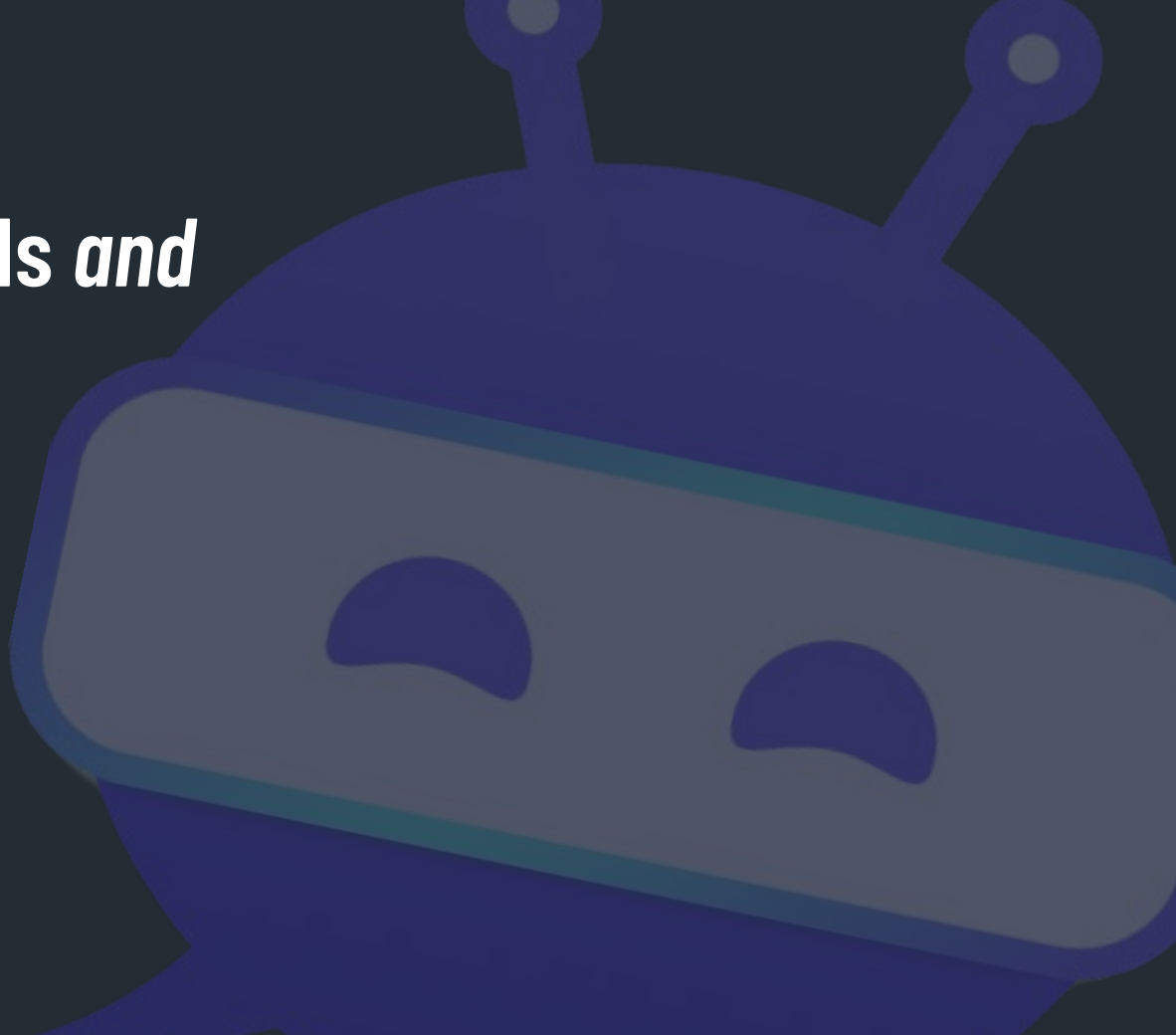# How to WIN Friends *and* Influence Judges ... with Q&A

First impressions count but last impressions are FOREVER

Q&A MATTERS

64% of decision-makers stated that Q&A was the most valuable part of a presentation, as it addressed their specific needs and concerns (LinkedIn).

