



CREATING A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS PITCH

A guide for early stage entrepreneurs



Context / Introduction

In latest years, the use of terms such as “business pitch”, “elevator pitch”, “investment pitch” have raised in popularity. Every tech pro or wannabe entrepreneur uses these phrases during their daily basis interactions, when they get in contact with investors, or when they're attending events.

But what is a pitch, exactly? A business pitch is the delivery of a business and product strategy verbally by an entrepreneur or a startup team to investors, potential partners, potential customers, media or any other targeted audience.

Every time an entrepreneur is pitching an idea, product or technology, the aim is typically the same: to secure funding from investors or to close business partnerships. Nevertheless, it's important to mention that a good business pitch is getting better if used not only in front of investors but in every business environments, networking events or industry conferences that occur on a daily basis, of course, adapted to each pitching occasion.

A business pitch can vary significantly in content and delivery if it is used for a public or private event.

A public pitch is targeted to a more diverse audience, most of the times in a context when multiple presentations are delivered. In such a context, the biggest enemy of the pitcher is not the previous or next pitch, but the overwhelming quantity of information that wants to get in the audience's head.

“

Remember also that the objective of a public pitch is not to get an investor or partner convinced but curious



BOGDAN IORDACHE

Investor & Program director @ [MVP Academy Accelerator](#)

“That's why public pitches focus more on the storytelling part, trying to engage with audience's emotions and curiosity. You will still need numbers and facts, but the way you dress up the presentation becomes equally important. Remember also that the objective of a public pitch is not to get an investor or partner convinced but curious. Measure the success of your pitch by the number of relevant people who are reaching out to you after, or by the number

of people you are approaching who already know who you are and what you do.”, says [Bogdan Iordache](#), Investor and Program director of MVP Academy accelerator.

A private pitch, on the other hand, is different in many ways. Most of the time private pitches are targeted towards convincing an investor or partner that you should do business together. The presentation should be less focused on storytelling (you already have their attention) and more focused on business details. **Get all your numbers and projections straight, know your market, competition, get ready to explain how you manage the risks associated with your go-to-market strategy and team enlargement.**

Sometimes, public pitches are slammed for their lack of consistency because they do not provide all the relevant information. It is true that sometimes pitching events, be it demo days or contests, feel more like a pony show than a business event. But in the same time, remember that they serve a different purpose and should be judged with different measures.

It is important to understand from the very beginning of this guide that you need to tailor your pitch to the needs of each business opportunity you're getting. Investors have specific interests about the team, business model or business strategy, while a potential business partner is interested in the business benefits and growth opportunity for his business.

A business pitch has various specifications an entrepreneur should care about when creating his presentation depending on the audience that he/she targets.

In this guide, we will explore in detail **how to develop an effective business pitch to attract the interest of investors, what is a pitch deck, and some of the best structures to use.** Besides, you will access the knowledge and experience of some of the most successful entrepreneurs in our network that pitched in front of thousands of people and, eventually, secured investment as well.



The Pitch Deck

Business plan pitches are, most of the time, presented with the aid of PowerPoint presentations, Keynote/Prezi presentations, demo videos or other tools that can help you deliver a broad description of your company, your team, your product, your overall business: this is what we often call the pitch deck.

You can use the pitch deck for your face to face meetings with investors, during pitching events, for your online meetings or other business environments where you need to present your startup.

Regarding **pitch decks**, there are multiple templates available on the Internet. You can find some of them [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#). Still, from our experience of working with tech startups for 8 years now, we believe that more important than the template or even the content, is the structure of your pitch deck and how you prioritise your information.



As journalists start their articles with the most important information and leave the background details at the end, this principle also applies to your pitch deck structure.

To make it easier for you to understand, we'll show you what you should insert on every slide of your business presentation, your pitch deck:

So, without further ado, here's the breakdown:

Slide 1

Introduction slide with logo, website link, motto and more

Slide 2

Customer profile targeted and **the problem you want to solve** for them

Slide 3

Broad view of your solution and the main benefits for users/clients

Slide 4

Advantages of your solution, compared with other substitutes or competition

Slide 5

Your **business model** and **pricing strategy**

Slide 6

Go-to-market strategy

Slide 7

Current status regarding the product and the business metrics

Slide 8

Team composition, roles and experience related to the roles

Slide 9

Roadmap for the next months regarding product and business development

Slide 10

Details on what you need (investment, partnerships, employees)

Slide 11

Final slide with **contact information, call for action**

The content of a pitch depends highly on the stage of the company.

