



HOW TO WRITE A PITCH DECK?

(practical advice and useful tips)

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WHAT IS A PITCH DECK?

A pitch deck is a quick overview of a business plan, usually between 10 and 15 slides created in PowerPoint or Keynote. It's an essential fundraising tool used in meetings with potential investors to present a business as an investment opportunity.



WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR PITCH DECK?

1.

TO INTRODUCE
YOUR BUSINESS
TO POTENTIAL
INVESTORS

The purpose of your pitch deck is to introduce your business to potential investors, get them excited about it and leave them wanting to know more. It's the first step in the capital raising process and its goal is not to answer all possible questions about your business or get an immediate investment offer.

2.

TO GET A
FOLLOW-UP
MEETING

Its goal is to engage the investors in a conversation about your business and get a request for more information or a follow-up meeting. It's only then that you'll have a chance to discuss your business in more detail and hopefully receive an investment offer. To this follow-up meeting (or, it could be a series of meetings) you may be expected to bring a detailed business plan with market analysis and financial projections.

For they are relatively short, pitch decks are often more difficult to write. In an attempt to impress potential investors, many entrepreneurs create too many slides with too much information on them, and just confuse the investors. This guide offers practical advice and many useful tips that will help you avoid those common pitch deck mistakes and raise funds for your startup.

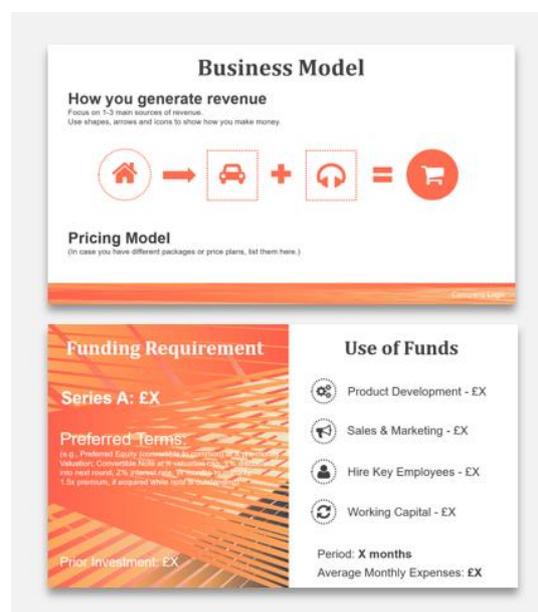
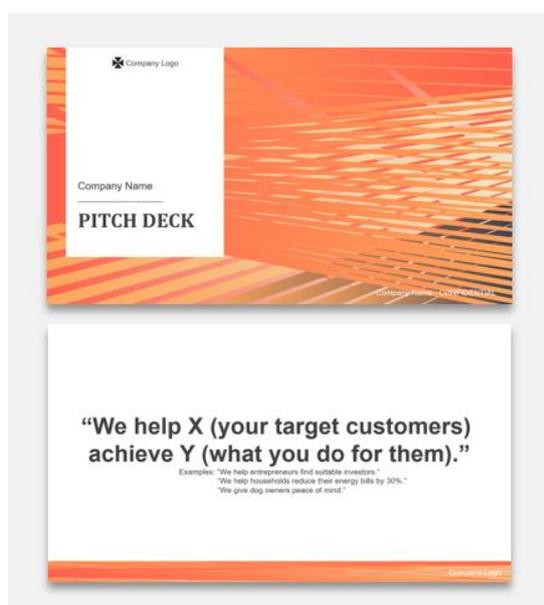
HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE?

This guide is to be used with our [Pitch deck template](#), which can be downloaded from our website. It's designed for entrepreneurs who have never created a pitch deck before.

Pitch deck template

The template has 15 generic pitch deck slides and 5 slides with icons. It's available in six colours and structured in a way that allows easy customisation.

You just need to replace the placeholder text with your company information, maybe add a few photos and replace the icons with those that better describe your business.



Every business is different or at a different stage of development, so all of the slides or slide content may not suit your particular needs.

You may have to change the layout, delete some of the slides or combine two slides in one. However, everyone can use the template at least as a good starting point for creating their company's pitch deck.

Before you start writing the pitch deck, read the rest of this guide. After you've written it, review your pitch deck against the slides writing tips below to ensure you haven't made any of the common mistakes.

PITCH DECK SLIDES WRITING TIPS

SLIDE 1: Cover slide

Don't date your deck, or potential investors will know if it's taking you a while to raise funds. Logos of accelerators you graduated from, awards, nominations, strategic partners, media partners and similar attention drawing facts should be on this slide, and not at the back.

SLIDE 2: Elevator statement

Briefly explain what you do and for whom. Keep it one sentence only and use simple language, avoiding technical terms and buzz words (disruption, bleeding edge, etc.). Don't leave your audience wondering in which space you operate, or you'll make it difficult for them to follow the rest of the pitch.

