



This guide provides startup founders with a **step-by-step framework to create an investor-ready pitch deck**. It covers essential slides, from Title and Ambition to Financials and Execution Plan, while highlighting best practices for **structure, content, and consistency**. The guide also includes practical tips on **aligning value propositions, market insights, and team strengths**, helping startup founders clearly communicate their vision, opportunity, and growth potential to investors.

1. TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. TABLE OF CONTENTS	1
2. TERMINOLOGY	2
3. WHY IS A PITCH DECK NECESSARY?	3
4. FORM AND LAYOUT OF PITCH DECKS	4
5. PITCH DECK CONTENT & STRUCTURE	5
5.1. THE 'TITLE' SLIDE	5
5.2. AMBITION	5
5.3. IDEAL CUSTOMER PROFILE (ICP)	6
5.4. PAIN POINTS	6
5.5. VALUE PROPOSITION	6
5.6. SOLUTION	6
5.7. BUSINESS MODEL / VALUE CAPTURING	6
5.8. MARKET ASSESSMENT	7
5.9. CUSTOMER'S BUSINESS CASE	7
5.10. TEAM	7
5.11. TECHNOLOGY	7
5.12. SALES ARCHITECTURE / CHANNELS	7

5.13. GO-TO-MARKET (GTM) STRATEGY	8
5.14. GROWTH STRATEGY	8
5.15. COMPETITION	8
5.16. MOATS	8
5.17. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI)	8
5.18. FINANCIALS	9
5.19. TOP LEVEL EXECUTION PLAN	10
5.20. CALL FOR ACTION	10
6. MIND THE GAPS	10
7. FINAL COMMENTS AND BENEFITS	11
8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	11

2. TERMINOLOGY

Bottom-up Forecast - A realistic financial projection built from detailed, operational data such as customer counts or pricing.

Business Model - The structure showing how a company creates, delivers, and captures value.

Call for Action (CFA) - The final slide that clearly outlines next steps or investment requests for investors.

Customer Acquisition Cost (CAC) - The total expense incurred to acquire one new customer.

COGS (Cost of Goods Sold) - The direct costs of producing a company's products or services.

COR (Cost of Revenue) - The total cost required to generate revenue, including COGS and CAC.

Critical Path - The sequence of essential tasks that determine the minimum time needed to achieve project goals.

CLTV (Customer Lifetime Value) - The total expected revenue generated from a single customer over their lifetime.

Execution Plan - A timeline and strategy for achieving milestones and deploying resources effectively.

Financial Model - A structured forecast of a company's financial performance based on assumptions and key metrics.

Go-To-Market (GTM) Plan - The strategy outlining how a product or service will reach and attract target customers.

Growth Strategy - The plan describing how a business will expand its customer base and revenue over time.

Ideal Customer Profile (ICP) - The description of the type of customer most likely to benefit from and purchase the product.

Key Performance Indicators (KPI) - Quantifiable measures used to track performance and success.

Liquidity - The availability of liquid assets that allow a business to meet short-term obligations.

Management Team Slide - The slide introducing key members of the startup's leadership and their roles.

Market Assessment - Analysis of potential market size, customer segments, and growth opportunities.

Moats - Competitive advantages that protect a business from competitors, such as patents or trade secrets.

Pain Points - Specific customer problems or unmet needs that require a solution.

Payback Period - The time required for profits from a customer to cover the cost of acquiring them.

Pitch Deck - A short presentation used to communicate a startup's business idea and investment opportunity.

Problem / Opportunity - The issue or unmet need that the startup's solution aims to address.

Proof of Technology - Demonstration that the underlying technology functions as intended and can scale.

Sales Architecture / Channels - The structure and strategy used to sell and distribute the product.

Solution - The product or service offered to solve a customer's problem.

TAM (Total Addressable Market) - The total market demand for a product or service if 100% of the market were captured.

Top-down Forecast - A high-level financial projection starting from total market size and estimating share.

Underlying Magic - The unique technology, insight, or innovation that differentiates the company from competitors.

Unique Selling Proposition (USP) - The distinctive advantage or feature that sets the company apart in the market.

Unit Economics - The direct revenue and cost associated with serving one customer or selling one unit.

Value Inflection Points (VIPs) - Key milestones that significantly increase the company's valuation or traction.

Value Proposition (VP) - The specific value or benefit offered to customers to solve their problems.

3. WHY IS A PITCH DECK NECESSARY?

A **pitch deck** is one of the most essential tools for any startup seeking investment, partnerships, or strategic support. It provides a concise, visual overview of your business, communicating the most important aspects of your idea, market, and team in a compelling narrative.

The **primary purpose of a pitch deck** is not to secure immediate funding, but to **generate interest** and earn a **follow-up meeting** with investors. It acts as a bridge between your concept and potential backers, helping them quickly understand your opportunity and why it is worth their attention.