If you're an early stage company, with an MVP and no real traction, you should focus on the **quality of the team because that's all you have**. Mention the team experience in the vertical that you're targeting, the teamwork experience together on other / similar projects, the "unique" mix of your competences that makes you different, the exceptional things you've done together or separately in the past.

"If you've already got an MVP, focus less on the team and more on the technical and product development challenges you've faced and overcome.



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On the user / client feedback of your product (including, if possible, retention numbers), the lessons learned from your users' / clients' first interaction with what you've built and the lessons for improving your product. If you've got not only an MVP, but also some sort of traction, then balance the team and product value proposition with numbers and relevant information about it: a significant number of users, pre-orders, distribution partnerships.", says [Bogdan Iordache](#).

Whatever your stage, include crystal clear information about your business proposal:



The **problem** you are solving



The customer profile you are targeting



Who your **competition** is



Why is your value proposition **different** than your competition



The **market size** of your customers

The market size in particular is a clear indicator of the potential of your business. But it needs additional information regarding the competition and your differentiators to make it sound realistic.



So you think you can pitch?

Lessons learned by the best pitchers in our network

Pitching is a skill that you have to practice on and on if you want to be good at it. Think about the hundreds of eyes that will look at you, scouting for every innocent mistake or, on the contrary, waiting for you to amaze them with your product?! Facing them - this is not easy - but all you need to do is **getting comfortable with having an audience.**

For these reasons, a group effort like accelerator programs or Demo Days is, most of the times, extremely valuable in your early stages. You get a chance to be coached by people that have previous experience in this respect and that will provide you with honest feedback. You will learn how to use a mic, what to do with your hands, how to control your emotions and how to overcome your fears. But more about managing emotions when pitching later on in this guide.

Meanwhile, every time you see an entrepreneur selling his product like a pro remember that there was a time when it was difficult for him as well to show his product to the entire world.

We have asked some of our fellow community members, young successful tech entrepreneurs, to share their most valuable lessons learned from their previous experiences with investors and pitching events.

Our first interviewee:

BOBBY VOICU

Cofounder @ MavenHut & Limited Partner @ SOSV

“ Your only focus is to get people to be curious enough to talk to you and THEN sell them on the idea.

“A common mistake I used to make when pitching was to forget why I was actually there. Most of the time, I was pitching to get investment. Sometimes I was pitching to get partners (ad providers). But that wasn't always clear from my pitch. And you shouldn't make the same mistake.

“

The most important result of a public pitch is to get people to come to you and talk (potential partners, investors, employees). Nobody will invest in your business or commit in any way to it without getting more details. So you need to raise their interest and convince them to come to you to get more information. This is what you need to focus on.

It means that you need to show the most important numbers of your business in your pitch, those showing you are doing something different, that you can change something in your **intended market**. Do not focus on the simple details, that can be learned afterward. Also, let people know exactly why you are there and, of course, let them know how to contact you (you'd be surprised how many people forget to put a simple contact email in the deck).

Finally, again: your only focus is to get people to be curious enough to talk to you and THEN sell them on the idea. This is what your PUBLIC pitch is about. Don't make the mistake of thinking your pitch is about anything else. You will otherwise understand, later, that you lost a lot of opportunities to reach your real objectives.”

MĂDĂLINA SEGHETE

Cofounder @ Branch Metrics

“ Perfect is the enemy of good enough.

“Often entrepreneurs tend to postpone the task of writing and rehearsing their pitch until they'll have enough data about their market, their customers, business valuation and other aspects they think are way more important than the presentation. In fact, your pitch will get better and better along with your business's development..

If you're afraid to show what you know because it might not be good data or enough data, stop thinking about this as a failure:

Don't be afraid to fail - just learn and keep building. Branch was our fourth product idea, we failed three times in a year and a half, and the Branch idea came from the lessons we learned from Kindred, our previous failed startup. Failing means you are learning and if you are not failing, it means you are not trying hard enough, and you are not pushing yourself outside your comfort zone.