In real-time interactions, audiences perceive presenters as *40% more credible and trustworthy* when responding directly to questions (Harvard Business Review).

Audience (a.k.a. JUDGES) engagement can increase by *up to 50%* when attendees participate in Q&A, transforming the presentation into a dialogue (Northwestern University).

Research from the University of California reveals that *audiences recall about 75% of information* from Q&A segments compared to only 50% from the presentation itself, leading to higher satisfaction with the session (University of California).

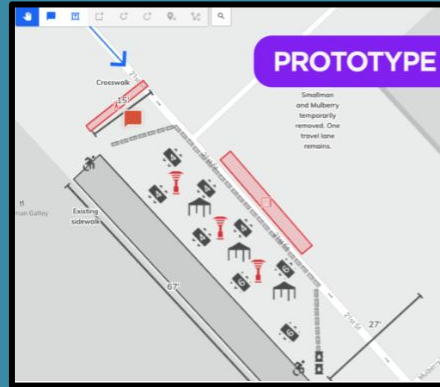# Okay, let's set the stage ...

CIVIX - AI Assisted City Planning
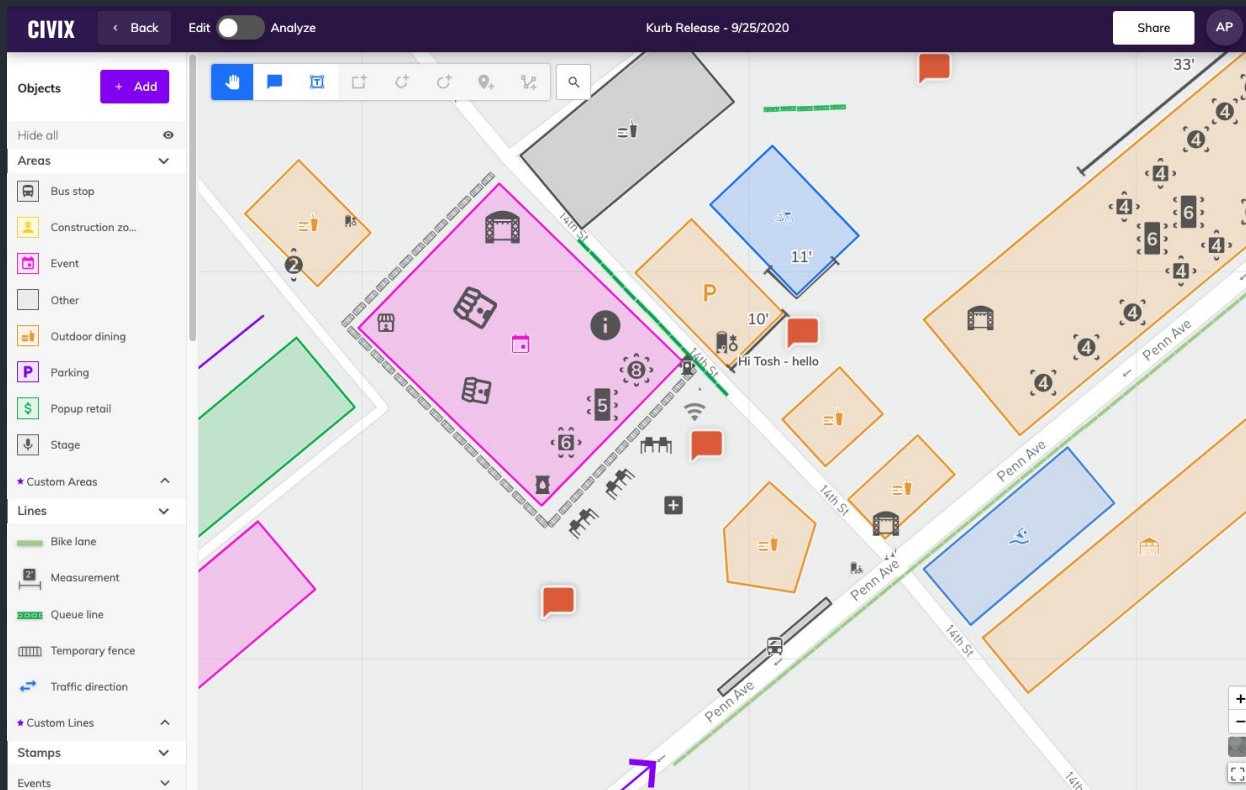
CIVIX - AI Assisted City Planning

AMAZING Background

Great ENERGY but nervous

Good time management

It works (a lil buggy)

Early social proof/pipeline

Easy to understand value/model

THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?