A well-crafted pitch deck helps you:

- Clarify your business model and value proposition.
- Present data and assumptions in a structured, easy-to-follow format.
- Demonstrate that you understand your customers, competitors, and market dynamics.
- Build investor confidence in your team's ability to execute.

Whether presented live or sent electronically, the deck should **tell a story** that captures both the rationale behind your business and the emotion that drives it. The ultimate goal is to inspire trust and curiosity, not to overwhelm investors with detail.

4. FORM AND LAYOUT OF PITCH DECKS

While the strength of your content ultimately determines your success, the **form and layout** of your pitch deck strongly influence first impressions. A clean, consistent, and visually engaging design communicates professionalism and focus.

Which of these slides tells your story better?

EXECUTED BY A POWERFUL TEAM WITH THE NECESSARY RESOURCES



Bill Gates
Co-founder & CEO
Head of Sales













Elon Musk
Co-founder & CTO
Head of Marketing



Jeff Bezos
Co-founder & CEO
Head of Operations

Experienced team with track record in building the fastest vehicle for high speed of execution

 Christian Horner CEO ETH	 Adrian Newey CTO EPFL	 Max Verstappen COO Massachusetts University	 Oliver Hughes VP Marketing UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE	 Hannah Schmitz Head of Strategy University of Göttingen
				

Think of design as a **hygiene factor**. It will not secure investment by itself, but poor design can distract from your message. Use form to **support** your story, not to overshadow it.

Key principles for form and layout:

- **Keep it simple.** Avoid cluttered slides, long sentences, and excessive graphics. Each slide should convey one key idea.
- **Be consistent.** Use the same font family, color scheme, and formatting throughout the deck.
- **Readable fonts.** Use at least 28-30 point font for clarity, especially in live presentations.
- **Visual support.** Use charts, diagrams, and images to illustrate points rather than relying solely on text.
- **Limit length.** Around 10-12 slides is ideal. More slides risk losing investor attention.
- **Prioritize clarity over design flair.** A simple, logical structure will always outperform a flashy but confusing one.

Use this list to understand the key do's and don'ts of pitch deck format and layout every startup founder should know:

Do – crucial points:

- ✓ Be precise and concise
- ✓ Be consistent
- ✓ Use visuals to enhance, clarify your message
- ✓ Present a convincing team slide
- ✓ Have a clear ask
- ✓ Show financials, traction
- ✓ Invest time in the design

Don't – avoid by all means:

- ✗ Overload with text and digressions
- ✗ Have typos, inconsistencies
- ✗ Neglect content and design
- ✗ Make false claims or unrealistic projections
- ✗ Claim you have no competition
- ✗ Neglect your revenue model and go-to-market

5. PITCH DECK CONTENT & STRUCTURE

Focus on organizing the content effectively. The following key topics represent the **core structure** every startup should cover. You can dedicate one slide per topic, combine several topics on a single slide, or expand one topic across multiple slides depending on your design and storytelling preferences. The sequence below serves as a general guideline, but you can adjust the order to best fit your narrative. Keep your content concise and focused, as investors value **clarity and impact over excessive detail**.

5.1. THE 'TITLE' SLIDE

This is the first impression investors will have of your startup, so make it count. Include your **company name**, **your own name** and **title**, as well as your **contact details** (address, email, and phone number) to make it easy for investors to reach you. It is also helpful to give a quick

sense of what your company does by adding a **tagline** or a **mission statement** that hints at your business focus or value proposition.

5.2. AMBITION

This slide communicates your **vision**, that you have identified an untapped opportunity, recognized its **economic potential**, and are **driven to capture it**. Keep your ambition statement **short and powerful**, often just a few words that encapsulate your big idea or long-term goal. It is typically the slide with the fewest words, but it can be one of the hardest to craft effectively.

5.3. IDEAL CUSTOMER PROFILE (ICP)

Define the type of customer who experiences a specific **pain** or **unmet need** that your product or service can address. This is the audience for whom you create tangible value by solving a real problem or easing a significant frustration. Keep in mind that a “customer” can represent a **group of stakeholders** rather than a single individual, especially in complex markets.

5.4. PAIN POINTS

This slide identifies the **specific challenges or unmet needs** your target customers face. Highlight the issues that make them open to new solutions, and use a brief example or story to make the problem tangible. The goal is to help investors understand why this issue matters and why the market is ready for your solution.

5.5. VALUE PROPOSITION

This section explains **how your product customers their needs and resolves their pain points**. Each value proposition should directly correspond to a specific customer pain point you identified earlier. Avoid highlighting benefits that are not connected to those pains, as investors will be looking for a clear, logical link between the problem and your solution.