SLIDE 3: Problem & solution

Focus on explaining the customers' problem, rather than solution. Use visuals such as photos and graphs. The more you can make the problem feel real, the more your audience will understand your business and its goals. It has to be your customers' No.1 problem, not No.5. If that's not the case, you may need to redefine your target market.

SLIDE 4: Products / services

Tell stories about how your customers use the product and how your company makes their lives better. The more you can tell stories that investors can relate to, the more you'll be able to build excitement around your product. Avoid going into technical details. You can include the link to your product demo, if you have one. It's rather uncommon to play demos during investor meetings. If you haven't got a product or prototype yet, show a mock-up. It will give your plan more credibility.



SLIDE 5: Market opportunity

You must show that there's a specific and reachable market for your products/services. The more specific you are, the more realistic your pitch will be. Avoid top-down approach where you "only need 1% of a huge market" to be successful. Investors never take those

claims seriously and they might doubt your whole pitch. Calculating your own TAM (total addressable market) will give you a deeper understanding of your target market and confidence to defend the numbers.

Be realistic about your market size and apply bottom-up approach, where you detail your expectations for how you're going to acquire customers. Start with your traction and multiply with the growth rate in the last 6 months. If you are a startup, use a competitor's market share/growth rate and show that you have the ability and experience to achieve it.



TAM (total addressable market) is the annual revenue if your company gained 100% market share. It could be a local, national, international or global market for a specific product/service. It's calculated by multiplying the number of potential customers by the average product selling price, taking into account the frequency of purchases. If smaller than £100 million, it should be growing fast. Many industry reports

provide TAM data but what those numbers include varies widely between publishers. SAM (serviceable addressable market) is the share of the TAM that your company plans to target (e.g., 18 – 34 year olds in the US, farmers in the UK and Ireland, product users who value price over brand, etc.). SOM (share of market) is a share of the total market your company holds or plans to capture. It should be based on your company's capabilities rather than desires. See our [Market research guide](#) for an example of TAM, SAM and SOM.

SLIDE 6: Business model

This is one of the most important slides so keep it as simple as possible. If there are ten potential revenue sources, don't list them all. Focus on the main revenue streams (maximum 3). You can also discuss how your prices fit into the larger market. Are you a premium, high-price or budget offering?

SLIDE 7: Marketing & growth strategy

Often called "go-to-market" strategy, it explains how you (plan to) acquire customers. Again, keep it as simple as possible and be realistic. If your marketing or sales process (or growth strategy) is significantly different than that of your competitors, it's important to highlight it here.

SLIDE 8: Competition

Don't try to persuade potential investors that you have no competition. Being honest about your competitors and listing at least 3-4 specific companies, helps increase their trust in you. If

you have many competitors, you can group them by size, product, location, online/offline. The key here is to show that you've identified your competitors and developed a plan for dealing with each competitive threat.

SLIDE 9: Competitive Advantage

You have to persuade the investors that you have a very specific advantage over your competitors that will enable you to achieve market success. If there are a few advantages, don't list more than 3. Possible advantages: unique or superior product features, technology advantage, better value for money, differential business strategy, better after-sale services, access to distribution channels, etc.

SLIDE 10: Financial projections

If you haven't got any financial data yet, use our [Financial projections template](#) to forecast your financial results. If it makes sense for your business, provide revenue and expense estimates for 1, 100, 1000, 10000 customers or users. If you are a startup, don't go into too much detail about your financials.

Instead, focus on the period when your company is expected to start generating revenue and the break-even point. Make sure your assumptions are realistic, otherwise, no one will trust your financial projections. Bear in mind that from the investors' point of view, a good investment opportunity is a huge, growing market, where the life-time value of a customer is higher than the cost to acquire a customer.

SLIDE 11: Management team

This is one of the most important slides because investors invest primarily in people. If you have a very experienced team, this slide should go after the elevator pitch. If not, keep it at the back. Highlight your team's industry specific experience, as well as any business development or startup experience. Even if you don't have a complete team yet, identify the key positions that you still need to fill and explain why those positions are critical to your company's success.



SLIDE 12: Funding requirement / Use of funds

You must show that you know exactly how much money you need and how the money will be spent, to achieve key milestones (e.g., first clients, break-even point, 3x revenue growth) or before the next funding round.

Think about future funding needs and how you'll raise money later (e.g., potential investors in the future, what milestones you have to reach by then). You'll be asked those questions so make sure you've got the answers ready.



SLIDE 13: Traction

If you already have sales or early adopters using your products, show your numbers even if they're not impressive. Any proof that your solution works is extremely powerful and reduces risk for investors. Mention notable clients, letters of intent, sales pipeline, revenue to date, number of users, number of paying customers to date, etc.

If you lack traction, you can pitch by analogy (using data of other companies that have a similar business model) to show your company's potential. If you don't have a good analogy, talk about the milestones you've achieved so far or don't include this slide in your pitch. The better your traction, the

sooner this slide should be in your pitch.