Congratulations, you've pitched!

What you think judges are like...

They may be more like…

Has money, not recent experience

Superficially positive

Serious network of lagging capital

Been there, done a lot

Associate/Scout, some money

Really digs into competition/model

Ready to put in the work & mentor

Minimum operator experience

Has recent experience and money

Feels you could work harder & faster

Digs for tech/science differentiation

Thirsty for validation/relevance

Closed (Yes/No) Questions

Definition: Closed questions, also known as polar or yes/no questions, can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no." They are direct and often used to confirm or deny information. **If hostile, they can also be used to box you into an oversimplified answer so beware!**

Example:

Question: "Have you already secured partnerships with local governments to use CIVIX?"

Response: "Yes, we have partnerships in place with a few municipalities, and we're actively working to expand."
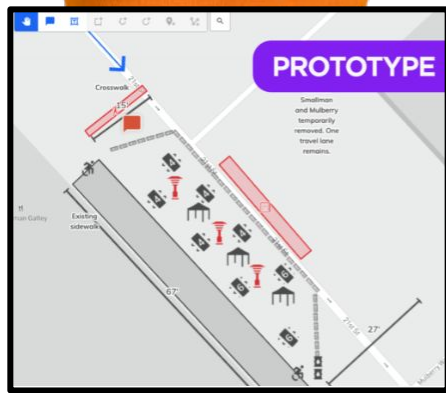
Closed (Yes/No) Questions

- **EXPAND:** "Yes, AND..." NO, BUT"
- **REDIRECT:** "Does your product currently solve X problem?" - "Not yet, but we've prioritized features based on market needs, and X is on our roadmap because we've seen demand there."
- **REFRAME:** "Can I elaborate on how our approach addresses that issue?" or "Would you like to hear more about how we're handling similar challenges?"
- **PARTIAL AGREEMENT**: "Is this strategy fully proven?" - "Yes, our preliminary data supports it, and we're now refining it to address any remaining gaps."
- **FOLLOW UP**: "Could you clarify what specific aspect you'd like more information on?"

Open-Ended Questions

Definition: Open-ended questions invite more detailed responses (especially compared to yes/no questions), allowing the respondent to express thoughts, feelings, or experiences. These questions typically begin with "what," "how," or "why." However, **watch out for someone asking an open ended question in order to let you unearth a view counter to the current direction of the investor.**

Example:
Question: "What are the most impactful ways CIVIX could improve urban planning?"

Response: "CIVIX makes urban planning more accessible by letting communities visualize changes in real-time, from traffic improvements to green spaces, fostering greater civic engagement and optimized city layouts."

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

FOCUS: Answer concisely, ensuring that your response aligns with your core message.

HIGHLIGHT: Showcase past achievements or how your approach supports the investor thesis, subtly aligning your answer to reinforce direction.

SOLUTION: Avoid focusing on problems (which are really opportunities), overcome hurdles with confidence

REFLECT: "Why did you decide to enter this market?" - "We saw a strong opportunity here—are you interested in hearing about the early indicators we observed?"

Leading Questions

Definition: Leading questions "subtly" guide the respondent toward a particular answer, often assuming something in the phrasing. **Sometimes people will call this telegraphing.**

Example:

Question: "CIVIX seems like it would be popular with city planners, right? Have they been enthusiastic?"

Response: "Absolutely, city planners appreciate how CIVIX simplifies complex data, and we've seen strong enthusiasm from early users."

LEADING QUESTIONS

- **ACKNOWLEDGE:** "You'll have no problem scaling this, correct?" - "We're confident in our approach, and we're actively preparing for scaling challenges to ensure success."

- **REDIRECT:** "You must be planning to cut costs soon, right?" - "Our priority is maximizing efficiency while preserving quality, so we're making strategic adjustments to add value across the board."

