

Pitching perfection – ten steps to building a great pitch

“Launching a business is essentially an adventure in problem solving.” Richard Branson

Always think end audience

Before getting started, a quick piece of advice. A pitch deck that you use for in-person public speaking and an investor deck that you send by email are very different. Every presentation must be tailored to its specific audience. It's safe to assume the majority aren't experts in your industry, so clarity of communication is key. Know your audience and be in their shoes.

Focus on How You Say “It”

When crafting a pitch, most people spend a lot of time and energy on **the content and the words they use**, but not enough time on how they deliver the message. **Your body language and your tone of voice need to communicate enthusiasm and confidence.** Make sure your body language and tonality make people want to listen. **Practice in front of a mirror, in front of friends, or in front of a camera.**

Tell us what problem you're solving.

These can be **a couple of perfunctory slides or three, four or more educational slides**, depending on your audience's sophistication. Convey the nature of the market opportunity by highlighting what is “broken” or “not working.” If possible, scope out the size of the market opportunity. Ideally, these slides make it clear market participants are spending real dollars for imperfect products that do not really address their needs.

Demonstrate enthusiasm!

If you're not passionate about the product, your audience won't be either. Richard Branson has a key condition for entering a new business: It has to be fun. If it's not fun, why bother? Too many of us are subject to dull pitches and presentations. Inject some excitement into your pitch!

Get in the Pitch Zone

Feel great when you deliver the pitch and curb your anxiety. Some people **visualize their goals** to feel inspired and upbeat. Some people work out. Others eat healthy food or listen to music they love and dance. Do what works best for you.

It's always about how you start and how you finish your presentation. Maintain that energy and drive throughout your pitch.

Slide 1: The Intro Slide

First take a moment to introduce yourself and your company. Give a high-level summary of what your company does without getting too much into the weeds.

Visuals: On the slide itself, you really only need your logo, a product image, and your tagline. Remember to talk about you, in relation to the product or service, what equips you to bring this business to market. How did you get here, to this idea and today.

Slide 2: Big Problem

What's the big problem you're solving and why should your audience care? All great companies exist to solve a tangible problem in the market – this is your chance to make a case that it's a problem worth solving. Don't use too much text to distract from the story that you're telling in-person.

Visuals: Include keywords and images that relate but don't overcomplicate your message with too many graphs, Wordart, or a cluttered collection of statistics.

Slide 3: Solution

Now that you've defined the problem in a relatable and compelling fashion, what's your hypothesis? In a few short sentences, you should be able to boil down exactly what your company does and the value that it provides to your customers. Again, keep it simple so that your grandmother would understand it. Sell the benefit. Instead of simply demonstrating the features behind the product, sell the benefit behind the features. This is a critical persuasion technique.

Visuals: Include visuals of your product and service. There's definitely no need to flood this slide with bullets and text.

Slide 4: Traction/size of the market

After presenting the problem and summarizing your solution, show that it's also a problem that your customers are willing to pay to solve by highlighting your traction to date or the size of the market. This slide is critical to keeping an audience of investors engaged. Don't focus on projections; focus on exactly how you've proven out your hypothesis.

Visuals: Include a clear graph of historical traction and growth and present the key metrics that investors should remember (highlight those metrics on the side).

Slide 5: Market Opportunity – growth

Your traction may be impressive, but what's your growth potential? Use this slide to emphasize the addressable market. This is where you make investors realize the potential

disruption that you're causing in the market. While it's great to be in the billions, be truthful. It's a number investors will remember and ask about.

Visuals: Show the market size and/or growth but make sure to emphasize the million, billion or trillion dollar number.

Slide 6: Competitive Edge

If it's a problem worth solving in a market ripe for disruption, there will be other competitors in the playing field. So highlight your "secret sauce" or unique selling point and show how that is positioning you better in the market. Don't get too bogged down in discussing competitors. Focus on your company. If there is one obvious big name competitor, make sure you clearly articulate that "unlike x, we y."

Visuals: Pull out and visualize the key components that differentiate your product or use a very summarized table to address the competitive landscape.

Slide 7: Team

Who is behind this business, what are their skills.

Visuals: On the slide, include headshots, emphasizing impressive background.

Slide 8: The Ask

Investor: How much are you raising? What stage round is this? What is the valuation (or terms if a note)?

Customer: What's the unique offer for them? How much are you willing to offer them if they buy x amount.

Slide 9: Why Now?

As you wrap up your pitch, make an argument for investing in your company or placing an order. This is your chance to make a call to action to the audience.

Slide 10: In Summary

You've presented a lot of information in a short period of time. To finish your pitch, drive home the 3 key points of your pitch to keep investors thinking after you leave the stage. Whether its traction, market, team – it's up to you to decide what 3 details you want investors to remember.

Don't be afraid to teach us something new.

A venture capitalist once said: "If you can teach me something I didn't know before, you'll have my attention, and perhaps my money!" Every *successful* pitch has the element of knowledge, teaching your listeners something that wasn't obvious to your audience.