“

Also, perfect is the enemy of good enough - it's better to put something out there and get feedback vs. perfecting something in a vacuum. You can think you know what your customers want, but you won't know until your product is out there. It's ok if it's not perfect - you will learn and keep iterating, and nothing will give you better feedback than going live with your product!



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<http://bit.ly/PitchGuideHTW>

Next:

MARIUS TÎRCĂ

Cofounder & CTO @ [UiPath](#)

“ Your idea is the spark that lights the journey but don’t get motherly proud of it and lose focus on the real fight

“For us, the funding story did not exactly follow the common route. By the time we decided to reach out to an investment fund, we were already a team of several developers with a small business of our own.

We were more or less self-assured and standing on our own feet. **For the previous ten years we had been bootstrapping** and pivoting by developing several consumer products and then an SDK (a software developer kit) that we were selling to other development companies. We had our own finances, and our business was slowly taking off, signalling sustainability.



“

The decision to go and raise the money from investors was not as easy as one may think.

The decision to go and raise the money from investors was not as easy as one may think. We could have kept our business going the way it was on its own and have our peace of mind. But we soon realised that we were on the verge of something great and unless we got the money, **we couldn’t really plan for the future.** We needed the resources to build a bigger team. So we aimed high and we

aimed far and went for it. We went straight for a round A investment, bypassing the incubator and accelerator phases, and we raised it from Early Bird, Credo Ventures and Seedcamp.

At the time we didn’t have an investor pitch. You may think that’s crazy, but sometimes VC companies fight over the fish label guys like us. Not having a pitch showed that other

investors hadn't already approached us. We were valuable because we were unpolished. So they counselled us on how to build the pitch, and how to move to the next level. Some investors make it their strategy to guide you and expose you to the best opportunities.

Your investor pitch has to be short and focused. Your idea has to be strong, but also show that you can execute it, that you have a market to go to and sell. Some entrepreneurs aim for the glittery opportunity, for what's hip, but sometimes aiming for a less sexy market means less competition, therefore a better chance to sell. We negotiated extensively on the term-sheet. It took several good months to finalise. The most important thing for us was that we didn't want to give away control of our company too soon. And it's true that the good investors won't rob you of that right.

Once funded, we began to move at a better speed and we were able to follow our long-term plan to become leaders in the field. We are now three years later and we are proud to have recently been named leaders and star performers in RPA by top analysts.

For those barely starting, I would recommend several things. Your idea is the spark that lights the journey but don't get motherly proud of it and lose focus on the real fight. Investors are of course interested in your idea, but there are also other critical things they value, namely the team. They invest in people. Is there potential in the team? Is the team flexible, is it knowledgeable?

“

Your idea is the spark that lights the journey but don't get motherly proud of it and lose focus on the real fight.

Also, **is there a good foundation to what you're building?** They won't risk putting their weight on a wobbly foundation. One more thing: never venture on your own! Find a partner, investors value the balance. They evaluate you through your potential for growth, so as long as you are scalable and multipliable, you are good. Last but not least, show your passion for what you want to build! Being true to yourself and the plan is a huge selling point to the investors.”

Next:

ANDRAS KAPY

Cofounder & CEO @ Axosuits



ANDRAS KAPY

Cofounder & CEO @ [Axosuits](#)

“ Ask for financial expertise! Make sure you “proofread” your numbers with an expert before going too public with them

“Don't bullshit around! If you don't know, just tell people you don't know!

It often happened to me to pitch to at events and have doctors in the audience as well. When they asked me about various medical conditions, I didn't play the expert role saying nonsenses all around: I just thanked them and said that I will get back with an appropriate answer after consulting with the doctors I was working with. Had I improvised on the stage, just to say something, that would have only embarrassed my team and me as well.

“

Statements like "my product is unique" are just bullshit, and most of the times it only proves you don't know your competition.

Don't overstate! Be sure that in this entire world there has to be someone building something similar to your product or even greater than that. Those statements like "my product is unique" are just bullshit, and most of the times it only proves you don't know your competition.

