
If they have a blog, you could even do this with blog comments too. The more your name shows up, the more likely they'll be to open your email when it lands in their inbox.

I originally wrote this paragraph saying that this step isn't really essential. But, in fact, it is. You *can* land contracts on a cold pitch. I've done it. But it's much harder work than going in with a relationship established. So where you can, build that relationship with someone.

The Most Important Checklist Before You Write

There are a few extra elements I suggest you put together before you even think about writing your pitch. They'll make pitching easier, allow you to craft more effective emails and boost your response rate.

This list should be personalized to each potential client. And, some of the concepts are covered below, so don't worry about filling in this checklist before you carry on with the rest of this post.

1. Have you made contact with this person at least three times before? (Twitter, LinkedIn, Blog Comments etc.)

2. Do you have the correct email to pitch to?

3. Do you have the person you're pitching to's name?

4. Do you know who their competitors are?

5. Do you have a valid, tangible reason they need SEO?

6. Do you have social proof of your SEO results?

7. Do you understand the benefits of your service to the person you're pitching?

By having all of these in order, especially before you pitch, you can begin to create an easy file to create sales pitches from.

#1: How To Write The Perfect Pitch Introduction

The introduction to your pitch is an area you need to focus on.

Why?

Because that's where you're going to **grab** people's attention and get them to listen to what you've got to say. This is your foot in the door.

Be Personal

The first step here is to be personal. Like, extremely person. I know if an email lands in my inbox that says, "Hey James" in the snippet I'll actually open it. (If it doesn't I feel like you're being lazy, because the name of my site isJamesWritesThings and my name is actually in the title).

The same goes for most of my friends in business circles, too. By adding their name you'll boost the rate of people opening – and responding – almost instantly.

Making an email personal takes a lot of hustle though. Because the name isn't always apparent though. Especially if you're pitching to a business or company. So, what can you do if the name doesn't stand out to you?

I'd recommend looking around their site for an about, or background page, like this one below. It may not have *everything* you need, but there are clues there that you
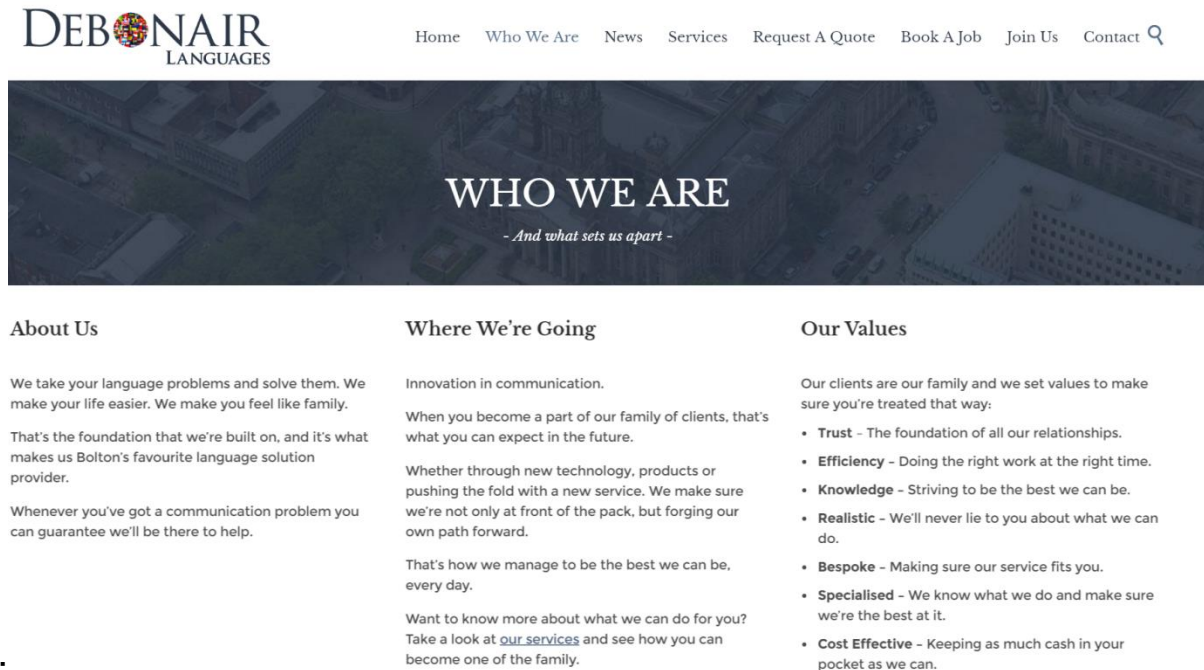
can find:

Failing that, give them a search on LinkedIn and look for their main business page. They may have a list of employees there. If not, look at the *Others Also Viewed* section on the sidebar. Jackpot, we found a full name.

