Workshop: A Persuasive 5-Minute Presentation

One Idea, Three Parts, Cut to Time, Rehearsed

Bonus material for uniquestoremarket.com's "How to Give a Persuasive 5-Minute Presentation" guide. A facilitator script that walks a client or small group through the guide's six chapters live, in one session, using each participant's own real pitch.

Session objective

By the end of this session, each participant leaves with: (1) a one-sentence thesis that another person can repeat back, (2) an open-body-close outline cut to fit five minutes, (3) a slide sketch and a six-beat index card, and (4) two or three likely questions with short honest answers.

Format and length

90 minutes. Works 1-on-1 or with a small group (up to 6–8, working in pairs for the aloud exercises). Needs: paper or notebook, a timer for each pair, index cards, and a real pitch topic each participant has to give soon.

Agenda

1. Opening — why 5-minute pitches fail (5 min)

Say it as the guide does: most five-minute presentations fail for the same two reasons. They try to carry more than one idea, and they were rehearsed as a script instead of as a structure. Ask each person to name the real pitch they will work on today and where they expect to struggle: content, speaking it out loud, or running over time.

2. Ch. 1 — find the one idea (20 min)

Run the micro-start: a ten-minute freewrite of everything the presentation needs to cover, no editing. Then each person circles or writes one sentence that answers "what changes if the audience does what I ask?" Use the guide's example: "I want us to pilot a self-serve onboarding checklist that cuts ramp-up time from three weeks to one." In pairs, each person says their sentence aloud and the partner repeats it back. If they can't, revise it. Check it passes the stranger test and fits in one breath.

3. Ch. 2 — Open-Body-Close (15 min)

Teach the three parts: Open (30–45 seconds) states the problem and the thesis, Body (3–3.5 minutes) has no more than three points each explained in one breath, Close (30–45 seconds) repeats the thesis in different words and ends with one concrete next step. Walk through the onboarding example, ending on "can I get a yes today?" Participants draft their own open, body and close on paper, no slides yet.

4. Ch. 3 — cut to five minutes (12 min)

Teach the numbers: five minutes is roughly 650–750 spoken words, and first drafts are usually two to three times too long. Each person marks every freewrite point keep, cut or maybe, then removes the cut points entirely and reads the rest aloud, timed. Rule: if still over five minutes, cut one more point rather than trimming every sentence. Maybe points go to a follow-up document.

5. Ch. 4 — slides that support you (10 min)

Principle: a slide shows what words alone can't do well, such as a number, a photo or a short label. Start from about one slide per 45–60 seconds, so 5 to 6 slides, each with no more than about six words plus one visual. Participants sketch one slide per body point, plus an opening slide with only the thesis and a closing slide with the concrete ask. Use the guide's example of "3 weeks → 1 week" as a single-number slide.

6. Ch. 5 — rehearse structure, not script (18 min)

Each person writes a six-beat index card from their outline: short labels only, no full sentences (e.g. Thesis → Pain → Point 1 → Point 2 → Point 3 → Ask). In pairs, one delivers while the partner times it, then they swap. Deliver twice, with the wording allowed to vary each time. Debrief: did the same beats land in both versions? Assign homework: rehearse at least three times, record once on a phone and note one thing to adjust.

7. Ch. 6 — questions and close (10 min)

Each person writes the 2–3 questions they most expect, with a one- or two-sentence honest answer for each. Say that “I don't know yet, I'll follow up” counts as a valid answer where true. Then everyone practises their opening line aloud five times in a row. Close with a share-out of each thesis. End on the guide's reminder: the goal is the one-sentence thesis landing, not a flawless performance.

Facilitator notes

- The most common failure is a thesis that can't be repeated back. Don't move on from step 2 until the partner can say it back in their own words (Ch. 1).
- If a pitch has five or six body points, or runs over time, have the participant cut a whole point instead of trimming all of them a little (Ch. 2, 3).
- Watch for closes that end in “thoughts?” or “any questions?” — insist on one specific, answerable ask, on the slide as well (Ch. 2, 4).
- If someone starts writing out full sentences on the index card, send them back to short labels — memorized wording is the fragile part (Ch. 5).
- The guide spreads this over seven days; this session compresses the same six chapters into one sitting. Remind people that rehearsing three times, recording once, and one run under mild pressure still need to happen afterwards.

Full guide: uniquestoremarket.com/build-your-own-persuasive-presentation