Ten Minutes to Convince Them (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

Daniel had been waiting for this meeting for six months. His company was small, his savings were nearly gone, and the investors had agreed to give him exactly ten minutes. He arrived early and sat in the waiting room, going through his notes for the last time. On the table in front of him lay a pile of glossy brochures advertising far bigger companies than his own. He tried not to read them.

His idea was simple. He had designed a device that reduced the amount of power used by office buildings at night. The technology itself was not new, but nobody had combined the parts in quite this way. The device did not possess any complicated software, which made it cheap to install. A large portion of the market, he believed, had been ignored completely because everyone was chasing luxury clients.

When his name was called, he walked in and shook three hands. The room was bright, and someone had arranged the chairs in a slightly awkward position, so that he had to stand at an angle to be seen by everyone. He delivered his pitch calmly, exactly as he had rehearsed it in front of the mirror. He explained the costs, the savings, and the environmental benefits, and then he stopped talking. One of the investors, a woman with sharp glasses, asked a pointed question about who would repair the devices when they broke. It was the one weakness he had hoped nobody would notice.

Daniel did not pretend. He admitted that repairs were still a problem, then described the training programme he wanted to launch with a local college. Students on a work placement could learn to service the devices and gain real experience at the same time. The woman nodded slowly. Her colleague pointed out that such a scheme might also improve the company's popularity among younger customers, who cared about local jobs. Daniel had not thought of that argument himself, but he accepted it gratefully. There was a long silence while they read his figures.

Afterwards, walking back to the station, he realised that he could not tell whether the meeting had gone well. He felt oddly positive anyway, because he had answered every question honestly. Two weeks later an email arrived offering him a smaller sum than he had asked for, plus a place on a business support programme. He accepted immediately. Six months after that, a journalist came to write about him, and made him pose beside one of his devices for a photograph. She said the story had a good plot: a young engineer, an unfashionable idea, and a slow, stubborn success.

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