For those barely starting, I would recommend several things. Your idea is the spark that lights the journey but don't get motherly proud of it and lose focus on the real fight. Investors are of course interested in your idea, but

there are also other critical things they value, namely the team. They invest in people. Is there potential in the team? Is the team flexible, is it knowledgeable?

Ask for financial expertise! After many years as an entrepreneur in Romania, I've realised that I don't have enough financial knowledge. When you pitch in front of hundreds of people, be sure some of them are good at numbers. So make sure you “proofread” your statistics/ numbers with an expert before going too public with them.



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Don't blame the audience, not even the trolls that are showing up at events with this only purpose in mind. When people, potential customers, or even investors warn you about something that it wasn't clear enough in your presentation, stop for a second, don't take it personally, don't fight with them and think that they might be right."



CAMIL MOLDOVEANU

Cofounder & CEO @ [Reflex](#)

“ Start by selling that big idea to yourself.

"Every pitch that you're delivering should be about your product, your team, the problem you're solving, the market you address and so on. But it should also be about the story of your startup.

So along with building your pitch deck, preparing your numbers and researching your market, you have to create a story for your product as well. In fact, I think you should start by selling that big idea to yourself. **Get that level of dedication, energy, and commitment that every startup needs.** You will have to tell the story about your idea to anybody that is willing to listen, and you need to trust it first. Afterwards, with people's help and questions, your story will get better and better.

“

You will have to tell the story about your idea to anybody that is willing to listen, and you need to trust it first.

Always improve your story/pitch and make sure that you find and add the elements that are missing to get investors onboard. When you have them, build the story for your clients and repeat the process."



OANA KORDA

Co-founder & Product Manager @ [Woogie](#)

“ If you have a particular style or anything that empowers you, use it!

“If we speak strictly about the on-stage presentation, I think the most important element is the confidence.

For me, this is something that depends on how much you believe in what you say and how much you've practised your pitch: from speaking out loud to posture exercises, to breathing control, and all these tricks that help. That's on the one hand. On the other hand, it's the way you look.

“

During my latest pitch, one of my coaches suggested wearing a dress and high heels, and I must say: that totally changed the way I delivered that pitch!

If we speak about the structure of your pitch, **storytelling is THE THING!** Every single pitch is composed by technical elements as script, numbers, structure and by emotions! You just need to ping-pong with these items to engage your audience in your story. If you can make it memorable,

and deliver emotions along with technical information, you can rest assured you'll get those meetings you crave for so much.

Also, don't forget that the devil is in the details: make a script before all else, structure it in chapters, use a clean design, and fill it in with professional photos to create a mood for your audience.”

Now, remember!

In order to become more effective in your networking and pitching activities, you should also focus on building relationships with every person you're engaging with. If you expect to sell your idea only by delivering a perfect story, a well-rehearsed speech, well, you need to change this approach. Here's Emi Gal's mindset on the matter:

EMI GAL

Founder & CEO @ [Brainient](#)



“ Build relationships with investors & do your homework

“An entrepreneur should never focus on a pitch. She should focus on building relationships with investors. Investors almost never invest in pitches. They invest in entrepreneurs. So the better they know you, the more likely they are to invest in your startup. It's as simple as that.



“

Investors almost never invest in pitches. They invest in entrepreneurs.

Secondly, it's possible that investors will invest in an entrepreneur they like. But they are absolutely sure to invest in an entrepreneur they like that has also done her homework. And by homework, I mean that she has data to support her idea, claim or problem. So in a nutshell, focus on relationships and focus on data.”



How to control your emotions when standing up and speaking in public

Although we just mislead your thoughts with this subtitle making you believe that we have a recipe to control your emotions when presenting in public, the reality is that we don't. Not because we're not capable, but there is no such thing as a secret recipe or set of tips & tricks for you to apply and get rid of emotions in an instant.

