

Launch211 Competitive Events Guidelines

Venture Pitch



The **Venture Pitch** is a comprehensive presentation that tests participants' ability to apply startup principles and business analysis in real-world market conditions. Students engage in a multi-week create phase, building and creating a company or product. The teams will then complete an in-person presentation round where they must demonstrate deep understanding of industry analysis, storytelling, and market research.

Participants will develop critical skills in market research, problem solving, critical thinking, and how to create viable business models. This event challenges students to think like startup founders while articulating their decision-making process and defending their strategies under scrutiny from expert judges.

Event Overview

| | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| Event Type | In-Person Presentation |
| Team Size | 2 - 4 members |
| Presentation | Live Pitch to Judges |

Event Elements

| Round | Format | Objective |
|---------------------|---|---|
| Presentation | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Live Presentation of Pitchdeck• Software: Google slides, Microsoft PowerPoint• Pitch Product or Company | Present Startup Company or Product Idea using real market data and entrepreneurial principles |

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Timing Structure

| Phase | Duration | Specific Procedure and Requirements |
|--|-----------------------|--|
| Presentation | 7 - 10 minutes | The team delivers their investment strategy analysis, portfolio rationale, and key insights. The timekeeper provides a 1-minute warning and then indicates when time is up. At that point, participants must stop immediately. |
| Question & Answer (Q&A) | 3 - 5 minutes | The judge asks standard questions to determine understanding and probe critical thinking. For teams (> 1), every team member must participate by responding to at least one question during this session. |

Knowledge Areas

- Business Model & Strategy
- Market Analysis & Opportunity
- Financial Planning & Projections
- Competitive Landscape
- Customer Value Proposition
- Revenue Models & Growth Strategy
- Funding & Investment Fundamentals
- Risk Management & Mitigation

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Required Competition Items

| | Items Competitors Must Provide | Items We Provide |
|--------------|--|--|
| Presentation | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Each team needs at least one working device with internet access• Any presentation materials you plan to use (notecards, printed notes, etc.)• Devices allowed (computer, tablet, phone, etc) to access any presentation materials or notes during the presentation | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internet access• Projector/screen for pitchdeck and visuals |

Event Administration

Presentation

Live Pitch Presentation

Duration: 4 weeks (30 calendar days) of pitch building, concluding on the in-person competition date.

Objective: Teams develop and present a compelling business venture to a panel of judges, demonstrating entrepreneurial thinking and strategic planning. Competitors pitch their innovative ideas, defend their business models, and showcase their ability to identify market opportunities while addressing potential investor concerns.

Key Details

- Teams register through their teachers/coordinators
- Either one company or one product being pitched.
- Live build of Platform or Physical product **not** needed.
- All team members present and participate within the pitch.

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Strategic Considerations

As you build and develop your pitch, consider the following:

Before You Begin:

- Define your venture idea in one clear, memorable sentence—if you can't explain it simply, refine it
- Identify a specific, urgent customer pain point with real evidence (interviews, research, personal experience)
- Research the competitive landscape thoroughly to understand what exists and where gaps are
- Determine your beachhead market—the specific first customers you'll target
- Establish your unique value proposition and why customers would choose you over alternatives

Building Your Pitch:

- Document the "why now"—what trends, technologies, or changes make this the right moment for your solution
- Develop credible market size calculations (TAM/SAM/SOM) using bottom-up research, not just top-down estimates
- Create a realistic business model with clear revenue streams and evidence of willingness to pay
- Identify early adopters specifically—not just demographics, but actual customer personas
- Prepare a go-to-market strategy that shows how you'll actually reach your first customers
- Anticipate tough questions about competition, market size, and business model viability

Research & Validation:

- Talk to potential customers—don't assume you understand their pain without validation
- Look for evidence that supports your assumptions (market reports, customer interviews, competitor analysis)
- Understand both the problem and solution deeply—be able to explain why current solutions fall short
- Research comparable companies and business models to strengthen your financial projections
- Identify what could go wrong and develop thoughtful risk mitigation strategies

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Presentation Preparation:

- Practice your pitch until it feels natural and conversational, not memorized
- Ensure all team members understand every aspect of the venture and can speak confidently
- Prepare for Q&A by anticipating challenging questions judges might ask
- Balance confidence with humility—acknowledge risks while demonstrating you've thought them through
- Time your pitch carefully to cover all rubric elements without rushing
- Develop clear, simple visuals that support your story rather than distract from it

Preparing Your Presentation

Your presentation should tell the compelling story of your startup idea. Judges want to understand not just what you did, but **why you did it** and **what you learned**.