5.6. SOLUTION

This slide provides a **clear, objective description of your product**. Show what users experience when they interact with it, including features, design, and overall look and feel. If your solution includes multiple components, such as a mobile app, web service, or hardware, be sure to represent all of them. Keep this description **neutral**, without discussing value or customer pain points.

Next, explain **how your product addresses the problem** introduced earlier. Highlight the benefits and real-world impact, showing investors why your solution matters and how it creates value.

5.7. BUSINESS MODEL / VALUE CAPTURING

Explain **how your company creates and captures value**. Show the **flow of money** and ensure the model is **easy for customers to use**. The business model is a key part of product-market fit. Make sure it is **easy for customers to engage with** and does not create unnecessary barriers to purchase. Describe how your company currently generates profit or how it plans to do so in the future, highlighting the mechanics that make your model sustainable and compelling.

5.8. MARKET ASSESSMENT

Use **graphics** to clearly illustrate your market assumptions. Total Addressable Market (TAM) is best calculated **bottom-up**: number of ICPs multiplied by their willingness to pay, broken down by geography.

5.9. CUSTOMER'S BUSINESS CASE

If your product requires the customer to justify its value internally, make sure you **understand their business case** and present it clearly in your slide deck.

5.10. TEAM

Investors invest in **teams as well as business ideas**. Use this slide to show why your team is the best possible one to execute your vision. Highlight **relevant experience, skills, and team dynamics**, and be transparent about any gaps you are aware of and how you plan to fill them. Avoid simply listing headshots and titles; instead, explain why your team is uniquely positioned to make the company successful.

5.11. TECHNOLOGY

If your product is based on a new technology, this slide should show that you have validated:

- **Proof of technology** showing that the technology works
- **Product reliability and scalability** demonstrating that the product functions reliably and can be scaled
- **Supply chain management** showing that risks associated with new technology are addressed

Describe the **technology, secret sauce, or unique features** that make your company special. Include a **demo or prototype**, use illustrations, and focus on **benefits rather than features** to help investors engage with your idea. Highlight what makes your product stand out.

5.12. SALES ARCHITECTURE / CHANNELS

Describe your **sales strategy**. Are you using **direct sales** or **indirect sales through distributors and resellers**? Explain why you chose this approach and how it supports your business objectives.

5.13. GO-TO-MARKET (GTM) STRATEGY

This slide is needed if your **GTM strategy** is still ahead of you. Focus on how you plan to earn the right to scale, usually starting with a **beachhead market** to manage uncertainty. GTM efforts can sometimes force a strategic pivot, so clarity is key.

Explain **how you plan to distribute and market your product or service**. Simply mentioning social media is not enough. Every company must find customers, even if you are selling advanced technology. Detail your **action plan**, including how you will acquire and retain customers, which partners you will leverage, and why those partners are motivated to collaborate with you. Investors want to see that you have **thought through the practical steps** needed to reach the market and are ready for investment. Underestimating these efforts is a common reason startups fail.

5.14. GROWTH STRATEGY

If applicable, use this slide to show your **growth strategy** and the current state of your company. Outline **milestones you have achieved** so far and those you aim to reach in the near future. Clearly explain **how you plan to use the investment** and why funding is needed at this stage of development. This is also the place to specify **how much capital you are seeking**, helping investors understand the purpose and timing of your funding request.

5.15. COMPETITION

Provide an overview of your **competition** and highlights how your company stands out. Identify which companies offer similar value propositions and show **what they lack in comparison to you**. Explain your **unique selling proposition (USP)**, the value only your company provides that customers are willing to pay for. Highlight your **unfair advantage**, how it gives you an edge over competitors, and how **sustainable** that advantage is in the long term.

5.16. MOATS

Moats are **mechanisms that protect your company from competition** or make it difficult for competitors to replicate your success. Common examples include:

- **Intellectual Property (IP)**: patents, trademarks, and other legal protections
- **Company secrets**: proprietary knowledge needed to build your product
- **Significant head start**: a time advantage that competitors cannot easily recover
- **Control of key resources**: such as data sources, raw materials, or other critical inputs

5.17. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

Select a **representative set of metrics** that showcase your company's performance or potential. Examples include:

- **Adoption**: installed units, daily active users, number of new customers
- **Revenue**: derived from adoption
- **Customer Acquisition Cost (CAC)**

- **Cost of Goods Sold (COGS)**
- **Cost of Revenue (COR):** CAC plus COGS
- **Sales Cycle**

For recurring revenue businesses, also consider:

- **Customer Lifetime Value (CLTV)**
- **Retention and Churn**
- **Unit Economics:** CLTV divided by COR
- **Payback Period**

If your company is **pre-GTM**, provide estimated KPIs based on **market research**, **analogies**, **experience**, or **insights from similar startups**.

