

FTC 4140 – Fish in the Boat



1) The Initial Phone Call

1. Your name
2. Connections you have to the company or person if any
3. Depending on the situation, we would send the person an e-mail with more information about FTC and our team. "I will be sending you an email that contains information about FIRST Tech Challenge. The email is from yourteamname@rocketmail.com."
4. Tell them very briefly about who you are.
5. Tell them why you are calling. "We'd like the opportunity to come in and talk to you about the program and about the team and our goals."
6. Leave a phone number for them to contact you with.

You will not always speak to an actual person, so your voicemail needs to be short and sweet. If you get the chance to set up a meeting, make sure it is at their convenience, not yours. It would be a good idea to bring along your robot to demo.

2) Follow-up Phone Call

This call will be along the lines of the initial phone call. Reference the fact you have called/emailed already. If you get a voicemail, leave them a phone number, and tell them you will try again in the next day or two.

3) The answer

At this point, they will either say "yes, we're interested" or "thanks, but no." If they say no, thank them for their time, wish them a good day, and say goodbye. It was about a 50-50 split with 'yes' and 'no' for us last season. If you do set up a meeting, you'll need a pitch to do so. Unfortunately, going in and say 'Give us money' doesn't work.

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The main points in our pitch were:

A Welcome - Who you are, what FIRST is, FIRST Tech Challenge.... You should have a packet of information (about three to six pages) about your team and about FTC to give them.

History - When your team started, number of members, number of girls/guys on your team, if you've won any awards, etc.

Accomplishments - How you did at previous tournaments, what awards you've won/been nominated for

Outreach - What you've done in the past or plan to do in the future to make FIRST more well-known This is a good time to reference that sponsors will be displayed at all outreach events, including the tournament.

Difference - What makes you different from other teams? How do you stand out? (Whether it's from having bright red shirts or a competitive robot, you'll stand out.)

Experiences - What have you learned from being a part of FTC? Some of our examples included time management, public speaking, research, mechanical, marketing, and software skills. We also had a team member share a story about their experience on the team.

Money - And then you hit Money: Have how much you want to raise and how much you have raised already.

Relationships: What do we gain? (Product, money, mentoring) What do they get in return? (Publicity, team news, sponsor recognition, kids interested in STEM programs, etc.)

Note: There are other things that can be added and cut. This pitch worked for us, but may not do so for every team.

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THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND!

- You may have people walking in and out during your pitch - don't be deterred by that.
- You may be stopped so questions can be asked - don't let that deter you either. If it's covered later in the pitch, say something like 'I'll get to that in a moment'. If it's not, then you can answer it then or say 'questions will be answered afterwards'.
- There are benefits to having your robot with you, just make sure you are able to run it. If it's a cold call, have it with you, but don't bring it into the building.
- Sponsorship doesn't necessarily mean money. It could be mentoring (we had some guy come in and help us with our website and programming) or it could be product (we also had a sponsor who - after writing us a check and giving us a tour of his plastics machining facility - which was awesome, by the way - said 'Come back if you need any plastic!' So we did.).
- We ended up with several tours of various different facilities, the aforementioned plastics place, a metal machining facility, and a company that is working on the U of M campus. So you might end up with a couple too. Even if you're completely bored by the company, act interested. (It's really cool to see what people do though; you'll probably be kept interested.)
- You want to contact these companies the next season!! That's why being interested about what they do, being polite, and being well organized are all important.
- The company may say 'We'll discuss and get back to you later.' That's fine; just make sure they have your contact information and the packet of information you give them at the beginning of the pitch.
- If you haven't noticed, politeness is key.
- Keep a record of all the companies you call (even if you only call them once and leave a message) and every detail about contacting them. This way you don't contact someone twice or too much.