What we have instead is **an expert's opinion to understand what happens to your brain when you're speaking in public, why does this happen and what you can do before taking a stage in order to be more comfortable and achieve your goals.**

We have kindly asked [Alis Anagnostakis](#) to help us get answers to all these questions. Alis is an Executive Coach (PCC), Trainer and Organisation Culture consultant with ten years experience in creating and delivering leadership development and behavioural change solutions and over 2000 hours of executive coaching. In 2011, she founded Mind Learners, a company that designs training and coaching programs with the brain in mind. Alis and her team use the newest discoveries from neuroscience and psychology to create powerful workshops to facilitate learning in a variety of fields - from leadership to sales or customer service. Now, let's hear her opinion.



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ALIS ANAGNOSTAKIS

Executive Coach (PCC), Trainer & Organization Culture Consultant.



Several studies investigating people's greatest fears constantly show that public speaking comes up in the top five. In some studies, it even ranks higher than the fear of death.

Why are we so afraid of standing up and speaking in front of a group?

One scientifically valid explanation is that, evolutionarily speaking, circumstances where one man stood alone in front of many pairs of eyes were not usually good news for his survival – more often than not those pairs of eyes belonged either to a pack of wolves or, just as bad, in front of the tribe being judged and facing rejection. **Social anxiety is a terrible burden to bear for us humans** because, for many thousands of years, our survival depended on collaboration, on being included in the group. Rejection meant being ostracised and left to one's own devices which, in primitive times where life was filled with predators ready to hunt humans at every step, meant almost certain death.



Our brain has evolved to pay extreme attention to social cues. Our limbic system, the part of the brain responsible with emotional life, makes it possible for us to connect with other people, to read their emotions and to express our own. The limbic system is also in charge of identifying possible survival threats – be they either other people or any kind of predator.

When our limbic system perceives a threat, as it did in ancient times when it saw a wild animal coming to haunt us, it sends signals that start a chain reaction in the brain. **Adrenaline and**

cortisol are produced, which prepare the body for fight or flight – the basic survival instincts which helped us escape the threat and stay alive for so long.

This part of the brain, right behind the forehead, is the seat of reason. It makes it possible to calmly and rationally analyse a situation, to make wise decisions, to weigh in options, to consciously remember what we have learned and use that information when we need it.

In prehistoric times, **when a man was being chased by a tiger**, the last part of the brain that he needed was the prefrontal cortex. It's penchant for analysis would have dangerously slowed down its owner. Pondering on what might be the speed of the tiger or whether the tiger was really hungry was not really a good idea for survival.



Faced with direct survival threats, prehistoric man had to react quickly. He had to start running even before consciously realising what was going on. So our marvellous brain has evolved to do just that. **The same cortisol and adrenaline that make it possible to run fast and far when chased by the tiger, also make it possible for the limbic system to temporarily shut down the prefrontal cortex and launch a sort of "emergency procedure" to maximize the odds for survival.**

That's all good when faced with physical threats. But what about social threats? Well, apparently our brain doesn't know the difference unless we teach it to.

Thousands of years have passed since we were physical being chased by tigers, yet we come into the world with the same brains as our ancestors and the same predisposition to react to what we perceive as a danger by starting the same old defence mechanisms. The brain hasn't changed much, but the world has.



Our modern "tigers" are other people. Angry bosses, colleagues or clients, daily worries about job safety, mortgages, economic or political uncertainty. Our brain, sadly, doesn't tell the difference. The same cortisol and adrenaline are produced, our prefrontal cortex is perturbed, as is our capacity for logical, clear judgement in stressful situations.

Beyond making your heart beat faster, blood rush to your muscles in preparation for running or fighting, adrenaline and cortisol do one more thing – they temporarily shut down another essential part of the brain – the prefrontal cortex.



Which brings us back to public speaking. For our brain, speaking in front of others can be a big tiger. Once the defensive cycle has started, and the prefrontal cortex starts shutting down, that dreadful feeling of “blank” might overcome you. It’s that moment when you have the impression that you cannot remember anything you have prepared as if your brain is in some sort of lockdown. Which it is, because the prefrontal cortex is the one which retrieves memories and brings them back into consciousness at will – **so if you are too stressed your prefrontal cortex can’t do its job.** It’s as if you have a huge library, but in order to access it you need the librarian to go in and bring you the book you need. When fear overcomes you, the librarian gets locked out of the library.

What to do then?