5.18. FINANCIALS

Use this slide to present **top-level financials** derived from your KPI model. Include a **three-year forecast** with key metrics such as number of customers and conversion rates. Focus on a **bottom-up forecast**, which starts with your business and growth plans rather than the entire market. This method provides a more realistic view of your company's financial future, which is what investors want to see.

Be sure to include **clear unit economics**: how much it costs to acquire a customer (CAC), the cost to deliver your product or service (COGS), the revenue generated per transaction, and the resulting margin. This slide should clearly demonstrate the financial viability of your business.

Guidelines Financial Modeling to keep in mind:

- Avoid overly ambitious forecasts that are not supported by assumptions; back them with **industry metrics** and a strong **go-to-market strategy**.
- **Track actual performance** against your forecast and adjust as needed.
- Model on a **monthly basis** to capture seasonality and quickly identify deviations and liquidity risks.
- Consider **different scenarios** to understand potential outcomes.
- **Model cash flow** monthly to maintain a clear view of liquidity.

Benefits of a sophisticated financial model:

- Forces you to **question assumptions** and ensure a suitable pricing strategy.
- Provides a tool to test sensitivity to different **customer behaviors and market conditions**.
- Allows tracking of performance to **validate assumptions** or improve market understanding.
- Serves as a **sales document** that communicates your vision and startup potential.
- Reinforces investors' perception that you are **in control** and understand your business and market.
- Provides the **fundamentals for a DCF valuation**.

Financial Model Dos and Don'ts

Do – crucial points:

- ✓ Be detailed
- ✓ Avoid shortcuts
- ✓ Document your assumptions
- ✓ Stay close to reality
- ✓ Show potential and levers
- ✓ Show historical numbers and forecast
- ✓ Invest time and update regularly

Don't – avoid by all means:

- ✗ Be too ambitious with unrealistic projections
- ✗ Have inconsistent formulas
- ✗ Neglect assumptions and reality checks
- ✗ Make a yearly forecast without liquidity plan
- ✗ Hard code number excluding assumptions

5.19. TOP LEVEL EXECUTION PLAN

Visualize your **Value Inflection Points (VIPs)**, showing **when they occur** and **how much funding is needed** to reach them. Include planned **funding rounds** on the timeline. Add the **major activity streams** that lead to each VIP and highlight the **critical path** required to achieve your milestones.

5.20. CALL FOR ACTION

Use this slide to **state the purpose** of your presentation: you are seeking capital. Propose clear **next steps** based on the type of investor:

- **Lead Investor:** Move quickly to determine if they are a fit. Identify what information or follow-up they need and keep the process focused.
- **Follower Investor:** Ensure they understand your company and maintain engagement. Follow up promptly once a term sheet from a lead investor is available, unless they decline earlier.

6. MIND THE GAPS

Ensure your **pitch deck is consistent** across topics, especially from **Pain Points** → **Value Proposition** → **Solution** → **Business Model** → **Market Assessment**. Gaps often appear when:

- **Value propositions don't match pain points:** Some pain points have no corresponding value proposition, or vice versa.
- **Market assessment misalignment:** Bottom-up market calculations are based on customer segments that don't align with your pain points or value propositions.
Solution overreach or mismatch: Your product may include unnecessary features that don't correspond to value propositions, or fail to highlight features that do create value. This signals to investors that you may not fully understand the opportunity.

Consistency across these elements is crucial to show **clarity, focus, and a solid understanding of your market and solution**.

7. FINAL COMMENTS AND BENEFITS

Creating a pitch deck is challenging because you must **condense content** while ensuring key messages are clear. Avoid overloading slides and focus on **the core story**. Before presenting to investors, share your deck with other founders or your network and ask them to describe the messages they take away. This helps ensure your story comes across as intended.

Remember, even the most visually impressive deck cannot compensate for weak fundamentals. A **work-in-progress pitch deck** is valuable for founders to track the big picture, detect deviations, and ensure the narrative remains plausible from start to finish.

For additional inspiration, review pitch decks from successful startups like Airbnb, BuzzFeed, and Dropbox [here](#) (external source).

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The guide incorporates insights and expertise from leading startup professionals and organizations in the **Swiss startup ecosystem**:

[Patrick Griss](#) - Co-Founder and CEO, Zühlke Ventures

[Julian Stylianou](#) - Senior Account Executive, Salesforce

[Natalie Ploeschberger](#) - Head of Marketing & Communications, two.jobs

[Elodie Huber](#) - Manager, BV4

[Grégory Frei](#) - Analyst, BV4

[Swiss Startup Association](#)

We are grateful for their contributions, which helped shape the recommendations and best practices presented in this guide.