If you **still** can't find someone's name, try finding active Twitter accounts or social media profiles connected to their business page using a software like ClearVoice.

This might seem like a lot of work. It is. Tough shit. But finding someone's name can make **all** the difference to getting your email read.

Get To The Point

This *doesn't* mean you should go straight for the wallet. What I mean here is that nobody wants your life story. You don't need to write an excerpt from your autobiography, you just need to explain **why** you're writing. Why, in their busy schedule, they should stop and read your mail.

How you get to the point is completely personal, but this has two benefits for you:

1. It shows respect for the person receiving the email

2. It keeps the responses you get targeted and more likely to buy

For example, when writing your email if it looks like this:

The person reading it knows **exactly** why you're getting in touch. You're a freelance SEO, and you want to know how they feel about the way they're performing in Google. They know you're not here for charity, and if they don't care about Google, they can decide almost instantly to not respond.

The Open-Ended Question

Notice how the question in that last picture of a pitch is open-ended?

It doesn't require a Yes or No answer, it needs someone to *think* about their response. This creates a more emotional connection, and attaches the reader to your pitch somewhat.

Now, this example pitch is for a smaller, local business. But if you're an agency the same principle applies, the question may just change slightly. They may not know – or care – how they're performing. But, they may know that they're not happy with their current SEO service, so you may want to change to, "How do you feel about your current SEO service?".

#2: Start Providing Value After The Introduction

That's the intro taken care of. Now it's time for you to start adding real value. This is where you have to start focusing **outwards** and on the client, not on what you do for a living. Let me show you…

Find Your Benefits

As you read earlier, nobody cares about your features. They care about what your product or service can do for them. Like how you don't care about what goes into your coffee, you care about the fact it's going to make you more alert and taste nice. But the big question here is how do you turn your features into benefits?
The most simple way to do this is to write down **all** of the facts about your service, and create a bridge between those facts and how they impact your clients. For example:

Hey Paul,

My names James - we've spoken a couple of times on twitter - and as well as being a Manchester United fan, I'm a Freelance SEO. I wanted to ask how well you feel Debonair Languages is performing on Google?

I took the liberty of performing an audit on your site - just to check if you even needed any SEO work - and I got some results that you should be aware of.

For example, if you were to optimise your site for Mobile Devices, you would be easier to find in for both potential clients and new employees (especially helpful now you're hiring). I've also seen a few areas that you could outrank your competition - like D.A Languages and TheBigWord - that would really drive new customers your way. The whole report is in the attached PDF report and highlights some other issues for you too.

In the space between I want you to imagine, if you will, that the words, *which allows you to,* are written. That's what takes you **straight** to the benefits of your features or facts. Your list will be completely unique so I suggest you spend some time working on this. Because, the bigger the list, the more you can tailor them to the potential client you're pitching.

That last point is the most important. Because, they're going to respond even more to that. For example, I saw that Debonair Languages were hiring on LinkedIn, so I put a benefit in there that directly links to that.
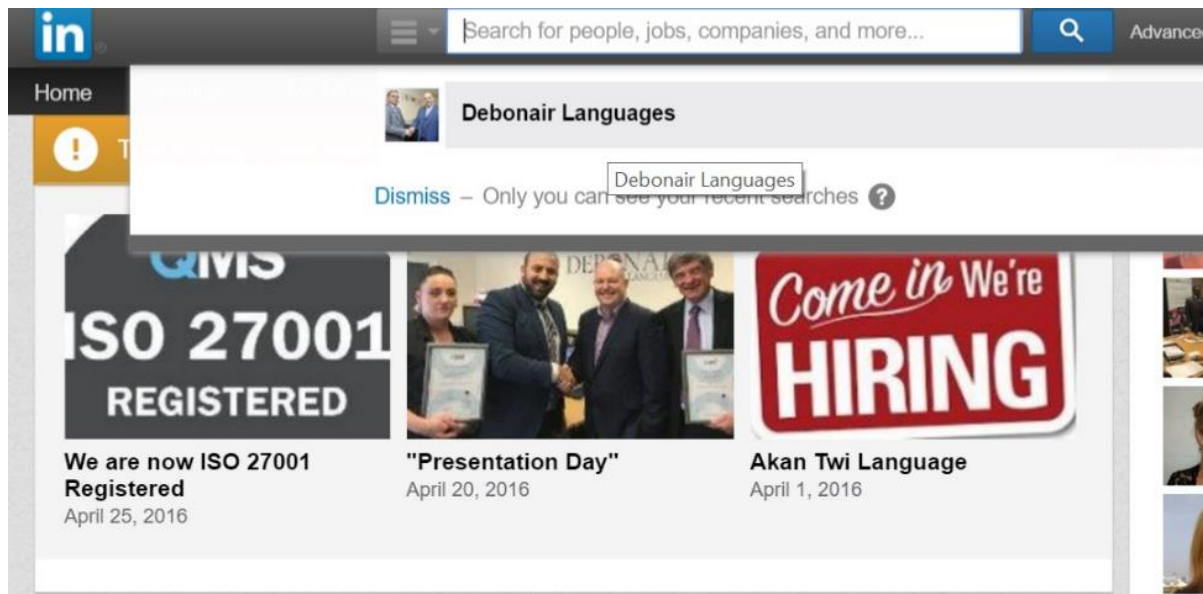
Have A Tangible Reason For Pitching