Fortunately for us, our brain is very plastic. With repetition, it builds new neural pathways, new connections and habits. Sounds like very common sense advice, but one of the best ways to overcome fear of public speaking is to expose yourself to it as often as you can. **The more you step up and speak in front of others, the more relaxed you’ll get.** It might help if you choose friendly audiences to practice your speeches and it might also help if you are able to know your audience, even if very briefly, before a speech.

Connecting to those people in advance will help your limbic system realize it’s not tigers that you are facing, but people like you, who might very well be afraid of public speaking themselves.

Another very common sense technique involves breathing. A few deep breaths might help calm down your overexcited nervous system (deep in the solar plexus the two branches of the nervous system intersect – the parasympathetic, which calms you down and the sympathetic, which stresses you out. When you breathe in deeply, your diaphragm pushes down on this nervous hub, activating your parasympathetic nervous system, which helps you relax a bit).



Any type of mindfulness exercise is also very helpful in dealing with public speaking generated stress. A few minutes of conscious attention, where you are just observing your body, the rhythm of your breath, the feelings inside (even if they are unpleasant) – just acknowledging them, without trying to stop or change them – is very helpful in calming you down.

This kind of exercise, many studies have shown, activates a certain part of your left prefrontal cortex which is not only responsible with the state of being present in the moment, but also with the capacity to concentrate on a task and keep one's emotional balance, generating feelings of peacefulness and calm. A few minutes of just being present before a presentation can take you a long way towards a more relaxed attitude and milder emotions.

Finally, another technique you can use when you feel your nerves overcoming you is called – self-awareness/labelling/reframing. It involves paying attention to your body, observing the beginning of a strong emotion, labelling it by naming it (“I am afraid right now”) and then finding a thought that helps you change your perspective on the situation into a less threatening one. It's a bit paradoxical, but admitting you are afraid actually helps calm you down. What happens is that you activate your prefrontal cortex (the one you need most for a successful presentation) to observe what the limbic system is up to (self-awareness), detect incoming emotion and consciously name it (labelling) and then help the limbic system realize it's not a tiger it is facing, but a mere group of people listening to what you have to say (reframing by thinking, for example – “these people are not enemies, they are interested in what I have to say and I have something valuable to share with them”).

For reframing to work, it helps if you observe your own stakes in that presentation and take a step back, detaching, as much as you can, from the final result. If it's pitch or any kind of speech where you need to convince someone to support you in some way – as an investor or potential client – the best thing you can do for yourself and your brain is stay authentic. Accept your emotions (if you feel brave enough, admit to your audience that you are nervous), trust who you are and what you have to offer and relax in the knowledge that you are there to give them the best version of yourself, but you cannot control all the factors in their decision.

The clearer you are about the value of your proposal and the more accepting of the final result (even before you know what it might be), the more relaxed, honest and impactful you **will be in your presentation**. It's a paradox that our obsessive fixation on success actually makes us less likely to succeed, because wanting to win at all costs puts a lot of stress on your brain, which might mean you end up building "tigers" in your head and shutting down your own prefrontal cortex.

When it comes to public speaking, it is my deep belief that self-knowledge, becoming friends with our emotions instead of denying or trying to shut them down, takes us much farther than any kind of "recipe", "tips and tricks" or other "formula" for being a good presenter.

Striving to seem someone you are not takes a much greater effort and adds much more pressure and stress than just learning to relax in the knowledge of who you are, confident that you are enough. If you can do the latter, your wonderful brain will do the rest.



A few hands-on key takeaways

on how to deliver your public presentation

- 1 Write down your presentation **in great detail**, so you can time yourself and rehearse it properly.
- 2 **Repeat your delivery as much as possible** – don't try to learn it by heart if that's not your style, but do **practice** it at least 10 times.
- 3 **Stop reading the text 1h before the public pitching.** Your short term memory will only collide with your long term memory.
- 4 **Start with a memorable remark** about what makes you unique, be it about your product, team or industry.

5 **Don't move your feet while you talk;** it will get the audience distracted by your story.

7 When you go up on stage **find 2-4 smiling faces** from different corners of the venue, and talk only to them. This will make you to look throughout the entire venue, people will feel more engaged, and you'll feel confident you're talking to people who understand you.