Remember: The biggest pitfalls tend to be the lack of storytelling. Sharing information is a first step, but getting the audience engaged in the story (the emotional pull) tends to fall flat in the beginning for a lot of startups. A lot of our coaching focuses on clarity in how the information is presented and we focus on the storytelling (they tend to go hand in hand), and the second is what really sets someone apart. Mayank Mehta - *Assistant Director of Entrepreneurial Education iVenture Team*.

What to Include in Your Presentation

Your 7-10 minute presentation should address the evaluation criteria outlined in the rubric.

Consider (all not required but recommended) including:

1. Company Purpose & Problem

- What is your company and what does it do? (One clear sentence)
- What specific customer pain are you addressing?
- Why are current solutions inadequate?
- What evidence do you have that this problem is urgent and important?

2. Solution & Value Proposition

- How does your solution solve the customer's problem?
- What specific benefits does your solution provide?
- How does your solution make the customer's life meaningfully better?
- What makes your approach different or superior?

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3. Market Opportunity & Timing

- What is your market size? (TAM, SAM, SOM with clear calculations)
- Who is your beachhead segment and why did you choose them?
- Who are your early adopters and what evidence shows they'll pay?
- Why is NOW the right time for this solution?
- What trends or changes make this opportunity possible today?

4. Competitive Positioning

- Who are your main competitors (direct and indirect)?
- How do you differentiate from existing solutions?
- What is your unique competitive advantage?
- Why will customers choose you over alternatives?

5. Business Model & Go-to-Market Strategy

- How will you make money?
- What is your revenue model and pricing strategy?
- How will you reach and acquire your first customers?
- What evidence supports the viability of your business model?
- Who specifically are your target early adopters?

6. Team Preparation & Insights

- How did your team research and validate this opportunity?
- What assumptions did you test and what did you learn?
- What are the biggest risks and how will you address them?
- What would you do differently or what remains to be validated.

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Important Reminders

For Participants:

- **All team members must participate.** Every team member must respond to at least one question during the Q&A period.
- **Practice your presentation.** Ten minutes goes quickly. Practice multiple times to ensure smooth delivery and time management.
- **Be authentic.** Judges value honesty, self-awareness, and genuine learning over trying to impress with jargon or pretending you made no mistakes.

Allowed Materials:

- Computers, tablets, or smartphones to access presentation, notes, or presentation scripts
- Notecards, printed notes, or other reference materials
- Visual aids or slideshow presentations

Visual Aids & Slideshows:

- PowerPoint or Google Slides presentations should help organize your thoughts and make your presentation more engaging.
- If using visual aids, keep them clear, simple, and focused on supporting your narrative rather than reading directly from slides.
- A projector/screen will be provided.

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Scoring and Evaluation

The total score for the event is **100 points**. The evaluation is split into two weighted categories:

Business Strategy & Presentation (70%) and **Communication & Presentation (30%)**.

I. Business Strategy & Presentation – 70 Points

This category evaluates the team's market awareness, problem understanding, and Business approach.

The judges evaluate **5 specific criteria**:

1. **Company Purpose & Problem Definition** – Clear company description, compelling customer pain, and evidence of inadequate current solutions
2. **Solution & Value Proposition** – How your solution addresses the problem and creates meaningful customer value
3. **Market Timing & Opportunity** – Understanding of "why now" and identification of enabling trends
4. **Market Size & Customer Validation** – Credible TAM/SAM/SOM calculations, defined beachhead segment, and evidence of willingness to pay
5. **Competitive Understanding & Positioning** – Knowledge of competitive landscape and clear differentiation strategy
6. **Business Model & Go-to-Market Strategy** – Viable revenue model with supporting evidence and clear path to early adopters
7. **Communication & Professional Presence** – Clarity of articulation, team engagement, and quality of Q&A responses

Each of the 7 criteria is worth a maximum of 10 points.

II. Communication & Presentation – 30 Points

This category evaluates the professional quality of the delivery and the team's ability to communicate effectively.

The judges evaluate **3 specific criteria**:

1. **Clarity & Articulation** – Ideas expressed clearly and understandably
2. **Professional Presence** – Confidence, poise, and engagement; all members participate
3. **Response to Questions** – Demonstrates the ability to effectively answer judges' questions with thoughtful, substantive responses

Each of the 3 criteria is worth a maximum of **10 points**.