SLIDE 14: Timeline

You can start by saying how, when, where and by whom your company was started. Mention a few milestones you have already achieved, for example, when the MVP was launched, when you raised seed funding, secured a strategic partnership, etc. Finish the timeline with the future milestones, for example, when the company will become profitable, when you will reach 100k subscribers, when the investors can expect to receive the promised return on their investment, etc.

SLIDE 15: Vision & contact details

Close the pitch with your vision. It should be on the screen as you answer the investors' questions. The goal is to remind your audience why they shouldn't miss the opportunity to invest in your business now.



PITCH DECK PRESENTATION TIPS

Your presentation is as important as the pitch deck itself.

Tell your company's story

Stories stay with people longer than facts. Regardless of whether you're targeting angel investors or venture capital firms, it's important to have a great story that will stay with your audience long after they leave the presentation room. To create a story, try replacing headings with statements.

For example, replace "Problem" with a problem statement (e.g., 25% of household income is spent on energy bills.), "Market opportunity" with a market statement (e.g., In 2020, 70% of households will be using LED lights.), etc. Then, connect those statements and turn them into a powerful story.

Prepare a memorable elevator pitch

Always start your presentation with an elevator pitch, ideally, not longer than 30–60 seconds. Say who you are, what you do and for whom, what makes you unique, any traction (profit, number of users, big clients, awards, strategic partnerships), how much money you're raising and what it will enable you to achieve.

You have the most attention from investors in the first 1–2 minutes of your presentation so make sure your elevator pitch is unique and memorable. Try to sound natural and not like a sales person.



Show commitment and determination

Show that you're passionate about your business and that you really want to succeed. Investors know that passionate entrepreneurs solving personal or large-scale problems, are more driven and don't give up easily. They're able to adapt to changing market conditions and keep on fighting until they achieve success. Those looking for quick cash are rarely that motivated and investors want to avoid them.

Show, don't tell

Back up your statements and assumption with market tests and reports, official statistics, feasibility studies, newspaper articles, your traction, experiences of other companies in your industry, etc. Don't let investors doubt any part of your pitch. Go through it, slide by slide, to identify gaps and look for evidence that could be used to support those statements.



Personalise your pitch

You will raise funds faster if you take a personalised approach and tailor your pitch to each investor. If you know who you will be meeting, make a list of important fact about that investor (their experience, investment portfolio, interests, etc.) and try to find a connection with your business that will create urgency and provoke them on action. For example, you can try to find a synergy between a company they already own and your business.

Keep it short and simple

Simple and straightforward presentations always do better than detailed ones (with many bullet points and complex infographics). No one will invest in a business they find complicated and difficult to understand.

The ideal pitch deck size is 10-15 slides. Decks with less than 10 slides can seem incomplete, while those with more than 15 slides often lack focus. If you have a one-hour meeting, aim for your presentation to take 20 - 30 minutes. That will leave you with enough time to answer questions.

Keep it up to date

Fundraising takes time and you'll probably pitch your company many times before closing an investment deal. Before each meeting, make sure your deck is up to date with the latest progress, roadmaps, traction, etc. Listen to the investors' feedback and use it to improve your pitch for the future meetings. If asked to send a copy of your deck by email, always send a pdf. Everyone will be able to view it and the formatting will be preserved.

Practise your pitch

Practice makes perfect. Practise your pitch until you believe it's good enough to persuade someone to invest in your company. You can practise with friends and family or in front of a mirror. Some entrepreneurs record their pitch, and then listen to it and try to improve it.

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

After you've prepared your pitch deck and presentation, review them against this list of common pitch deck mistakes to ensure you haven't made any of them. If you find it difficult to review your own work, ask someone to help you.

1. TOO MANY SLIDES or too much information on slides.
2. BELITTLING COMPETITORS or claiming you have no competition.
3. FALSE OR UNREASONABLE ASSUMPTIONS you cannot back up or don't have data on.
4. USING COMPLEX DIAGRAMS to explain the product, market opportunity or business model.
5. OVERSELLING IN HEADLINES and repeating the same phrases throughout your pitch.
6. USING TOO MANY BUZZ WORDS everybody uses (disruptive, cutting-edge, outside the box, etc.).

PITCH DECK DESIGN

A clean minimalist design in your brand colours would be the best choice for your pitch deck. It can be achieved by ensuring consistency in use of fonts and colours, and avoiding complex infographics. Don't let the design overpower the content. That's not going to help you raise

funds. Your goal should be a pitch deck that is pleasant to look at, and easy to read and understand. You can use [Canva](#) to design your pitch deck for free or, if you don't have good design skills, it may be better to hire a professional graphic designer.

We hope this guide helps you create a pitch deck for your company and achieve your funding and other goals. Should you need further assistance, please visit the [pitch deck writing services](#) page on our website or contact us at funding@mcboffin.com.

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