6 **Don't obturate your slides,** stay at one end of the projection.

8 If you're shy **ask a few friends to join the presentation** and look at them all the time. Ask them to sit somewhere in the back of the room if possible, so you look at the entire venue and not only the first row.

Our top 3 best pitches

from Demo Days



Techstars Demo Day
2016

Watch



500Startups Demo Day
2016

Watch



Startupbootcamp Demo
Day 2012

Watch

What's your top 3 best pitches from Demo Days? Send us your favourites at thecrew@howtoweb.co and we will constantly update the list with your suggestions! Can't wait to hear back from you!



The Do's & Don'ts for pitches

Advice from investors

Now, we don't have a top-secret list of the things investors want to know before signing a check. What we do have is a list of the do's and don'ts for business pitches from investors in our network. Alan Clayton, Max Kelly, Martyn Davies and Rumen Iliev expressed their thoughts on the matter. Check them out below!

P.S. We will constantly be updating the list so make sure you are subscribed to our newsletter to be the first to get the latest updates we are doing to this guide. [Click here to subscribe!](#)



DO

- ✓ **Have a clear outcome** (write it on your hand if necessary)
- ✓ **Be in the emotional state you want to leave your investor in.** For example, if you want them to be excited - BE excited!
- ✓ **Use stories and pictures** more than data or numbers
- ✓ **Repeat company name/tagline** several times or it will be forgotten instantly.
- ✓ **Make sure titles on slides are in the form of questions** rather than boring statements. For example: "Who Are We?" rather than "The Team"

DON'T

- ✗ Use jargon
- ✗ Go over your time
- ✗ Ask questions - unless you're CERTAIN you'll get the answer you want

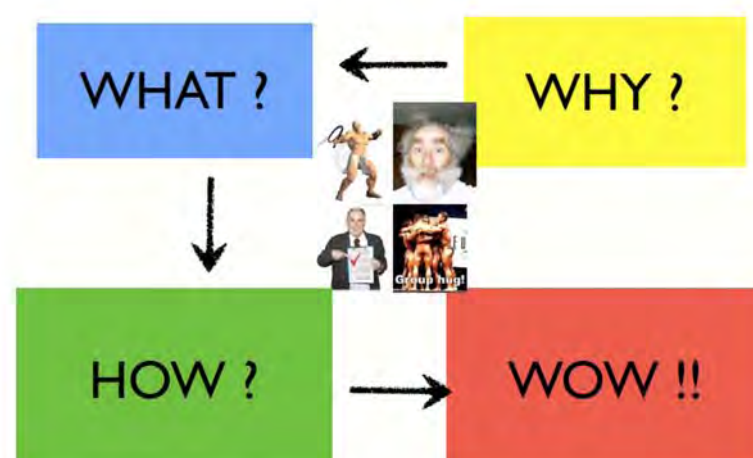
Favourite pitch structure

It's based on my work with Hermann Institute and the HBDI framework. I demoed at How To Web last November ([watch it here](#)). See the picture below.



The most important part of a pitch

The most important part is the ending – needs to be an "exciting summary of the ONE benefit of your product. Remember: investors want/ need memorable entertainment and to FEEL good about the product – BE ENTERTAINING.



MAX KELLY

Managing Director @ [TechStars](#)



DO

- ✓ Always get a warm intro
- ✓ Remember it is a **relationship**, so you need to build it over time
- ✓ Have a number of coffees, meetings etc. and **seek advice**
- ✓ Then when you pitch, it is on the basis of the **accumulated knowledge of both parties**
- ✓ Practice, practice, practice
- ✓ Know the obvious questions that will come up and have an excellent answer for each (keep a running FAQ)

Favourite pitch structure

Tons of good material out there about this. I use [this](#) as the most authoritative. I also like [Nicole's summary here](#).

The most important part of a pitch

People, people, people, market, traction, idea. So the quality of the team is the key: why are they the one who will succeed, what unique talents do they have which means they will beat every other start up in their space, what aspects of their character show resilience, tenacity and drive.