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JUDGE'S EVALUATION FORM

Event: Venture Capital – Pitchdeck Presentation

| Portfolio Presentation | Exceeds Expectations | Meets Expectations | Below Expectations | Little/No Value |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| Company Purpose <i>Define the company/business in a single declarative sentence</i> | Crystal clear, compelling company definition. Immediately understand what the company does and who it serves. | Clear company definition. The audience understands the business purpose. | Vague or overly complex definition. Takes effort to understand what a company does. | Unclear or absent company definition. The audience was confused about the basic purpose. |
| Score (0-10): _____ | 10-9 | 8-7-6 | 5-4-3 | 2-1-0 |
| Problem <i>Describe the customer's pain, current solutions and why they are inadequate</i> | Compelling articulation of customer pain with specific examples. Current solutions are clearly inadequate. The problem feels urgent and important. | Clear problem statement with reasonable evidence. Current solutions explained. The problem is understandable. | Problem stated but lacks clarity or evidence. Current solutions are not well explained. Urgency unclear. | Problem unclear or unconvincing. No evidence of customer pain. Fails to explain inadequacy of current solutions. |
| Score (0-10): _____ | 10-9 | 8-7-6 | 5-4-3 | 2-1-0 |
| Solution <i>Value proposition and how your solution makes the customer's life better</i> | Exceptional value proposition that clearly addresses the problem. Solution benefits are compelling and specific. | Solid value proposition. The solution addresses the problem. Benefits are clear and reasonable. | Basic solution presented but value proposition is weak. Benefits are vague or generic. | The solution is unclear or doesn't address the stated problem. Value proposition absent or unconvincing. |
| Score (0-10): _____ | 10-9 | 8-7-6 | 5-4-3 | 2-1-0 |
| Why Now? <i>Where does your solution fit in historical trends? What trends make your solution possible?</i> | Sophisticated understanding of market timing. Compelling trends clearly enable this solution now. | Good understanding of timing. Identifies relevant trends that support the venture. | Basic timing rationale. Trends mentioned but connection is weak or generic. | Poor or no timing explanation. Doesn't demonstrate why now is the right time.. |
| Score (0-10): _____ | 10-9 | 8-7-6 | 5-4-3 | 2-1-0 |
| Market Size <i>TAM, SAM, SOM, Beachhead Segment, Selected early adopters/personas x (willingness to pay)</i> | Exceptional market analysis with credible TAM/SAM/SOM calculations. Beachhead segment clearly defined. Early adopters identified with evidence of willingness to pay. | Solid market sizing with reasonable TAM/SAM/SOM. Beachhead segment identified. Some evidence of customer willingness to pay. | Basic market sizing but lacks depth or credibility. Beachhead segment vague. Weak evidence of willingness to pay. . | Market sizing is absent, unrealistic, or poorly explained. No clear beachhead. No evidence of willingness to pay. |
| Score (0-10): _____ | 10-9 | 8-7-6 | 5-4-3 | 2-1-0 |

Business Strategy & Presentation Subtotal: _____ / 70

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| Communication Criteria | Exceeds Expectations | Meets Expectations | Below Expectations | Little/No Value |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| Clarity & Articulation <i>Ideas expressed clearly and understandably</i> | Exceptionally clear. Complex ideas explained simply and effectively. | Clear communication. Ideas are well-expressed and easy to follow. | Generally clear with some confusion or unclear phrasing. | Unclear communication. Difficult to understand the main points. |
| Score (0-10): _____ | 10-9 | 8-7-6 | 5-4-3 | 2-1-0 |
| Professional Presence <i>Confidence, poise, and engagement; all members participate</i> | Highly professional, confident, engaging. All members contribute meaningfully. | Professional and appropriate. All members participate, though unevenly. | Generally professional with lapses. Not all members are fully engaged. | Unprofessional or one/some members don't participate meaningfully. |
| Score (0-10): _____ | 10-9 | 8-7-6 | 5-4-3 | 2-1-0 |
| Q&A Responses <i>Quality of responses; all members participate meaningfully (For teams)</i> | Thoughtful responses to all questions. All members contribute meaningfully. | Professional and appropriate. Good responses. All members participate, though contributions may be uneven. | Generally professional with lapses. Basic responses. Not all members are fully engaged. | Unprofessional or weak responses. One/some members don't participate meaningfully. |
| Score (0-10): _____ | 10-9 | 8-7-6 | 5-4-3 | 2-1-0 |

Communication & Presentation Subtotal: _____ / 30

Total Points: _____ / 100