It's a big waste of time pitching people who don't need SEO services, or aren't in as much need as someone else might be. So putting in some leg work **before** you even pitch them is a great idea. Like performing an audit (you can do that in SERPed by the way).

This also gives you a reason to pitch them that can get their attention. For example, if their site isn't optimised for mobile – another SERPed tool shameless plug here – you can let them know that's going to be an issue.

But, also, having something like a PDF report to attach to your email can make a world of difference. Because you've provided them with value. You're telling them, "Hey, no matter whether you buy from me or not, there are some issues you need to fix!".

Sometimes, you're going to need to this. You need to show them now **how** you can help them, but **why they actually need your help.**

Find Their Competitors

This is something I learned from a mentor long ago. And, it's stood me in great stead with pitching ever since. By finding who someones competitor is, you can put yourself in a position of leverage and knowledge.

By doing a little research I was able to find out just who Debonair Languages are in competition with. And, that they were making a few mistakes too. So there was room for Debonair to capitalise and become more competitive, if not overtake them, with a few consistent changes.

Now this *may* be a bit of a sexy copywriting magic but it really plays to emotions. If the recipient is an opportunist they'll see somewhere they can pounce. If they're a pessimist they'll be hit with the fear that they're losing out to the competition.

And – here's a bonus – you could find someone else worth pitching to if this one all falls through. Win, win, win, right?

#3: Provide Social Proof

You know what businessmen hate? Talk.

They cannot stand people who just run their mouth and don't provide **data** about what they can do. Without social proof everything else is just words. It *needs* to be in your pitch.

For example, here some (fictional) social proof that I've created for this pitch:

Over the last few months I've been fortunate enough to help some other companies build their income through Google, and I'd love to help Debonair become one of them. Here's a short swipe of my results for you to take a look at:

Dan's Dairy Farm - Over three months I helped them increase by over 2,000 organic page views a month, which resulted in a $1,500 per month boost in sales

Grindsmith Coffee - With Grindsmith I was able to help them increase their local visibility in Manchester and put them on the first page in Google, which had a direct impact on their foot traffic in the city, and lead to them being featured in LoveManchester Magazine.

Top Marks Tennis Academy - Top Marks wanted a Spring Campaign to help them increase their Summer Camp sign ups. With a few minor changes I was able to help them increase sign ups by 400% and contribute to their first ever sold out week since they opened (Thankfully my SEO is better than my Serve).

You can also check out all of testimonials and my reviews right here as well.

Yours needs to be, well…not fictional. But it definitely *needs* to be there. Create some case studies and show what your work can do.

Now, I hear you saying, "But I don't want to guarantee something I might not deliver", after all you can't *really* guarantee anything in SEO can you?

Well, look at it differently. You're not guaranteeing results, you're guaranteeing that you're not a cowboy looking to make a quick buck. You're showing that people have trusted you with their site, and their results, and you've followed through.

#4: Sign Off Confidently

You have to be prepared that some people *won't* get back to you. But, don't let them know that. Instead sign off like you're going to hear from them no matter what.

The most simple, effective way I know to do that is like this:

Don't drain their time. Don't ask them to contact you. Let them know that you're available and that, if they want to, they should get in touch with you.

#5: But, What About The Subject Line?

This is important, but don't over think it. I've found that asking questions is the**best way** to get people to open. Here are a few to choose from:

- Freelance SEO opportunities?

- How do you feel about your Google Rankings?

- Did you know your site is missing this?

People are **used** to spammy email headlines to try being direct, honest and straight to the point.

Time To Pitch!

Okay, it's over to you. Time to take these pitching ideas and make them your own.