- **EXPAND:** "You're focused primarily on rapid growth, aren't you?" - "Growth is essential, but we're equally committed to sustainable strategies that support long-term success."

- **CONVERT:** "Your product is only for the tech sector, right?" - "We're finding strong traction in tech, but we're exploring applications in other sectors as well—do you see any big opportunities?" - REMEMBER OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS?!?

Clarifying Questions

Definition: Clarifying questions seek to ensure that the respondent fully understands the question or to get more detailed information about something previously mentioned.

Example:

Question: "When you say CIVIX supports citizen engagement, do you mean it's interactive for public use, or is it more for professionals?"

Response: "It's designed for both—citizens can explore and suggest changes, while professionals can use advanced features to analyze data."

CLARIFYING QUESTIONS

- **APPRECIATE:** "Thanks for asking that—it's a good point to clarify."

- **BE DIRECT:** "Are you referring to revenue growth?" - "Yes, *specifically* revenue growth."

- **ADD CONTEXT:** "Does this impact your timeline?" - "It doesn't change the timeline; in fact, it strengthens our deadlines."

- **REINFORCE:** "When you say scalability, are we talking tech or team?" - "We're focused on tech scalability."

- **CONFIRM:** "Does that clarify it fully?"

Probing Questions

Definition: Probing questions go deeper into a topic, often following up on a previous answer or as a reaction to a presentation, etc in a pitch or meeting. They are used to gain more detailed information or to encourage critical thinking about a specific thing or moment.

Example:

Question: "What features of CIVIX make it particularly effective for city improvement compared to other mapping tools?"

Response: "CIVIX integrates real-time data and predictive analytics, enabling cities to test different scenarios and instantly see potential impacts, setting it apart from static mapping tools."

PROBING QUESTIONS

- **RECOGNIZE IMPORTANCE:** "That's a great question—there's a lot to consider there."
- **RESPOND W/ INTENTION:** Answer with depth but keep it targeted to the specific question, avoid unnecessary tangents.
- **SHARE EVIDENCE:** "Why did you choose this feature set?" - "Customer feedback consistently pointed to these as top priorities."
- **INVITE FOLLOW ON**: "Does that cover what you were curious about, or is there another aspect I should go into?"

Hypothetical Questions

Definition: Hypothetical questions pose a scenario to the respondent, asking them to consider what they would do or how they would feel in a particular situation. **Different than a recall and process question, this type doesn't require previous experience in the topic.**

Example:

Question: "If a major city adopted CIVIX tomorrow, what impact could it have on their planning process?"

Response: "Adopting CIVIX could accelerate planning cycles by up to 30%, improve public input, and allow the city to visualize data-driven changes in real-time, enhancing decision-making."

Hypothetical questions inspire imagination and creative responses but can also be "aggressive aggressive"

HYPOTHETICAL QUESTIONS

STROKE EGO: "That's an interesting scenario—let's explore it."

GROUND: "What if you doubled your budget overnight?" - "We'd scale marketing efforts and tech, as we've seen these areas drive high ROI."

CLARIFY: "Are you referring to revenue growth?" - "Yes, specifically revenue growth."

Loaded Questions

Definition: Loaded questions contain an assumption that may trap the respondent into admitting something, often used to challenge or confront. **While similar to telegraphing or leading questions these questions often have a broader scope or could attempt to influence on multiple points.**

Example:

Question: "Have you decided which markets CIVIX is focusing on first, or are you still figuring that out?"

Response: "We're focusing on mid-sized cities initially, as they often have fewer planning resources, but we're scaling with demand."

- **CO-CREATE:** "That's an interesting point. Let's break it down to see what insights we can both take away."
- **NORMALIZE:** "Good question. We often get asked about our decision-making process, and we're always open to discussing it."
- **EXPAND:** "That's a part of our overall strategy, which also includes X, Y, and Z elements to support it."
- **BRING CLOSURE:** "That's an excellent point to consider, and I appreciate the insight. To keep our pitch focused, here's the main takeaway: [summarize key point]. I'd be glad to explore more with you afterward if it's of interest."
- **AGREE:** "That's a valuable consideration, and it's something we've thought about as well."

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THANK YOU!
QUESTIONS?

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