Next:

MARTYN DAVIES

Programme Director @ [Ignite Accelerator](#)



DO

- ✓ **Do your research** if reaching out cold, spraying and praying connections on LinkedIn is less valuable than spending time targeting investors that understand your space and invest at the level you're at.
- ✓ **Know your numbers.** Your vision, goals, team and progress to date are great but make sure you're solid on where you are traction wise and more importantly where you're going to get to with their injection of capital
- ✓ **Try to build a relationship with investors before you pitch them.** Spend time seeking feedback, advice and notes if you can, it will serve you better when pitching a round later down the line.
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DON'T

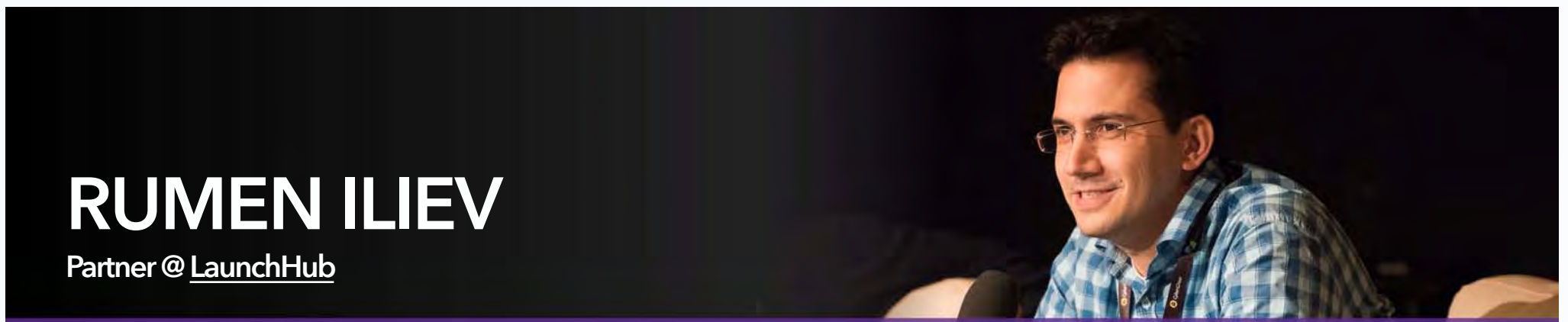
- ✗ **Be shy.** Ask if they're interested. Getting to 'No' is harder than you expect, and it's better to end things than hang around in investment limbo and move onto the next one.
- ✗ **Forget to rehearse and talk to as many people as possible ahead of a pitch.** Their feedback on elements that are confusing/unclear will be valuable in painting a clear picture for investors.
- ✗ **Be late.**
- ✗ **Don't argue or get defensive** if they don't like it or have critical feedback, there's no point arguing.

Favourite pitch structure

I like a **short deck** if it's being emailed over, **one that paints a picture of the problem and the solution and includes details on the execution** up to that point and the team that is working on it. You want to pique interest and leave room for investors to reach out and ask questions/ set up a meeting. 10 slides usually covers it for me, other people may want more, but they'll ask if they do.

The most important part of a pitch

Vision & team – I want to know the team is excited about making something huge but understands that it'll take incremental steps to get there and for them to have a grasp on what they'll execute in each of those stages. Additionally, demonstrating a strong team dynamic will always win it for me.



DO

- ✓ Be fully committed.
- ✓ Have the technical capabilities to make it.
- ✓ Have the marketing and sales capabilities inside the team.
- ✓ Know the market + [this article](#)

Favourite pitch structure

This one: <https://www.sequoiacap.com/article/writing-a-business-plan/>. Founder can be as creative as possible. However, you are speaking to investors that want to hear the pitch elements as they are used to. Behavioral science has proven that if something is easy to be understood is more believable. So I recommend go with traditional deck that is easy to understand.

The most important part of a pitch

It is the team and how they perform during the meeting. Can they explain simply enough? Can they sell it? Do they believe in it? Do I trust them? And then the market - can we make money? :)



Thank you for reading

Without further ado, **thank you** for reading this guide, and we hope you found it useful. **Make sure you share it with your friends** to help them pitch better or successfully present their ideas in front of their team.

Woo-hoo! Did you enjoy this material? Then make sure to **subscribe to our newsletter** for more actionable free business lessons, startups tips and video interviews.