



Interview with Beth Susanne, startup consultant and presentation coach.

by Pascal Lardier, International Director at [Health 2.0](#)
for the [EU funded GET Project](#).

Beth Susanne has coached close to a thousands of startups on how to present to investors: "You have about 10 seconds for an investor to decide whether you're worthwhile to continue to listen to or not. You have to be clear about what you believe in but you also have to be coachable."

Pascal Lardier: So, first question, Beth, can you describe your background and what makes you well positioned today to train startups on how to present their activities to potential investors and partners?

Beth Susanne: Well, I have trained close to a thousand startups in the last three years since I moved to Amsterdam. I have worked in 12 countries in Europe and, I go back and forth to work in Silicon Valley. I'm originally from Silicon Valley. Before I began training startups to get funded or to get partners and clients, I had been consulting architecture and engineering companies to win huge projects: 1.2 billion, 1.6 billion dollar projects that last over a number of years. The keys to presenting are similar, whether you're presenting in professional services or you're presenting to investors.

So, I've taken my experience over the last 20 years of working with companies, startups and venture capitalists and transferred from California to Europe and it's been really going well.

PL: So after training over a thousand companies on how to present their activities, what would you say is the best way to present to investors? What should the presentation focus on?

BS: The CEO needs to present a compelling story. He or she needs to be clear about what the investor wants to hear. They have to know what investors don't want to hear, cut out what's not necessary and tell their story in a very compelling way. They have to state the problem, what their solution is, why they're

better, and is it defensible? They have to state how big the market is. What's their first customer market segment, do they have traction? And then they have to talk about how they're going to make money and who they are, why them, why they are the best team. Finally, say how much money they need, how much money have they gotten, what are they going to do with the money they are asking for, what are the milestones.

They have to tell a compelling story that focuses on a real life problem or solution that most people can relate to. So that's the main key.

PL: What is the most common mistake you see in startup presenting to investors?

BS: The most common mistake? Well, there are actually two common mistakes. The first one is not understanding what the investor wants to hear and needs to hear, which leads to the second most common mistake,; talking too much about the technical details of what they've created, and describing all of the bells and whistles of their technology. They bury the investor in too much information: they're boring. You have about 10 seconds for an investor to decide whether you're worthwhile to continue to listen to or not. And then if not, they check out, or go on their smartphones, and you've lost them.

Unfortunately, for entrepreneurs, once you have lost your investor's attention, you rarely have a second chance to get up in front of that same investor again. They're usually gone for good.

PL: Quite often, it's the CEO himself or herself that present to investors. They know their markets, they know their solutions but they often have a hard time conveying a vision that will convince the investors. Why is that?

BS: There are two reasons. One of them is, basically, what I have said: they aren't clear about what the investors want and need to hear.

So they give them too much information. VCs are looking for three things when investing in startups. 1) They want to know that you have a really great product. 2) They want to know that you can execute on your idea and 3) that you're entrepreneurial, that you can be flexible enough and adaptable enough to really make it happen. So that means that the CEO, when he gets up there, has to tap into his "why". Why is he doing this? What's the reason that you're there developing this company? What's the problem you're solving that makes you get passionate, excited, and you're just going to make sure this is going to happen, that you're going to execute on this idea no matter what?

PL: So they're mixing up two stages of the discussion with investors. They're mixing up the stage where they should be picking the interest of the investors with the one that we call "due diligence" where you're supposed to provide actual data about the company.

BS: That's exactly right. So there are basically four different types of pitches for entrepreneurs. First, the "Hollywood pitch" which is like a tagline under their business name that just grabs people's attention and has them say, "Oh! What's that? Tell me more."

The second type of pitch is an elevator pitch which is 30 to 45 seconds and tells about the problem you're solving, the benefits your product/technology creates and the results that you've gotten.

Third, there's the one to five minute pitch to GRAB ATTENTION quickly, to get investors to meet with you afterwards. There are 6 points to cover 1) the problem 2) your solution 3) the market 4) the team, 5) the business model, financial projections and 6) how much money you need.

I always train my teams that "less is more". You want simpler phrases, ideally not more than 4 words on the slide, dynamic images on the screen and you want to have the words that you've chosen to sound like little jewels that you've carved out; saying exactly what you need to say without saying too much.

Fourth: The Investor Pitch: generally, about an hour to an hour-and-a-half long that goes over a due-diligence slide deck that covers all the details you didn't cover in the 5 minute pitch.

PL: Okay. So the presentation is important. But what other key elements, in your view, make the difference between those who get funded and those who don't?

BS: A couple of things. One is traction. If you have traction in the market, you're way ahead of other people. If you don't have traction, it's harder to get investors interested until you do have traction. Second, is the CEO coachable? I've had venture capitalists come from Silicon Valley come over to Germany to hear a few German companies pitch to them and one of the companies had a fabulous product, but he argued with the investor. The entrepreneur wouldn't take his advice. Well, needless to say, he didn't get the investment. Investors will not invest in people who don't listen to them. You have to be clear about what you believe in but you also have to be coachable.

PL: All right. It's a little bit like a job interview. It's not enough to have the skills but you also need to have a personality that the

investors are going to like and you want them to want to work with you.

BS: Right. Because what the entrepreneur is doing is he's hoping to enter into a relationship with a few high net worth individuals for many years. So they need to know that there's chemistry between all the groups so that they want to be around these people. The investors also want to know that the CEO can build a team and that the team works well together and they're not going to fall apart because they can't handle their interpersonal issues.

PL: Okay. You've worked a lot with health entrepreneurs but you've also worked outside of the health and wellness industry. What other advice would you give to health startups specifically?

BS: I think that this a really exciting time for health startups especially in Europe. I just successfully Pitch Coached the team that won the EIT Health KIC. It was just funded to the tune of 500 million Euros over seven years. There's another 1.6 billion Euros pledged from about 142 organizations across 15 countries in Europe to develop technologies and communities that extend the life of Europeans by an average of two years and improves and encourages healthy ageing for people across Europe.

So there's awareness in Europe about the value of technology to really transform the quality of our health and I don't see that happening in the U.S. It's a uniquely European vision of trying to improve the health of all 500 million Europeans. There are a few organisations across Europe like Health 2.0, that are bringing these groups and efforts together. There is a lot of money coming on the table and it's taken very seriously here. So it's a very exciting time for health startups.

PL: All right. I think through this interview, you will generate a lot of interest from CEOs who may need to be coached. What's the best way to reach you?

BS: You can reach me on my website: bethsusanne.com, beth@bethsusanne.com is my email or twitter is @bethpitch and my skype is: beth.susanne.

PL: Well, thank you so much.

BS: You're welcome. Thank you, Pascal.

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If you are an investor and would like to receive an invitation, please get in touch with Pascal Lardier via pascal@health2con.com. If you are an SME looking for funding and would like to join the GET Funded service, please check our [investors' criteria here](#).

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